Encountering God in Haiti:

An Invitation to Postcolonial Practical Theology

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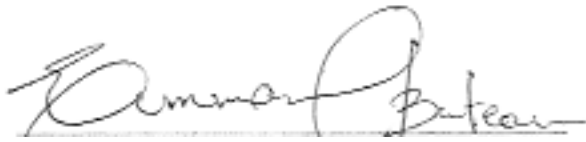

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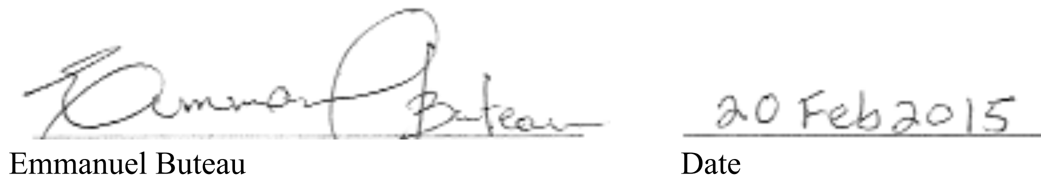

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Abstract

This study seeks to construct a postcolonial practical theology from the perspective of Haitian lived experience. Through engagement with various aspects of Haitian history and lived experience, it traces the Haitian people's difficulties to the evil that has pervaded Haitian relationships among themselves and with the community of nations. It further suggests that colonialism is a significant aspect of this pervasive evil as represented most concretely and most treacherously in the *rèstavèk* experience. Justice, a notion which emerges out of suffering, ensues as the ultimate concern of the Haitian people. Going beyond justice as retribution and beyond the mere satisfaction of some pre-established norm, this approach to justice is imagined as openness and participatory action in the phenomenon of encounter. In this form, it offers the hope of overcoming the pervading evil. A crucial first step is the construction of a new theological language based on the practice of justice.

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Preface

Haiti is generally not sought out for its ability to mediate the human encounter with God. On the contrary, as early as 1492, the Spanish-sponsored colonizers who landed on the island dubbed the indigenous peoples barbaric and deprived of God's salvation.[1] God, as theologians of the time contended, was absent from among these strange people. This disposition to disavow the encounter with God in its Haitian particularity persisted for over three centuries even as the Spanish colonizers ceded the western portion of the island to their French counterparts and especially as the enslaved Africans called on the Spirits of their ancestors for assistance against their oppressors.

Today, Haiti is vibrant with religious life. The Roman Catholic Church continues to dominate albeit at a smaller proportion than before. Protestant denominations are spreading rapidly.[2] Vodou is slowly but emphatically gaining acceptance as a valid form

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[1] "Until the Spaniards met the structured empires of the Aztec, Maya, and Inca, some thirty years after the arrival of Columbus, their notion of the inhabitants were quite dismal. Not only were they seen as idiotic and obtuse, not having the faculty of reason, but irreligious as well, assuming that they did not have any comprehensible form of religion." Vítor Westhelle, *After Heresy: Colonial Practices and Post-Colonial Theologies* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2010), 20. And since salvation for the Iberians meant belonging to the Roman Church and mission designated assimilation into such church, the conquerors related to the indigenous peoples with the same attitude they applied to the Muslims and Jews they encountered in Europe: salvation through assimilation – "and the sword was called in to bring about salvation." Westhelle, *After Heresy*, 20. The French attitude toward Africans was no more flattering. Concerning African religion, André Thévet sets the tone for many of his European contemporaries with his *Cosmographie Universelle*. He writes, "If there was an abominable idolatry, brutish superstition and ignorance in the world, you will find it among these poor people…this people is so stupid, bestial, and blinded by folly that it accepts as divinity the first thing it encounters in the morning when it wakes up." André Thévet, *Cosmographie universelle* (Paris: G. Chaudiere, 1575), 52. See also William B. Cohen, *The French Encounter with Africans: White Response to Blacks, 1530-1880* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 9.

[2] Kawas François, SJ, *Vaudou et Catholicisme en Haïti à l'aube du XXIe Siècle: Des repères pour un dialogue* (Port-au-Prince: Deschamps, 2011), 20.

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of religious practice.[3] Haiti's Muslim minority has three mosques in Port-au-Prince alone and boasts representation in most of the country's ten departments. The Baha'i faith too has adherents in parts of Haiti. Yet the focus remains on what others can do for Haiti on whom God will send to help Haiti's poor. The proliferation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the continued invasion by missionaries of various Christian traditions, in addition to the virtual branding of the country by donor nations, testify to this deliberate international effort to save Haiti. The context is somewhat different than that of the colonial period. The intentions are significantly less sinister. But the message remains the same: Haiti's salvation lies outside out of the hands of Haitian people.

As the following survey shows, most theological works on Haiti fail to address this problem. While scholars in the social sciences have made significant contributions to the study and understanding of religious life in Haiti, theological reflection that treats the Haitian experience seriously still lacks. More lacking are works that seek to construct a Haitian theology from within Haitian lived experience, which confront established theological positions for the sake of Haiti. Works that deal with the history of various religious groups in Haiti abound. Charles-Poisset Romain's *Le Protestantisme dans la Société Haïtienne* is one prime example. As Laënnec Hurbon's works demonstrate, works that focus on Vodou's place in Haitian society abound all the more.[4] Patrick Bellegarde-Smith and Claudine Michel's edited volume *Haitian Vodou: Spirit, Myth, and Reality*, falls in a similar category as Hurbon's works. Other works, such as Lamartine Petit-Monsieur's *La Coexistence de Types Religieux Différents dans l'Haïtien Contemporain*, have an ethno-sociological focus. Other works seek to engender dialogue among the

[3] François, *Vaudou et Catholicisme en Haïti,* 20.
[4] Laënnec Hurbon's major works include Dieu dans le vaudou haïtien (Paris: Payot, 1972).

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different religious groups. Jean Fils-Aimé's *Le dialogue necessaire entre le vaudou et la foi chretienne: L'Inculturation de la Foi Chrétienne au Contexte du vaudou Haïtien* and a number of titles produced by the Jesuit Institute's Centre de Recherche, de Réflexion, de Formation et d'Action Sociale (CERFAS), such as Kawas Francois' *Vaudou et Catholicisme en Haïti à l'Aube du XXIe Siècle: Des repères pour un dialogue*, fall in that category. Works that treat Haitian life phenomenologically and theologically, with Haitian experience serving as the subject rather than the object, are almost completely lacking from the literature.[5]

Such is the aim of the pages that follow: to address this practical theological problem by engaging Haitian history and lived experience critically, phenomenologically, and theologically. The central question is: what is the nature of the encounter with God in Haiti? Some sub-questions that stem from the central one are, how do Haitians encounter this God? What is the nature of the encounter? Where and how does the encounter take place? Does salvation as traditionally conceived apply to the Haitian situation? Naturally, these questions lead to a consideration of what and who God is among the Haitian people. Other pertinent questions include, what are the requirements for encountering God in Haiti? Do the requirements include a change in belief or behavior? What factors inform the encounter? Is the encounter open to all people? Is the encounter possible in all places within Haiti? What is the role of history, national and personal? What are the fruits of the encounter? What is the purpose of the encounter? Is the encounter necessary? What do

[5] The degree to which George MacDonald Mulrain succeeds in lifting "the theological significance of Haitian folk religion," remains in question. His text reads as if written standing outside and looking in. The tone of the work betrays a determination to promote a particular Christian understanding of Haitian religion rather than advancing Haitian theological thought or lifting up the Haitian people. See George MacDonald Mulrain, *Theology in Folk Culture: The Theological Significance of Haitian Folk Religion* (New York: Verlag Peter Lang, 1984).

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the ways of encountering God in Haiti say about life in Haiti both now and in the future? Those questions and others are considered from the perspective of the practices of the people; not so much their religious practices, but the practice of life: life in the marketplace, on the *taptap*, in the mountains, and on the streets.

The underlying thrust is to construct a Haitian practical theology that is simultaneously critical and robustly theological. Drawing from various aspects of Haitian history and lived experience, this practical theology aims to fill a conspicuous gap in the literature as far as Haitian voices are concerned. The introduction has two parts. The first part tackles the practice of using phenomenology and hermeneutics as practical theological methodology/method. It demonstrates not only the need for a Haitian practical theology but offers the rationale and steps on how to proceed. The philosophical basis for the idea of encounter is discussed fully in this section.

The second part of the first chapter makes the case for the hermeneutical theo-poetical manner in which Haitian history and lived experience are interpreted throughout the current text. It draws principally from Paul Ricoeur's essay "Naming God" to lift up the way in which practical theological language presupposes a surplus of meaning whenever it names God. This surplus of meaning always proceeds over and against the presumed sacredness of religious texts, places, and peoples. The hope of this approach is to free Haitian lived experience from the burden of abiding as a matter of preliminary concern to texts, concepts, and traditions that were written with someone else in mind and which fail to participate sufficiently in the Haitian struggle.

The second chapter lays the groundwork. It draws directly from the voices of the people as they try to make sense of their lived experience. Of great significance are the

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people's continued responses to the earthquake that ravaged the country on January 12, 2010. Paralleling the earthquake, *Goudougoudou*, with colonial history, and using the earthquake itself as a theological motif – the *Goudougoudou* motif – the second chapter demonstrates that redemption remains outstanding for all of Haiti's victims.

The third chapter foreshadows the sixth and final chapter in its consideration of language as a *place* to encounter God in Haiti. It engages a number of thinkers, notably Martin Heidegger, Emmanuel Lévinas, and Jean-François Lyotard, among others, to show how language is not so much the place of encounter but the "brother" who yearns for justice and who speaks in hope. The fourth chapter titled "Encountering God in the Footsteps of the Ancestors," is an invitation to mythical thinking. It is a continuation of the conversation in the third chapter and proposes the mythical space as the location in which the language of encounter is effective.

The fifth chapter is titled "Encountering God in the *Rèstavèk* Experience," and it is a heuristic approach to doing theology by reflecting to the *rèstavèk* her own words. The chapter also elaborates on the *rèstavèk* experience in both theological and philosophical language as a way to show that the lesson has been learned and personalized. This chapter might come off as unorthodox for a dissertation. However, it represents a very intentional effort to speak from the perspective of the conscientious oppressor. Works of theology typically speak about the oppressed. At times, they allow the voice of the oppressed to be heard by citing their testimonies, songs, and other forms of expression. Less popular, however, is an effort by the oppressor to speak to the oppressed using the language of the oppressed, as in the way a teacher makes her students verbalize what they learned as proof of their attention. A significant aspect of this exercise is the confession

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that ensues as the oppressor recognizes in the face of the oppressed the marks of his abuse. This produces a deeply spiritual exercise that is itself worthy of encounter. In this, it supports the notion of practical theology as spiritual exercise[6] for the practical theologian is simultaneously author and addressee of her or his reflections.[7]

Chapter six considers the encounter with God in the midst of evil. It proposes justice as the solution to the evil that has marred Haitian lived experience since colonial times. Justice ensues as the basis for postcolonial practical theology in Haiti.

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[6] Tom Beaudoin writes, "the turn to practical theology…is an opportunity to recover theological work as a spiritual exercise. He continues, "Practical theology is the approach that today is poised to make the importance of the theologian's relation to self for theologizing a topic of rigorous intellectual inquiry. Practical theologians can radicalize their practical turn all the way – back to themselves in their relationships, to the way theologians themselves practice their subjectivity through their research and writing, and deals with power, even perhaps including…our own internalized fascisms." Tom Beaudoin, *Witness to Dispossession: The Vocation of a Post-modern Theologian* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2008), 72.

[7] "In our intellectual work…we theologians are addressees of our authorship." Beaudoin, *Witness to Dispossession*, 73.

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Acknowledgements

The dissertation writing process is a communal effort. This constitutes one of the most important discoveries of Ph.D. studies. That this discovery is the fruit of studies in practical theology makes it all the more significant. The beginning point of the process is undeterminable as the scholar draws insights from all of life, the scholar's own, and those of others, including the quick and the dead. The scholar's influences then are legion and the community, in every way, indispensable. This makes the writing process in itself a deeply theological exercise, which tightens the scholar's bond with the community even as the scholar challenges the community to new ways of thinking and being in the world.

Such is the understanding from which I offer my thanks to you, parent, sibling, aunt, uncle, niece, cousin, nephew, friend, pastor, mentor, teacher, student, colleague, you who have thought of me, taught me, loved me, fed me, prayed for me, laughed and/or wept with me, argued with me, tarried with me, employed me, learned from me, encouraged and challenged me, opened the door when I knocked, wrote checks to me, and most importantly, walked with me empathically as though bearing on your own shoulders the burdens that lay upon my own. You know who you are, and I thank you.

I wish to acknowledge those who have chosen to tie their names and reputation to my fate. I refer to the members of my dissertation committee. I thank you Drs. Cheryl Bridges Johns, Terry Veling, and Terry Rey. I owe much of my success as a scholar to the indefatigable efforts of my committee chair and friend, Dr. Bryan Froehle. I leave for last the name that is above all others, the one who walks with me daily, in sickness and in

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health, in richness and (mostly) in want, Danielle Nicole Buteau, my wife, my friend, and my honor. Thank you, Darling. To God be the glory and to Haiti, life.

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Dedication

To all who dream of a just Haiti

and to Lègba, who dares lead the way.

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Tables of Contents:

Abstract v

Preface vi

Acknowledgement xii

Dedication xiv

Chapter I:

Introduction, Part I

Methodological Considerations: The Ways of Encounter

Parsing the Problem 1

An Epicurean Consciousness? 7

The Theological Significance of Haiti:

Methodological Considerations of *Goudougoudou* 11

Memory and the Margins 14

Defining Postcolonial Theology 17

Decoloniality as De-linking 18

The Basis for Haitian Postcolonial Theology 20

Dynamics of Phenomenology as Practical Theological Method

Practical Theology as Critical and

constructive Engagement 23

Understanding Encounter 26

The Way of Death 29

Encounter in Practical Theology 31

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Encounter as Practical Theological Method 33

Introduction, Part II

Revelation, the Poetic, and the Name of God 34

Poetic Language and Religious Discourse 35

"Letting go" as Hermeneutical Method 37

Jesus versus God 39

Reclaiming Poetic Language 40

Implications for Truth 42

Implications for Revelation:

The Mystery of the Gift 44

Implications for Practical Theology 46

Chapter Two – Encountering God in Haitian History 50

Redeeming Hope 55

The 'God' of Haitian History 61

Goudougoudou as Calamity 66

Goudougoudou as Theological Motif 71

Worlds Converge in the *Goudougoudou* Motif 74

The Legacy Continues 81

Goudougoudou as Redemption 83

Chapter Three – Encountering God in Language 87

The Breaking of the Corn 87

The Anatomy of Corn? 90

"And Who is my neighbor?" 93

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Language as Solidarity 98

Language as Revelation? 101

'Brother' as Practical Theological Motif 107

Chapter Four – Encountering God in the Footsteps of the Ancestors

The First Steps 112

Discovering the Mythical in the Public 121

Prayer contra Prayer 125

Suspecting Death! 128

Redeeming Myth 132

The Need to Learn from Others 133

The Mythical Dimension of Encounter as the Possibility of Salvation for the Ancestor and the Pilgrim

The Pilgrim's Vocation 135

The Pilgrim's Regress 136

The *Gifting* of Myth 137

Chapter Five – Encountering God in the *Rèstavèk* Experience 142

The Birth of a *Rèstavèk* 143

The Beginning is the End! 144

Equal Access to God? 148

A Broken Promise, A Stolen Hope 149

Were You a Slave? 151

Thirty Years a Slave? 153

Confession to a *Rèstavèk* 156

المنارة للاستشارات
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This is my Body! 159

Wherefrom Comes My Salvation? 162

Love is not the End! 164

Chapter Six – Encountering God in the Midst of Evil

An Indispensable Portal 167

Man Versus *Taptap* 168

Mimicking Perversion 169

Staring Haiti in the Faces of Women 173

Pawòl Granmoun for Women 177

The Water Seller’s Plight 179

The Water Seller’s Secret 182

Juxtaposing Dialectics 185

The Phenomenology of Evil 188

The Offending Haitian Body 191

Death as Ultimate Witness:

“Is there life before death?” 194

The Way of Mourning as the

Contradictions’ Possible Resolution 202

The Pilgrim Returns to the Abyss 204

Love, Power, Justice, and Love 206

Epilogue 209

Bibliography 213

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CHAPTER ONE:

Introduction, Part I

Methodological Considerations: The Ways of Encounter[8]

You feel you are hedged in; you dream of escape; but beware of mirages. Do not run or fly away in order to get free: rather dig in the narrow place which has been given you; you will find God there and everything. God does not float on your horizon, he sleeps in your substance. Vanity runs, love digs. If you fly away from yourself, your prison will run with you and will close in because of the wind of your flight; if you go deep down into yourself it will disappear in paradise.

—— *Gustave Thibon*[9]

Parsing the Problem

The continued disavowal of Haitian religious experience lies at the heart of the practical theological problem under consideration. In question is not only the religiosity of the Haitian people but also their very way of being and knowing. The phenomenon of

[8] Christian theologians are unequivocal on this point: God desires to have a relation with humanity. They agree that encounter with God is not only possible but, in fact, necessary for human flourishing, though their positions vary as to the form the encounter takes. The doctrine of revelation entails this divine "turning" to and disposition toward humanity. Karl Barth, *The Humanity of God* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 37. "[God] gives himself to be known by [humanity] as he knows himself." Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics Vol 2* (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 14. For Barth, faith, which constitutes humanity's response when confronted by this divine posturing issued from grace, is humanity's proper response to the revelation. It constitutes humanity's "turning" toward God, the human "Yes" to divine confrontation; the necessary mark that humanity belongs to and has surrendered to God (10). For Rahner, the revelation of God, which is coextensive with human history, is coextensive with God's offer of salvation to humanity. The history of the world, then, means the history of salvation for those who turn to God. "Anyone who does not close himself to God…through sin…finds his salvation." Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1978), 143. Kathryn Tanner proposes a relation between God and humanity that is akin to the relationship between desire and attainment. Humanity desires what God alone can provide. "God did not make us creatures for whom the vision of God would mean nothing, but creatures for whom that vision means everything; and therefore our nature demands it, yearns for it, tends to it, as if our very life depended on it." Kathryn Tanner, *Christ the Key* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 117.

[9] As quoted in Gabriel Marcel, *Homo Viator* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1951), 28.

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encounter, which undergirds the entire argument that is developed in the following pages, then, in addition to suggesting a distinct religiosity among the Haitian people, also raises significant epistemological questions for the possibility of a Haitian practical theology. Encounter thus suggests a certain consciousness, or at least, the possibility thereof, whose features will become clear as the argument unfolds.

To begin, consider the epigraph. First are an acknowledgement of the feelings and an affirmation of the dreams of the interlocutor. "You feel…you dream." Very quickly follows a warning: "Beware – of mirages!" Then three specific instructions follow, two negative and one affirmative, all three imperative: "Do not run!" "Do not fly!" "Dig!" The next clause contains a triple promise, a what – "you will find," a who – "God" and a where – "there!" The first part of the promise can be broken into at least three separate ideas. The "you" is a true subject. It evokes the vocative, that is, it addresses the interlocutor directly, as a genuine subject. This is the same "you" that feels and dreams. The same "you" is also implied in the commands "do [you] not run!," "do [you] not fly!," and "dig [you]!" The structure of the imperative itself expresses considerable insight when each word's role is weighed in close relation to the vocative "you."

For instance, "do" as an auxiliary verb indicates action even with the interjection of the "not" of negation in the command "do [you] not run or fly." The "not" in fact acts upon the "do" and applies to the "run" and "fly" of the command only because of the effect of the "not" on the "do." This is significant for it suggests that running or flying is meaningless in the absence of a deciding subject. Working with the statement backwards reveals as much. "Run" or "fly" alone expresses a very general idea but conveys no

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meaning alone. "Not run or fly" does the same. But "do not run or fly" expresses a complete thought and an action because it implies a subject.

This analysis is intended to show how the very structure of language anticipates the possibility of subjecthood for the addressee. In fact, the subjecthood of the addressor remains uncertain until the addressor addresses the other as subject. Put differently, the "I" affirms its own subjecthood when it addresses the other as subject. The "you" presupposes the addressing "I" as much as the "I" anticipates the addressed "you."

These ideas are of course not new, and they will recur in other parts of this work. The point here is to show the absolute logical necessity of the "you," which is also an absolute "I" relative to the addressing "you." The second idea in the promise "you will find" obtains in the auxiliary verb "will." "Will" is closely related to "you." Though "will" designates the future, it in actuality affirms the present. "Will" is meaningless in the absence of an enduring presence. Like a reflecting mirror, it affirms the present by pointing beyond presence to that which is absent in and to presence. In this sense, it affirms the interlocutors' subjectivity as a phenomenon that spans the entirety of existentiality in spite of temporality. In "will" as in past and present, the present, the past, and the future are present. The "you" that *is* is identical with the "you" that *is* not to run or fly, that is, that *wills* not to run or fly. The command not to run or fly affirms the subjectivity of the commanded. The command then is primarily not about running or flying. Rather, the command is about the "you" becoming aware of its subjecthood and, thereby, to realize that its prison is in fact *its* prison, that is, it is a reflection of its inability to see more than the prison or to contemplate any action other than escape or

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flight. "Will" then also means "to will" in this instance. The command not to run and the affirmative "you will" in effect activate the imagination.

The validity of this insight reveals itself more clearly in the command to "dig." In this forceful command, the one who acknowledges, affirms, and commands, also empowers. By proposing alternatives to the self's inclinations, it puts into question the self's perception of its state of affairs while inspiring the self to see more. The command to dig comes at a time when the self sees no other way but out. It wants to run. That the self has dreamed of running means that the self has planned on running. This suggests that by activating the imagination the command to dig also creates the possibility of digging, a possibility the self on its own has failed to consider.

The third idea embedded in the first part of the promise, "find," like "run" in "do not run," is meaningless in the absence of a willing "you." Finding happens only in the state of awareness. It happens to subjects. The first idea of the tripartite promise, the what of the promise also conceals a who. It in fact produces in the addressee the condition which the promise presupposes and anticipates both in the person of the addressee and in the language of the promise.

This leads to the more conspicuous who of the promise: "you will find – God." Finding from digging is logical. Finding God from digging is less logical. Why offer "God" as an answer if God is not part of the question? Now one answer that readily asserts itself is that all along, the self's aim has been to reach God whether by escaping or by digging. God appears as the answer of the self's crisis. That would not be a bad answer though illogical. In fact, that would be a good Sunday school answer. Jumping

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readily to God shows faith and fulfills the duty of the religious to make God the answer of all existential questions.

However, the conflation of existential questions and theological answers is problematic.[10] To presume that God was the self's concern all along is also to presume that the self can dig for God the way miners dig for gold. Such a conclusion, however, goes against the idea of correlation. But there is hope because God alone reveals God.[11] The appearance of God in and through digging is possible only insofar as God is involved in the digging. That fulfills the requirement for correlation, that is, encountering God becomes a possibility. In fact, this possibility is the primary aim of religion, but only because it presupposes God at every turn, not as the presumed answer to an unformed question, but as the possibility of a life that is fully aware of its subjectivity and which responds to God in the midst of its ultimate concern.[12]

The point of this analysis is not to romanticize anxiety and the state of being imprisoned or pretend to understand the reasons that compel some to escape in spite of the command to dig. In fact, it behooves a return to the helpful quote to consider the philosopher's words of caution, which remain to be investigated. The epigraph's stern warning, "Beware of mirages!" suggests that other options besides digging and other than running may present themselves to the self in crisis. Inaction based on some fatalism is one possibility. Now mirages are optical illusions. They are objects of the minds' creation. Need intensities the force of the mirage. But that the voice which commands

[10] "Existential questions and theological answers are independent of each other." Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 2:14.
[11] "God is manifest only through God." Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 2:14.
[12] "The personal encounter with God and the reunion with him are the heart of all genuine religion. It presupposes the presence of a transforming power and the turn toward the ultimate from all preliminary concerns." Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 2:86.

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and the voice that cautions are one and the same, however, suggests that even in the mirage, the possibility of encountering God persists, which justifies the presumption that God is present as much with those who fall prey to the allure of the mirage as with those who choose to dig. This is the very essence of grace, that is, the possibility of encountering God, whether as the fruit of strenuous digging or as the result of an unfortunate illusion.[13]

To dig into the self, then, as the author of the epigraph suggests, might be the self's best option. This is the third idea, the "there," in the above tripartite promise. The afflicted self that reaches into itself, into the infinite space of nothing-ness, discovers the artificiality of being as infinite distance. Two things become clear: first, as the epigraph suggests, flying or running is a most restrictive option, for "your prison will run with you and will close in because of the wind of your flight." Second, God has a knack for the uninhabitable. In this, the self is privy to another crucial insight concerning the commanding voice who promises "God" as the fruit of the self's digging: it is in fact the voice of God, which suggests that God was involved in the crisis from the beginning. That which ensues, then, is a re-imagination of homelessness or imprisoned-ness as the possible locus of epistemic singularity, whereby the self – the anguished, colonized, and oppressed self – discovers that the nature of its substance is coextensive with the activity of God. As it were, God claims the self's horizon and "sleeps in [its] substance,"[14] which,

[13] The words of Tom Beaudoin in describing the vocation of the practical theologian speak to this situation of grace. He writes, "what we share with our students, uncomfortably, is the complicated and obscure travail of intimacy with God, the uncanny concrete individual knowledge of the divine whose logic…[is] the mysterious gift of desolation and consolation that not even the holiest among us can predict, our now passionate, now resigned, now outraged orientation to the uncontainable, the life of grace." Beaudoin, *Witness to Possession*, 74.

[14] For Marcel, incarnation is of the essence of the *ego*, a modality it. He expalins "cannot escape without…losing itself among the mirages of abstraction." Marcel, *Homo Viator*, 28.

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in the words of René Depestre, transforms this prison into “a place of hope.”[15] The self’s prison is in effect the pathway to God.

This idea confirms Paul Ricoeur’s saying that imagination has the “power to open us to new possibilities, to discover another way of seeing, or acceding to a new rule in receiving the instruction of the exception.”[16] It also affirms the spirit of the epigraph, namely that the encounter with God pertains to the very substance of the subject for subjecthood for the colonized entails the ability to see and to know both the self and God in new ways. Put differently, perceiving and experiencing the world by the colonized subject is a matter of to be and not to be, that is, it is a matter of (normative) subjective truth, and if truth, then justice.[17] In this interplay of subjective knowledge and subjective truth lies the possibility of a corresponding ethos, a language, as it were, which expresses even as it affirms the voices and concerns of the colonized.

An Epicurean Consciousness?

This new mode of knowing is the hallmark of decoloniality for it means the creation of a new subject in history whose features correspond with their own history, lived experience, and aspirations. From an anthropological standpoint, this idea finds a parallel in the Epicurean tripartite notion of *phusiologia* which evokes in the first place the practice of *paraskeuē,*[18] that is, anticipatory action in light of life’s struggles. It

[15] «*La prison cette nuit est un lieu d’esperance*.» René Depestre, *Gerbe de sang* (Port-au-Prince: Imprimerie de l’Etat, 1946), 41.
[16] Paul Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative, and Imagination* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 281.
[17] “Truth is in effect not separable from intelligibility; to know is not simply to record, but always to comprehend.” Emmanuel Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2012), 82. This is the first citation. It needs a full citation here.
[18] Epicurus, *Letters, Principal Doctrines, and Vatican Sayings* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964), 45.

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suggests the ability to anticipate the disposition which is required to overcome those struggles.[19]

The second effect of *phusiologia* is expressed in the notion of *autarkeia*. It denotes self-confidence and a determination to value the self as an originary source of wisdom and knowledge.[20] Finally, *phusiologia* evokes notions of courage, self-confidence, and self-reliance. In sum, it is simultaneously constitutive and institutive of transformative practices, which tie subjectivity and the possibility of happiness together into a single practically determined existential motif.[21]

These three thinkers, Thibon, Ricoeur, and Epicurus, all insist on the practice of looking to the self and therefrom to uncover and construct further practices that issue in authentic freedom.[22] The author of the epigraph in fact intimates that freedom comes through digging.[23] Only in digging does the prison disappear, which suggests that freedom entails much more than the absence or removal of the prison's walls just as

[19] "*Paraskeuē* is the equipping, the preparation of the subject and the soul so that they will be properly, necessarily, and sufficiently armed for whatever circumstance of life may arise…The function of *phusiologia* is, then, *paraskeuein*, to provide the soul with the necessary equipment for its struggle, for its objective and its victory." Foucault, *Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 240. Needs a full citation here.

[20] "It is to be satisfied with oneself, again in a negative and positive sense. Negative: that is to say, they will need nothing other than themselves. However, at the same time, they will find a number of resources within themselves, and the possibility in particular of experiencing pleasure and delight in the full relationship they will have with themselves." Foucault, *Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 241.

[21] This third aspect of *phusiologia* makes "the subject into a free subject who finds within himself the possibility and means of his permanent and perfectly tranquil delight." Foucault, *Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 241.

[22] This represents an introspective application of the idea which Placide Tempels expounds for his fellow Europeans concerning the African way of being in the world. This idea might be taken further to postulate, as Tempels does with the Bantu, an active philosophical system at work among Haitians. For Tempels, this system is essential to the very humanity of the Bantu. Placide Tempels, *La Philosophie Bantoue* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1961), 16. Further research can articulate, if possible, the features of such a system and explicate the degree to which it should be incorporated into Haitian practical theology.

[23] This digging is similar to Metz's idea of running. Both center on the primacy of praxis. Johann Baptist Metz, *Faith in History and Society: Toward A Practical Fundamental Theology* (New York: Herder and Herder, 2007) 151.

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enslavement is not a necessary synonym for the absence of freedom.[24] Slave and free are not mutually exclusive realities. The same applies to the polarity lost and saved in biblical parlance. Narrowly conceived freedom does not preclude suppression.[25]

The turn to the self is akin to accessing a source of power, which, for one reason or another, has remained heretofore inaccessible or unintelligible.[26] The winds of authentic freedom do not exacerbate the conditions of the subject's incarceration nor do they merely dis-immure the self. Rather, they blow in the direction of the subject and perhaps into the subject, unleashing the "force" that determines the subject's very being[27] and as in the Hebrews' imagining of the creation of humankind, activate subjectivity's alethic character, creating subjects out of otherwise derelict entities.

Needless to say, the condition of the colonized is identical with the prison that maintains the subject in a state of dereliction. Subjective integrity and the possibility of flourishing then obtain as paramount features of decoloniality, and the convergence of

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[24] "Slavery is not equivalent to the absence of freedom…If taking someone's freedom does not make him a slave, then merely giving him his freedom back is also not sufficient to terminate that degradation. Setting him free may in fact be the easiest and smallest part of what has to be done to restore a man from that position." Frithjof Bergmann, *On Being Free* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1991), 8.

[25] "The constitution of subjectivity, in a strong sense, through historical practices that are caught up in power relations, means that subjectivity is always already tensioned, agonistic, strung up through competing discourses made of practices trying to form us in the truth of ourselves. The emphasis here is not on subjectivity as something *formed* pacifically by cultural practices, but something *contested* in and through them…highlighting the ambiguity of all power-knowledge practices within even the most seemingly liberative subjectivities." Beaudoin, *Witness to Dispossession*, 68.

[26] "Foucault argues that practices are the way we are governed and govern ourselves, because power circulates through how and what we can know about ourselves and our world, and that power circulates through practices…producing the world of identity, relationship, responsibility, and obedience that we then most often take to be simply given. In a deep sense, the very 'organization of our practical knowledge,' our forms of perception, the experience we have of ourselves and others, and the categories we employ for that experience , are historically constituted through power-saturated practices, making us subject to the institutions that support and are supported by regnant form as of knowledge in particular times and places." Beaudoin, *Witness to Dispossession*, 67.

[27] In Bantu philosophy, force is synonymous with "the nature of being" for "'being is that which has force.'" Tempels, *La Philosophie Bantoue*, 35.

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their constituting parts is a source of practical "relational" knowing.[28] For Haitians, this means that Haitian subjective experience obtains as a source of "useful knowledge" that is normative for the possibility of any and all conclusions concerning Haitians, including their ways of encountering God.[29] Furthermore, this suggests that in subjectivity and in truth,[30] Haitian history and lived experience are indispensable for discerning criteria of intelligibility and appropriateness for all claims concerning the encounter with God among the Haitian people.[31]

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[28] Michel Foucault shows the necessity to maintain this tension between knowing and flourishing, or in Foucault's transliteration of the Greek terms between *epimeleia heautou*, meaning "care of oneself, attending to oneself, being concerned about oneself, etcetera," and "*gnōthi seauton* 'know thyself.'" Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* (New York: Picador, 2005), 2-3. "I think this is one of the most clear and distinct descriptions of what seems to me to be a general feature of this ethic of knowledge and truth, which is found again in the other philosophical schools, namely, that what is ruled out, the distinguishing point, the frontier established, does not affect, once again, the distinction between things of the world and things of human nature: it is a distinction in the mode of knowing (*savoir*) and in the way in which what one knows (*connaît*) about the gods, men, and the world can have an effect on the nature, I mean on the subject's way of dong things, on his *ethos*" (237).

[29] The idea of "useful knowledge" is related to the ethos that characterizes the dynamic relation between subjectivity and truth. Ethos as *ethopoios* "is something that possesses the quality of transforming an individual's mode of being." Foucault, *Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 237. Reflecting further on the occurrence of this idea in Plutarch, Foucault writes, "useful knowledge, knowledge in which human life is at stake, is a relational mode of knowledge that asserts and prescribes at the same time and is capable of producing a change in the subject's mode of being." Foucault, *Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 238. A new way of being and seeing does not suffice according to the criteria for decoloniality. It also requires a changed world, which offers a place in which new ways of being – thinking, seeing, perceiving, etc. – may flourish. As Mignolo asserts, "[L]iving is knowing and knowing is living. And when living is no longer possible, it requires a different epistemic path." Walter Mignolo, "Decolonizing Western Epistemology/Building Decolonial Epistemologies," in *Decolonizing Epistemologies: Latina/o Theology and Philosophy*, ed. Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz and Eduardo Mendieta (New York: Fordham, 2012), 20.

[30] "But the passion of the infinite is precisely subjectivity, and thus subjectivity becomes the truth." Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 181. "When subjectivity, inwardness, is the truth, the truth becomes objectively a paradox; and the fact that the truth is objectively a paradox shows in its turn that subjectivity is the truth" Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, 183.

[31] 'Criteria of intelligibility' and 'criteria of appropriateness' build from David Tracy's use of the terms. Tracy uses the terms to delimit the usefulness of the tools, critical methods, historical-critical methods, and social scientific methods, which theologians employ to "develop their enveloping understanding of the tradition through methodical explanation or to argue publicly for the need to correct the tradition at appropriate points." David Tracy, *Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 237.

Another important element to keep in mind has to do with the paradox that ensues in creating a new self: Haitians will create an *Other* out of their oppressors. Therefore, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's statement that "the colonizer constructs himself as he constructs the colony" applies to the Haitian people in reverse. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 203. Has a different year of publication in

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The Theological Significance of Haiti:

Methodological Considerations of *Goudougoudou*

From a methodological viewpoint, the above insights intimate the need for doubt and questioning in a colonized people's interactions with their lived experience. Questioning established knowledge, which lies at the heart of decoloniality, indicates dissatisfaction with the well entrenched answers and a desire to find more adequate knowledge,[32] which entails identifying and calling into question the very structures, which uphold the colonial spirit even in the absence of the colonialist.

As shown above, power or a claim to power figures at the center of this decolonizing practice of epistemological "de-linking."[33] Questioning indicates doubt and possibility. As Mignolo suggests, questioning designates the possibility of "learning to unlearn in order to relearn and rebuild."[34] Undergirding this thesis is the notion that knowledge and power are inseparable.[35] From this perspective, decolonizing

bibilograhy. For the time being, let it suffice to formulate two questions for later consideration: what does the encounter with God in Haitian history and lived experience mean for the Haitian people's oppressors? What does it suggest for their relationship with Christianity?

[32] Perhaps the epistemic disposition from which the questions emerge is a helpful initial criterion to determine the adequacy of future answers. Walter Mignolo, "Decolonizing Western Epistemology/Building Decolonial Epistemologies," in *Decolonizing Epistemologies: Latina/o Theology and Philosophy*, ed. Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz and Eduardo Mendieta (New York: Fordham, 2012), 20

[33] The question remains whether the Haitian people are able to ask the questions. If not, who gets to ask them and from whose perspective? Is it paternalistic to ask about the validity of particular questions? Mignolo proposes a delinking "from the theological and egological politics of knowledge in which Western modernity / rationality has been anchored." Mignolo, *Decolonizing Epistemologies*, 27.

[34] Mignolo identifies this "unlearning" as the first task of decolonizing epistemology. Mignolo, *Decolonizing Epistemologies*, 26. Otto Maduro avers that such thinking may produce 'counter-knowledges': alternative ideas, subversive discourses, dissident voices." However, he offers the following warning: "one of the tragedies and tendencies of all knowledge produced within and under relations of oppression, exclusion, domination, and exploitation is that inadvertently, surreptitiously, at least part of the ruling patterns, relations, conceptions, and / or values permeating the larger society might be reintroduced." Maduro proposes humility and critical dialogue to prevent recreating the status quo. Otto Maduro, "An(Other) Invitation to Epistemological Humility," in *Decolonizing Epistemologies: Latina/o Theology and Philosophy*, eds. Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz and Eduardo Mendieta (New York: Fordham, 2012), 88 and 102.

[35] "To know is always, at least implicitly, a claim to know…claiming to know something, to have knowledge, is thus always a kind of claim to power, a political move." Maduro, *Decolonizing*

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epistemologies is constitutive of a shift in priorities and power relations including the subject's relation with it-self. The very fact of existence is at stake in this matter.[36] The methodological thrust and warrant for the urgency with which this matter is treated in the following chapters is expressed theologically in the *Goudougoudou* motif, whose features are delineated in the next chapter. This theological motif originates from the experience of the earthquake that ravaged Haiti in 2010. The sustained questioning that characterizes the *Goudougoudou* motif's structure correlates both with the general inadequacy of the theological answers proposed historically and with the clear practical theological problems which the earthquake raises.

For this reason, the main question this study is investigating must be considered beyond the generalities or the rigid boundaries of doctrine or any of the usual *-isms*, particularly those *-isms* that value texts, places, or certain traditions above lived experience. The question seeks a way out of the confines (prison) of the traditional conceptions of soteriology and eschatology, or 'Kingdom of God' theologies, particularly due to the fact that those concepts and/or theologies tend to relativize the Haitian historical particularity, implicitly or explicitly, to the point of rendering it moot.[37] *Goudougoudou* upends those ecclesiastical predilections, catapults Haitian subjectivity to the epicenter of theological reflection, and seals Haitian lived experience in a place of irrevocable primacy. The spilled blood, the broken bodies, the muffled cries for help, the

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Epistemologies, 90. "The key to power is knowledge, and true power is held with the conviction that the ruler knows better than the rules and must convince the ruled that whatever the colonial master does is for the benefit of the ruled." R. S. Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Criticism and Biblical Interpretation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 15. "Once again, knowledge of subject races or Orientals is what makes their management easy and profitable; knowledge gives power, more power requires more knowledge, and so on in an increasingly profitable dialectic of information and control." Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 36.

[36] Tempels, *La Philosophie Bantoue*, 16.

[37] Karl Barth, among many others, falls in that latter category.

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aborted dreams, the limited literacy, the language problem,[38] the lack of political representation, the national and international elitism problem, among others, unapologetic and resolute, all witnesses of suffering's unbridled sway, become raw material for the construction of narratives that do justice to an experience that is waiting to speak its own truth.

In addition, the joys of daily life, the beauty of the land and of the sea, the fertility of the soil, the wisdom of both young and old and of the living and the dead, the courage to be, the songs of the laborer, and the continual gift of life, coalesce in a hopeful vision that Haitian lived experience is good. Perhaps that is the reason for the intensification of the question in the unresolved dialectic of presence and absence.

Put in more concrete terms, Haitian contemporary life is too faithful a reflection of times past, so tightly enmeshed are the events of today with the realities of history, and Haitian blood is too irreversibly bound to Haitian soil to be sifted, differentiated, and packaged into some purist form of religiosity, be it Christianity, Islam, or even Vodou, least of all, encapsulated uncritically in some one-size-fits-all vulgar concept, be it salvation, Spirit baptism, Vilokan, or heaven.[39] From this perspective, the problem of contextual priority is complex, and it claims foundational significance. *Goudougoudou* is a literal line in the sand but because it is a line that breaches the crust of the earth, its implications reach to the core of what it means to be Haitian. As a consequence, it is

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[38] The Kreyòl language is still a second-class language in Haitian society. Yet Kreyòl is the sole language of the majority. Arthur K. Spears and Carole M. Berotte Joseph, ed., *The Haitian Creole Language: History, Structure, Use, and Education* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2010), 61.

[39] The question does arise whether contemporary Haiti, or perhaps the future this study envisages, is to be described as post-Christian or post-Vodou. The argument so far does suggest that a rich Haitian theology must traverse the traditional theological boundaries, especially those, which the colonialists put in place. Bourdieu's theory of practice suggests that theologians must treat Vodou and Christianity with both care and suspicion. Terry Rey, *Bourdieu on Religion: Imposing Faith and Legitimacy* (Durham, UK: Acumen, 2007), 5.

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indispensable for the possibility of discerning the nature of the encounter with God in Haiti. Justice is central to this position. Justice in this context entails going beyond the usual *loci* of grammar and orthodoxy,[40] resisting the intrusion of borrowed narratives such as those of the bible in favor of the historical strivings of Haiti's people.

Memory and the Margins

The questions concerning the nature of the encounter with God in Haiti are intentionally broad. Overly broad questions do tend to elicit overly broad answers. However, broad questions have the potential to direct the reflection process to greater breadth, at the very least, to a degree that is commensurate with the degree of depth this study seeks to achieve. Thus, the breadth of the questions has methodological significance. In theological thinking, the very impression of openness may prove useful.

This approach makes room for marginal concerns to shape the process of decolonization.[41] It creates the possibility for questions from the margins to become the cognitive catalyst that reconstructs memory, helping to interrupt the occluding epistemological structures latent in western modes of knowing. In the margins figure the lived experience of the powerless, those whose participation is deemed insignificant.[42] The margins are also replete with the voices of the forgotten of history and those whose

[40] Robert J. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1985), 116. This seems to be the first citation so you need a full citation here.

[41] "[Decolonization] can only be understood, it can only find its significance and become self coherent insofar as we can discern the history-making movement which gives it form and substance…It focuses on and fundamentally alters being, and transforms the spectator crushed to a nonessential state into a privileged actor, captured in a virtually grandiose fashion by the spotlight of history. It infuses a new rhythm, specific to a new generation of men, with a new language and a new humanity." Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 2004), 2.

[42] Though Haitians have inhabited the margins from the beginning, they continue to have their own margins, an exteriority in the form of the *rèstavèk*, the slave substitute. The Haitian margins boast a level of complexity that will become apparent as the study progresses. At this early stage, suffice it to interject the following assertion by Westhelle. "To make a binary juxtaposition of oppressor and oppressed as the interpretative principle is naïve, at least, and, at most, deceptive to the point of being misleading about what is at stake." Vítor Westhelle, *After Heresy: Colonial Practices and Post-Colonial Theologies* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2010), 1.

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stories of suffering do not meet the level of importance to be remembered. The margins epitomize the mundane: that which the dominant culture takes for granted and deems unworthy of mention. Yet these very features of the margins imbue them with the quality of a *locus theologicus*, that is, as the point of departure for theological reflection that is new and fresh.[43]

According to Kwok Pui-lan, "memory," particularly as originating from the margins, "is a powerful tool in resisting institutionally sanctioned forgetfulness."[44] It deconstructs established narratives by confronting the "myths" adduced by history's victors.[45] Memory and narrative create cognitive space for the dead to participate in the living's self-understanding. They enable the creation and/or approbation of narratives that place the experience of the dead alongside the living in a position of hermeneutic significance.[46]

This approach to history and memory is accurately termed historical praxis. This idea lies at the core of liberation theology, and, according to Rebecca Chopp, it envisages

[43] "Margins are a strange window to the world; they offer to sight a perspective into the everyday even while luring the gaze to a different world that defies visualization. And precisely because of these reasons they are dangerous: they bring to sight what should not be revealed and entertain visions unsettling to the order of things. Thus societies live with the compulsive behavior of hiding their margins. They hide them because, as Mary Douglas observed, margins reveal the fragility of the entire social fabric and threaten its center. Therefore, the margins have a disturbing revelatory potential, the potential of disclosure and the power of exposure." Westhelle, *After* Heresy, 122.
[44] Kwok Pui-lan, *Postcolonial Imagination & Feminist Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 37. Gadamer describes memory as essential to finite existence. It is more than a mere "psychological faculty." Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Continuum, 2006), 14.
[45] Metz writes, "whoever hears the message of the resurrection of Christ in such a way that in it the cry of the crucified has become inaudible, hears not the Gospel but a myth of the victors." Johann Baptist Metz, *A Passion for God: The Mystical-Political Dimension of Christianity* (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), 126. Elsewhere Metz asserts, "Memory and narrative do not have their practical character without solidarity, and solidarity does not attain its specifically cognitive import without memory and narrative." Johann Baptist Metz, *Faith in History and Society: Toward A Practical Fundamental Theology* (New York: Crossroad, 2007), 183.
[46] See Metz, *Faith in History and Society*, 167. Deloria asserts, "[The] dead are not powerless." Vine Deloria, Jr., *God is Red: A Native View of Religion* (Golden, Colorado: Fulcrum Publishing, 1992), 174. The Bantu also recognize this ongoing dynamic between the living and the dead, although the force of the dead is diminished. «*Ainsi le langage courant des Bantous peut présenter les trépassés comme des êtres diminués, vivant d'une vie réduite.*» Tempels, *La Philosophie Bantoue*, 44.

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new ways of being in the world, "of being human in history."[47] Concerning this idea, Gutiérrez writes, "in this historical praxis there is more than a new consciousness of the meaning of economic activity and political action: there is also a new way of being man and woman in history."[48] Kwok Pui-lan concurs when she writes, "[this turn to] the historical imagination aims not only to reconstitute the past, but also to release the past so that the present is livable."[49] In the process, historical praxis becomes "liberating praxis" as nonpersons move toward human agency.[50]

Liberating praxis in this light is synonymous with decolonization. It correlates with irruption, with a breaking-in of the marginalized. For Gutiérrez, that means for the marginalized to "give expression themselves to their sufferings, their comraderies, their plans, their hopes."[51] If colonization is synonymous with "thingification,"[52] then decolonization also enjoins a creative process by which 'things' take on humanness.[53]

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[47] Rebecca S. Chopp, *The Praxis of Suffering: An Interpretation of Liberation and Political Theologies* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2007), 49.

[48] Gustavo Gutiérrez, "Faith As Freedom: Solidarity with the Alienated and Confidence in the Future," *Horizons 2* (Spring 1975), 36-7. See also Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The Power of the Poor in History* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1983).

[49] Kwok, *Postcolonial Imagination*, 37.

[50] "A society that cannot remember and honor its past is in peril of losing its soul." Deloria, *God is Red*, 272.

[51] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2010), xx. In the Haitian context, the term irruption meets with ambiguity. The ambiguity surrounds Gutiérrez's apparent use of the term in a descriptive manner. He writes, "Our time bears the imprint of the new presence of those who in fact used to be 'absent' from our society and from the church." The Haitian situation requires nuance. Perhaps a prescriptive tone is more apropos.

[52] Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000), 42.

[53] Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, 42. Don Browning likens a people's narrative to their history. He adds, "But it is more than just the sequence of events that make up that history. A narrative is the story that a group tells to give significance to a particular sequence of events." Don Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology: Descriptive and Strategic Proposals* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 124.

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Defining Postcolonial Theology

The Postcolonial-Liberational Link

Postcolonial criticism and decoloniality are related but distinct. Homi Bhabha's definition of postcolonial criticism still stands. It states, "postcolonial criticism bears witness to the unequal and uneven forces of cultural representation involved in the contest for political and social authority within the modern world order."[54] Bhabha goes on to identify those who prospectively engage in postcolonial criticism as those from "Third World countries" and minority groups that call into question the normalizing tendencies of hegemonic powers and expose the shadow sides of modernity.[55] From this perspective, the postcolonial shares certain characteristics with the postmodern insofar as they both call into question the assumptions of the modern project with its "totalizing tendencies."[56] Stanley Grenz's characterization of postmodernism holds true for postcolonialism. He writes, "whatever else it might be, as the name suggests, postmodernism signifies the quest to move beyond modernism. Specifically, it involves a rejection of the modern mind-set, but under the conditions of modernity."[57]

In the context of biblical interpretation, postcolonial criticism has become the lens through which to read and engage biblical texts for some scholars. For R.S. Sugirtharajah, it is a way "to situate colonialism at the centre of the Bible and biblical interpretation."[58] In rejecting modern hegemonic tendencies and in prioritizing the experiences of the oppressed, postcolonialism or postcolonial criticism shares important

[54] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 246.
[55] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 246.
[56] Mayra Rivera, *The Touch of Transcendence: A Postcolonial Theology of God* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 10.
[57] Stanley J. Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 2.
[58] Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Criticism*, 25.

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characteristics with liberation theology. In fact, postcolonial theology is sometimes viewed as a "supplement" to liberation theology.[59] Perhaps that is due to the fact that postcolonial criticism and liberation theology share a common starting point in modern thought. This relation to modernity is perhaps the most distinguishing characteristic between decoloniality and postcolonialism, and by extension, liberation theology.

Decoloniality as De-linking

Decoloniality is concerned most principally with advancing new modes of knowing in order to create new knowledge that is untainted by the modern project. It seeks to decolonize the systems of knowledge that are based on Eurocentric modes of knowing. It is intended to change both the rules of the knowledge/power dynamic as well as the terms of the conversation. Its principal aim is to create new epistemologies and dismantle the centers of power along epistemic, political, social, and economic lines. In practice, it embodies a total rejection of western epistemologies. Drawing from insight into the relation between knowledge and power, it treats Euro-centrism, capitalism, and imperialism as members of a "complex of power" that must be rejected while advocating for the creation of new social and economic systems based on the principle 'living in harmony.' Liberation theology and Marxism are unsuspecting victims of this matrix of power. Another crucial characteristic of decoloniality is its critical stance toward Christianity. It treats Christian theology as an accomplice of colonialism. In defense of this critical position, Mignolo writes, "the colonial matrix of power, put in place in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, was framed in and by Christian theology."[60]

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[59] Catherine Keller, *God and Power: Counter-Apocalyptic Journeys* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 99. In this sense, liberation theology and postcolonial theology intersect Minjung theology. See Anne Joh, *Heart of the Cross: A Postcolonial Christology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), xxi.
[60] Mignolo, *Decolonizing Epistemologies*, 19-43.

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The lines between postcolonialism and decoloniality are not clearly drawn, especially within theology. Some theologians engage liberation theology as a matter of course while doing postcolonial theology. Wonhee Anne Joh, Mayra Rivera, and Vítor Westhelle are three examples.[61] Others, such as Sugirtharajah, criticize liberation theology, particularly Gustavo Gutiérrez, for ingratiating modern thinkers and for using a modernity inspired biblical hermeneutics and for its textualism.[62] From this position, Sugirtharajah's postcolonialism resembles Mignolo's decoloniality or decolonizing epistemology. Mignolo writes,

> To extricate oneself (to de-link from modernity/rationality) means to de-link from the Right, the Left and liberation theology. It means simply that the decolonial options need to be asserted in order to 'extricate oneself' not only from the imperial/dominating option but also from current Western liberating options such as Marxism and theology of liberation. Decolonizing epistemology means in the long run, liberating thinking from sacralized texts, whether religious or secular.[63]

Both postcolonial and decolonial language will be used in the current study. Decoloniality may reject liberation theology and locate itself beyond the postcolonial, but it does so from the privileged position, which liberation theology and postcolonial criticism have created with great pain. In the Haitian context, liberation theology made an appearance in the *ti legliz* movement championed most visibly in the speeches, sermons, and political activism of Jean-Bertrand Aristide, former Salesian priest and former

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[61] See Wonhee Anne Joh, *Heart of the Cross: A Postcolonial Christology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), Mayra Rivera, *The Touch of Transcendence: A Postcolonial Theology of God* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), and Vítor Westhelle, *After Heresy: Colonial Practices and Post-Colonial Theologies* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2010).
[62] R. S. Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Criticism*, 112-115.
[63] Mignolo, *Decolonizing Epistemologies*, 25-26.

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president of Haiti.[64] Arguably, Aristide's efforts produced no lasting fruit either in the religious or the political sphere. Protestant ministers in turn showed little to no interest in engaging liberation theology. The challenge before Haitian theologians, philosophers, and/or critical theorists is to adopt a more pragmatic approach and engage all possible sources as they lay the foundations for a Haitian theology. This foundation necessarily includes the perspectives of Vodouisant scholars who are theologians and philosophers in their own right.[65] The addition of those fresh voices will likely problematize the Haitian religious field in a way that will produce rich conversations across confessional and ideological lines, and hopefully contribute to a more just Haiti.

The Basis for Haitian Postcolonial Theology

From the standpoint of a postcolonial practical theology the Haitian irruption entails the deployment of a new historical consciousness to reimagine the nature of the Haitian encounter with God.[66] Reimagining entails taking a fresh look at the operating sources of Haitian theology including the Bible and its corollary symbols and acknowledging the ways in which they have occluded the Haitian theological voice. Reimagining also means to reconsider the elements that have been condemned to

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[64] The *Ti legliz* or "small church" movement refers to the liberation-oriented base community organization movement that has been prevalent in other parts of Latin American. For more detail, see Terry Rey, *Our Lady of Class Struggle: The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Haiti* (Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, Inc., 1999), 68-77.

[65] Concerning the need to expound on questions of Vodou hermeneutics and theology, Bellegarde-Smith and Michel enjoin, "These are some of the fields we hope to research in the future…if Vodou is to be given its place alongside all religions, on a par with all others." Patrick Bellegarde-Smith and Claudine Michel, ed. *Haitian Vodou: Spirit, Myth, and Reality* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), xx.

[66] "Religious experience gives meaning to colonial subjects' history of struggle while also opening the door for the development of identities that challenge imposed identities and stereotypes. It opens the door for the discovery of historical consciousness…Religious experiences open up the imagination of the community to new identities, as these experiences become cultural processes that bring together historical memories and everyday life experiences." Hjamil A. Martínez-Vázquez, "The Act of Remembering: The Reconstruction of U.S. Latina/o Identities by U.S. Latina/o Muslims," in *Decolonizing Epistemologies: Latina/o Theology and Philosophy*, ed. Ada María Isasi-Díaz & Eduardo Mendieta (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012), 134-135.

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insignificance such as Vodou and its corollary symbols and retrieving therefrom elements that may have been suppressed or altogether abrogated but yet remain vital to the possibility of Haitian flourishing. The point is not to romanticize any one tradition at the expense of truth but to allow all the voices to speak their own truth. The goal is to look to Haiti for the sources that speak to the nature of the people's encounter with God and to develop therefrom language that faithfully expresses the practical theological concerns implied in the lived experience of the people.

This may be the point at which this study parts ways with certain aspects of liberation theology. A number of liberation theologians envision a new Christianity out of the actions of the new subject of history.[67] That is a position that carries significant implications for Christian discipleship.[68] As Sugirtharajah argues, such a position is based on a hermeneutic of liberation, which, while rightly lifting the theme of liberation out of the biblical texts, "operates within the existing biblical approaches, and it accords God's self-disclosure through historical events in the life of Israel a primary status in its hermeneutical endeavors. It was this very model which was appropriated by missionaries and colonialists in order to subjugate and subdue other peoples' culture and history."[69]

The current study aims to construct a practical theology that is distinctively Haitian. Its loyalty to Christian orthodoxy remains open. Therefore, it resists the textualism and the appeals to orthodoxy that operate in liberation hermeneutics. Most Haitians can neither read nor write. Texts end, while life remains open at both ends.[70]

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[67] Gustavo Gutiérrez and Jon Sobrino are two prominent representatives. See Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2010), 106-120. See also Jon Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological View* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1998), 254-271.
[68] Chopp, *The Praxis of Suffering*, 62.
[69] R. S. Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Criticism*, 112-115.
[70] Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred*, 309.

للاستشارات
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Textualism as a hermeneutical point of departure goes against liberation theology's commitment to prioritize the community of the oppressed. In addition, cautionary remarks against compromising and betraying the Christian tradition, which Stephen Bevans deems "a real danger in contextualization"[71] carries little weight in this study's considerations of the human encounter with God in Haiti.

Therefore, this study adopts a skeptical position concerning the legitimacy of pre-established criteria for orthodoxy. The Haitian people have too much at stake to subject their theological reflections to strictly Christian ways of knowing, though such knowing may constitute a helpful point of departure for many people. Criteria for orthodoxy that call for alignment of intention with Christian tradition, alignment with right Christian praxis, and alignment with communal discernment, when applied universally, exclude significant aspects that shape the Haitian situation.[72] Those criteria are helpful in guiding communities that are strictly concerned with rightness of Christian belief and practice. However, those criteria disappoint when right Christian belief and practice constitute but a small part in a complex system, which in turn comprises a difficult process of self-assertion and identity formation. In these moments of deep seeking and discerning that constitute identity formation, Taylor's notion "God is love"[73] may lose its appropriateness as a criterion for orthodoxy, particularly when the experience of "God" has historically been shaped by disfavor and partiality. Identity formation problematizes

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[71] "There is no doubt that when a theologian takes context seriously, he or she can fall into the danger of taking these realities more seriously than the Judaeo-Christian tradition as expressed in scripture and church tradition." Stephen Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2011), 24.
[72] José M. de Mesa and Lode Wostyn, *Doing Theology: Basic Realities and Processes* (Manila: Maryhill School of Theology, 1982), 14-18. Robert Schreiter adduces five criteria of his own, which agree with those outlined by de Mesa and Wostyn. See Robert J. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1985), 117-121.
[73] Mark L. Taylor, *God Is Love: A Study in the Theology of Karl Rahner* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986). After Timothy R. Stinnett, Bevans recognizes a "basic religious proposal" in the phrase "God is love" whose affirmation is essential to Christian theology. Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual*, 23.

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the very criteria for criteria for orthodoxy. It has a relativizing effect on theological abstractions while simultaneously raising concrete experience to the same level traditionally reserved for dogmatic proclamations concerning the human condition in God's presumed plan of salvation.

Dynamics of Phenomenology as Practical Theological Method

Practical Theology as Critical and Constructive Engagement

For certain, the intensification brought about by questioning is significant, as it presses for further clarification of the object in question. After all, "one's research question specifies what one is looking for," that is, "question determines object." And as "object determines method,"[74] as suggests James Spickard, then the intelligibility of the question determines the appropriateness of the research method. However, practical theology problematizes the simple scheme of question – object – method by highlighting the inherent connectedness of its constitutive elements, and thereby, subjecting it to structural critique. As a theorization of practice,[75] practical theology is the line between the two points of a line segment. The end points are analogous to the inadequate practice that inspires practical theological questions and the enhanced practice toward which practical theological reflection endeavors. The distance between the two points is artificial and is hence invoked for its heuristic potential. The definiteness of the points suggests the necessary grounding of theological reflection in the absoluteness of Haitian

[74] James V. Spickard, "Phenomenology," in *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*, ed. Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler (New York: Routledge, 2014), 333.
[75] Elaine Graham, "Practical Theology as Transforming Practice," in *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology*, ed. James Woodward and Stephen Pattison (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell, 2000), 109. Theorization of practice also figures among Swinton and Mowat's six tasks of practical theological research. Also John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (London: SCM Press, 2011), 26.

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lived experience. This "practice-theory-practice"[76] scheme, which Don Browning champions in his work, is the justification for the prioritization of empirical description in practical theological research.[77]

The priority of practical theology is not so narrow as to promote one form of practice over another so concerned with promoting agendas that uphold the interests of those in power. Sometimes, practical theology's greatest contribution comes from its critical component as it promotes the discontinuance of certain practices, particularly practices that obstruct constructive engagement with useful insights and unfamiliar practices for fear of diluting the Christian message. The point is that practical theology is not the servant of traditionalism or oppressive power structures hence its great potential both for decolonizing established modes of knowing and basing theological reflection on knowledge acquired from engagement with the Haitian context.

The relationship between question and object then is organic and non-linear. From this perspective, the practical theological question determines the research object because the research object inspires the practical theological question. Therefore, the relation between the question and the object has logical priority over the relation between the object and the method because the existence of the question implies that of the object though the object alone enjoys ontological priority.

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[76] Don Browning is responsible for highlighting the foundational import of this conceptual scheme to "all theology." Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, 9. Liberation and political theologians have also championed this idea of the primacy of praxis. Gustavo Gutiérrez, Clodovis Boff, and Johann Baptist Metz are three important representatives of those traditions.

[77] Both Browning and Richard Osmer begin their practical theological methods with an explicit descriptive phase. See Browning, A *Fundamental Practical Theology*, 47. See also Richard Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 4. Gerben Heitink calls the first movement of his method "historical-interpretive," but its purpose is to "describe, analyze, and interpret" practical theology as a historical phenomenon. He applies his approach to the explanation of practical theology itself. Gerben Heitink, *Practical Theology: History, Theory, Action Domains* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), xvi, 5.

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The relegation of the method to a secondary level of signification is due to the conceptualization required in the development of the method. Conceptualization follows description. Nonetheless, though the method is secondary in logical terms and may be said to be at the service of the question-object complex whose nature *ipso facto* determines the appropriateness of the method, the method intrinsically determines the intelligibility of the question relative to the object. In all, practical theology requires the logical priority of the relation between the question and the object due to its integral aversion to unwarranted abstraction, but it recognizes the value of criteria of intelligibility, which requires a tighter bond between the question and the method, and by implication, the object. It is a logically circular scheme, but a scheme that is consistent with practical theology's aim both to understand and to change its object.[78]

In effect, the research question, "what is the nature of the encounter with God in Haiti?" emerges out of Haitian lived experience, the presumed object of the study, and it is laden with theories concerning God and the possibility of encountering God in a distinctively Haitian way. The language, which frames the question, expresses, in one form or another, notions that are meaningful for Haitians. If the answer to the question is important, then the question's components must be bearers of meaningful ideas for the people. The embeddedness of these ideas in daily practices, which will become evident as the study progresses, warrants the claim that they are indeed important. These ideas coalesce in the central idea of *encounter*, a term to which the discussion must now turn.

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[78] John Swinton and Harriet Mowat write, "The aim of practical theology is therefore not to understand the world but also to change it." Swinton, *Practical Theology*, 27. Paul Ricoeur draws the same conclusion about the gospel. He writes, "In its turn, understanding oneself in front of the text is not something that just happens in one's head or in language. It is what the gospel calls 'putting the word to work.' In this regard, to understand the world and to change it are fundamentally the same thing." Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred*, 234.

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Understanding Encounter

Encounter conjures up notions of the unexpected, that which is not exhausted by experience though correlative to it. Encounter does not necessarily implicate the divine. It may refer to what happens on a routine Saturday night. Someone may say, “I had a wonderful encounter last night.” By that he or she may mean to say, “Last night, I had a conversation better than ‘usual’ or beyond the usual chitchat.” Certainly, it may refer to a casual affair that culminates in an intensely bonding experience between friends or a sexual experience between lovers. What is clear is that the conversation partner and/or lover, the subject matter, or perhaps the context, make for an event whose effects are likely to leave a participant’s desire intractably whetted, having irreversibly altered the pattern of phenomena that a person may *reasonably* expect on any given encounter.

This expected unexpectedness is due to the character of the event as transformative, a feature that unsettles a participant’s ability to return to a pattern of life that is uninformed by the un-edging transcendentalizing interruption of the unexpected. Paradoxically, the event does nothing either to prepare the participant for an eventual encore, as encore implies repetition, which is categorically denied by encounter’s predilection for the infinite, or to re-produce the perceived dynamics of encounter by re-assembling its constitutive parts. Yet the experience is ordinary. Its constitutive parts suggest nothing ulterior to what can be grasped by the bare senses. Encounter remains undetermined, perhaps undeterminable though ineluctably mundane. It is infinition rendered sensible in paradox, hope reified in “a fiction of matter.”[79] These three

[79] Maya Deren, *Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti* ((New York: McPherson & Company, 2004), 21.

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integrated elements – the mundane, hope, and paradox – form the conceptual framework by which encounter may be interpreted as such.

Undetermined-ness[80] is not required of every part of an event, though it is essential to the encounter dynamic of all events. The above paragraph shows this much. That is not an absolute feature of encounter, nonetheless. At times, encounter pairs the strange with the perceivably unconscious or inanimate. At other times, it appears to transfigure or enigmatically conceal the familiar. Religious history's classic encounters feature strangers, plants, animals, and the elements such as water and wind: the Emmaus Road experience between a resurrected Christ and several pilgrims, the Buddha's *Bodhi* tree experience, Balaam's speaking ass, the storm at *Bois Caïman*, and the list goes on. In these instances, the narratives bearing witness to the events magnify the facts of the event with the seeming effect of a miraculous undertaking. However, if the mundane presumably determines the structure of all encounter, as suggested above, then these narratives must be praised for their ability to deploy the alethic power of the mythical and furnish the imagination with the language, namely the code, with which to operationalize the transcendentalizing character of the existential.

However, the nature of existence, those features in which subjectivity, defined by one thinker "as welcoming the Other, as hospitality," whereby subjectivity performs the "astonishing feat of containing more than it is possible to contain,'[81] in facilitating the

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[80] "Existence is indeterminate in itself because of its fundamental structure: in so far as it is the very operation by which something that had no sense takes on sense, by which something that had only a sexual sense adopts a more general signification, by which chance is transformed into reason, or in other words insofar as existence is the taking up of a *de facto* situation." Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (New York: Routledge 2014), 173.

[81] Emmanuel Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2012), 27.

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relation between the "tangible presence and the language of [the mythical],"[82] imbues the event-encounter with a feeling of being given only momentarily, more precisely, of being withheld or non-given, marking infinity's sway in the existential with every passing moment. Encounter thus assumes historical time's role of regulating the moment of passing, impregnating it with meaning, and affirming the simultaneity of the mundane with the perceivably adventitious, or the "consummation" of the infinite in the all encompassing dynamic of the encounter.[83] Very significantly, encounter strips the subject, the *ego*, of all claims, indeed, all right, to freedom and possession, including the *ego*'s claim to a self.[84] But the self, the historical subjective self, remains the possibility of encounter.

The qualifier 'wonderful,' by its association with an event-encounter, paradoxically takes on the nature of the qualified, while 'event-encounter' retains the role of qualifier, the proto-protagonist, as it were, for the ascription of 'wonderful' occurs *a posteriori.* Thus, ontological priority belongs to 'encounter,' relegating the adjective to a mark of embellishment, lacking substance except for that which the event-encounter imparts. Sufficient referents exist within existence to warrant anticipation in the process of experience, but the nature of an event-encounter is that it proffers something other than that which is visibly at work within experience. This sort of encounter is always *an* encounter and never *the* encounter, for encounter has a predilection for the infinite. It

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[82] Karl Jaspers and Rudolf Bultmann, *Myth and Christianity: An Inquiry into the Possibility of Religion without Myth* (New York: The Noonday Press, 1968), 19.
[83] Albert Einstein describes time in terms of simultaneous events. He writes, "We have to take account that all our judgments in which time plays a part are judgments of simultaneous events. If, for instance, I say, 'That train arrives here at 7 o'clock,' I mean something like this: 'The pointing of the small hand of my watch to 7 and the arrival of the train are simultaneous events.'" Albert Einstein, "On the Electrodynamics of Moving Bodies," in *A Stubbornly Persistent Illusion: The Essential Scientific Works of Albert Einstein*, ed. Stephen Hawking (Philadelphia: Running Press, 2007), 6.
[84] Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 76.

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resists the universalizing pretenses to de-finition as well as the restrictive patterns of repetition.[85] The indeterminacy of encounter establishes its correlation with existence itself, but in the latter's character as hope.[86] In all, encounter is universal in its reach, transformational in its end, noumenal as to its source, and undetermined as to its form and content. It is as personal as it is communal. It is undetermined from the standpoint of all but determined for all. In all, it is analogous with death.

The Way of Death

Like death, encounter proceeds in absolute singularity. The *I* of the *ego* persists throughout the encounter. Face and name coalesce in the event. There is also a suspension of the communal in the event, but only because the community is so intimately present in the shaping of the *I* in its "ownness,"[87] the *I* as the possibility of alterity, that is, the face and the name, as comprising a subject of history, even if antithetically.[88]

Encounter embodies possibility in all its possibilities, the possibility of the gift of life, of living death. In it, singularity, namely, face and name, takes on irreplaceability, as

[85] That is the reason for the use of the gerund in the title of this study.
[86] Here care must be taken in balancing Marcel's notion of the indeterminacy of hope and Merleau-Ponty's notion of the indeterminacy of existence. Is hope coextensive with existence? Or is the former a feature of latter? Marcel, *Homo Viator*, 45. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 173.
[87] Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1960), 92.
[88] "No one can take the Other's dying away from him. Of course someone can 'go to his death for another.' But that always means to sacrifice oneself for the Other 'in some definite affair.' Such 'dying for' can never signify that the Other has thus had his death taken away in even the slightest degree. Dying is something that every Dasein itself must take upon itself at the time. By its very essence, death is in every case mine in so far as it 'is' at all." Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (New York: Harper, 2008), §47, 240 [284]. The following quote from Derrida elaborates on Heidegger's thoughts on sacrifice in the above quotation. "I can give the other everything except immortality, except this *dying for her* to the extent of dying in place of her, so freeing her from her own death. I can die for the other in a situation where my death gives him a little longer to live; I can save someone by throwing myself in the water or fire in order to snatch him temporarily from the jaws of death; I can give her my heart in the literal or figurative sense in order to assure her of a certain longevity. But I cannot die in her place, I cannot give her my life in exchange for her death… [I] can give everything except immortality, everything except salvation as immortality." Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death and Literature in Secret* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 44.

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the absolute modality of the existential. One philosopher ponders, "nothing is more substitutable and yet nothing is less so than the syntagm 'my death.' It is always a matter of a *hapax*, of a *hapax legomenon*, but of what is only said *one time each time, indefinitely* only one time."[89] Encounter is death: if the death of the *ego*, of *I*, then the death of all, for the *I* is fully given in the *we*, the all, not in "totality," but as the activity of infinite possibility.[90]

The Hebrew response to this problem fails to capture certain significant nuances, namely, the dialectic of estrangement and reunion, the corollary of memory and narrative.[91] Nor does it capture the existential imperative that binds this cognitive dyad firmly – within subjectivity – to the practice of solidarity: the domestication of want by desire, the risky business of relativizing the perceived *telos* in light of historical praxis. That is perhaps decolonization's most significant corollary, hence Haiti's greatest gift to theology: encounter is above all a pilgrimage! Its perceived end is but a beginning. Always on the horizon, the decision to seek it out occurs in flux, within a process that is ever in motion. It is hope's most fitting object. Its practice is discipleship's most appropriate form.[92]

Encounter in Practical Theology

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[89] Jacques Derrida, *Aporias* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 22.
[90] "The experience of the other starting from a separated I remains a source of meaning for the comprehension of totalities." Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 58.
[91] Kierkegaard's interpretation of the Genesis 22 story in *Fear and Trembling* is of particular concern. In Kierkegaard's text, Johannes de Silentio takes an optimistic look at Abraham's paradoxical stance in regard to his son and community. Ethics naturally flows out of this social dance. In the end, duty to God trumps duty to neighbor or ethics, "for if this duty [to God] is absolute, then the ethical is reduced to the relative." Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 61. The Hebrew tradition clearly struggles with this notion. For a consideration of the underlying themes of this story in the context of death, see Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death and Literature in Secret* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).
[92] Julia Kristeva sees in Augustine's notion of pilgrimage the possibility for resolving the differences that cause alienation among human beings. She concludes, "The pilgrim gives and receives, his wandering having become gift is an enthusiasm [conceived as 'transubstantiation']: it is known as *caritas*." Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 83.

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The indeterminate and unexpected nature of encounter raises an important question: Simply put, how to recognize an encounter as such, particularly when it occurs within the matrix of hope whose object lies outside of the imaginable? The above discussion describes encounter in terms of phenomenon, that which is discoverable only in the light of its own manifestation, "that which shows itself in itself, the manifest."[93] A phenomenon is its own witness and speaks for itself, constantly pushing against determinedness, against being reduced to a given. Perhaps that is the reason it at times presents itself as other, as not itself, in order to make itself seen. In this, encounter obtains as a conceptualizing reality. Phenomenon is light. According to one philosopher, it is "that wherein something can become manifest, visible in itself."[94] Phenomenology then is the practice of uncovering, of exposing to the light of the phenomenon.[95] As such, it presupposes that perception of the world is in flux, always bound to the light of consciousness. It is "in constant motion…in the alteration of the different ways of being conscious."[96] To do phenomenology means to inquire into that which is taken for granted in lived experience for the sake of the experience itself.[97] In this sense, bracketing takes on new meaning: it becomes revolt.[98]

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[93] Phenomenon derives from φαινεσθαι, to show itself, which etymologically traces back to φα meaning light. Heidegger distinguishes between phenomenon, that is, "the showing-itself-in-itself" and appearance. The distinction is akin to the one between a disease and the symptom that announces it. The subtleties of the reference-relationship are important to keep in mind. For further study, see Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (New York: Harper, 2008), ¶ 7, 29 [51].

[94] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, ¶ 7, 29 [51].

[95] The φα of the φαινομενα. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, ¶ 7, 29 [51].

[96] Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), 109.

[97] "Theology must apply the phenomenological approach to all its basic concepts, forcing its critics first of all to see what the criticized concepts mean and also forcing itself to make careful descriptions of its concepts and to use them with logical consistency, thus avoiding the danger of trying to fill in logical gaps with devotional material." Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), 1:106. "Phenomenology is a way of pointing to phenomena as they 'give themselves,' without the interference of negative or positive prejudices and explanations" (106). The methodological significance of postcolonialism/decoloniality presents itself as irony when Husserl ascribes universality to his own

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To inquire into phenomena means conversely to cast doubt over that which is an object of consciousness or, more apropos to the postcolonial, to filter through the light of liberating praxis, of lived experience, and adjudicate[99] between the true, that is, the unhidden, and the false, where, according to one philosopher, "being false (ψευδεσθαι) amounts to deceiving in the sense of covering up [*verdecken*]: putting something in front of something (in such a way as to let it be seen) and thereby passing it off as something which it is not."[100] Decoloniality as liberating praxis issues in a rejection of unmediated (unfiltered) truth claims concerning the facts of existence. The absence of the lived experience of history's victims strips said claims of their alleged legitimacy.

Practical theology is concerned with subjectivity in its entirety. The "bracketing" that is typically required of the phenomenological reduction must be interpreted existentially, that is, hermeneutically. Liberating praxis, as a way of being human in history, is a holistic phenomenon, not merely a psychological one; and it does not allow neutrality in the process of experience.[101]

Encounter as Practical Theological Method

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perception. Like Kant, he leaves unquestioned problems that are essential to the perception of the postcolonial. His §6 of *The Crisis* titled "The history of modern philosophy as a struggle for the meaning of man," among others, shows evidence of this blind spot. Husserl, *The Crisis of the European Sciences*, 14-16.

[98] "[To inquire into phenomena] opens up to us, to our growing astonishment, an infinity of ever new phenomena belonging to a new dimension, coming to light only through consistent penetration into the meaning- and validity-implications of what was thus taken for granted – an infinity, because continued penetration shows that every phenomenon attained through this unfolding of meaning, given at first in the life-world as obviously existing, itself contains meaning- and validity-implications whose exposition leads again to new phenomena, and so on." Husserl, *The Crisis of the European Sciences*, 112.

[99] Unlike Husserl, this study is not seeking for indubitable or "apodictic" knowledge. See Maurice Natanson, *Edmund Husserl: Philosopher of Infinite Task* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 63. Rather, the focus is on mode of knowing. The possibility of knowledge is presupposed but undetermined.

[100] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 56-57.

[101] Husserl moves away from Descartes's problematic by moving "along a metaphysically neutral path." Natanson, *Edmund Husserl*, 63. As in Husserl, the metaphysical God is undetermined for the sake of this study. However, unlike Husserl, from the position of the study, neutrality is possible only in a strategic, artificial sense.

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The above discussion suggests that encounter has a tripartite structure: paradox, hope, and the mundane. In spite of the above attempts to delimit the phenomenon conceptually, the result is more akin to denial rather than affirmation – apophatic rather than cataphatic. The relation between encounter's form and content remains undefined. This is a hermeneutical-critical problem. Stating that encounter is correlative with experience or encompasses the mundane might speak to form: for example, it is grounded in subjectivity. It might correlate with features of hope as that is its matrix of operation. What remains unclear is whether lived experience contains the elements that render an event-encounter recognizable as such without serious limiting effects. That issue speaks to its paradoxical character.

Thus the truth or falsity of any encounter is not a matter to be proved or disproved. It is paradoxical in a specific way: it suggests an antinomy and, as such, writes W. V. Quine, "can be accommodated by nothing less than a repudiation of part of our conceptual heritage."[102] Hence, in its depth, encounter envisages the transformation of the concepts of experience and, by consequence, the modification of the precepts that govern the application of those concepts.[103] The transformation or "repudiation" of inherited concepts is a consequence of liberating praxis and figures at the core of decoloniality: Ushering in new ways of being human requires new modes of knowing. The co-extensiveness of epistemology and ontology can be maintained but only after a thorough phenomenological reduction and a rigorous hermeneutic process, in other words, only in the light of liberating praxis, as neutrality quickly dissipates before the urgency of interpretation.

[102] "A sentence that is true if and only if it is false." W. V. Quine, *The Ways of Paradox and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), 7-9.
[103] Encounter is a concept that is also a precept.

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Revelation, the Poetic, and the Name of God: A Conversation with Paul Ricoeur

In "Naming God," a short essay published within a compendium of Paul Ricoeur's writings under the title *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative, and Imagination*, the author asserts that he finds God already named in the texts of his predilection. In the gap that ensues in the transfer of text to life something takes place, which promises a recompense both intellectual and emotional. Texts as testimony to the truth promise to enliven the very act of faith which legitimates the event in which faith acts for the sake of faith. This is the persistent Anselmian *credo ut intelligam*. Ricoeur writes, "Naming God comes about only within the milieu of a presupposition, incapable of being rendered transparent to itself, suspected of being a vicious circle, and tormented by contingency. This is the presupposition: naming God is what has already taken place in the texts preferred by my listening's presupposition."[104]

Contingency describes the relationship between thinking, which presupposes the act of listening, and the stories and lives that are told and heard in faith. In other words, "I can name God in my faith because the texts preached to me have already named God."[105] This point is crucial to hermeneutics as it forms the guiding principle to that which takes place in the movement of faith.

Thus, texts have a peculiar relation to life in matters of faith, for religious experience presupposes not only the existence but also the engagement with the texts that are preached. The texts come to us with a triple independence from their authors, their contexts, and their audience. Such a character of texts expresses their power to maintain their role as witnesses of truth. It locates in front of the text the thing or issue of the text.

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[104] Paul Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred*: *Religion, Narrative, and Imagination* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 218.
[105] Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred*, 218.

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As a result, as Ricoeur writes, "a text addresses itself to anyone who knows how to read, refer to a world that is not there between the interlocutors, a world of the text and yet is not in the text."[106] This is the world of new possibilities. It goes beyond the context of the author and the author's state of mind and reaches beyond the original audience. This world calls into question the theologies of the word, which identify the voice behind the words of the biblical texts as that of God. Essentially, the world of the text does not speak so authoritatively to the reader as though the latter were an object to be merely instructed. Rather, in the instructing of the reader the text opens up a world of meaning that is other than the world of the book. Ricoeur puts it this way, "To the extent that the narrative genre is primary, God's imprint is in history before being in speech. Speech comes second inasmuch as it confesses the trace of God in the event."[107]

Poetic Language and Religious Discourse

The poetic character of biblical texts elucidates this point further but on the basis of the referential character of poetic language. The reduction of referential language to its descriptive function, that is, language as it is used to differentiate between subject and object, and the subsequent relegation of poetic language to emotionality, is problematic at best. To reduce referential language merely to its descriptive function creates a false dichotomy between referential discourse (descriptive) and poetic discourse (non-referential, nondescriptive). Poetic discourse has to do with the world of experience in a different but critical way. It does entail a suspension of the descriptive use of language in that poetry is not concerned merely with the objectification of the world or with the naming of the objects of experience. However, poetic discourse liberates language's more

[106] Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred*, 221.
[107] Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred*, 225.

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"originary referential function."[108] Poetic language, Ricoeur argues, "refers to our many ways of belonging to the world before we oppose ourselves to things understood as 'objects' that stand before a 'subject'…[rather it describes the world in terms of] *rootedness and belonging-to* that precede the relation of a subject to objects."[109]

The implications of this reduction of poetic language to an emotional function are tremendous for the understanding of truth. Truth so positivistically conceived in terms of "adequation to real objects" and "verification" paralyzes the power of poetic discourse to describe real relationships.[110] In so doing, it limits human experience to that which can be measured and verified. It also denies humanity the possibility of experiencing language at levels that are strange to the structure of scientific epistemology. Contrariwise, the concept of belonging-to, as may be reified in the diverse human emotions such as fear and joy, expresses real constructs that constitute relevant responses to the world of experience including the relation with the objects of experience.

For Ricoeur, emotions are a way of being in the world; "all the more reason why feelings, temperaments, moods, and *Stimmungen*, expressed, shaped, and instructed by poetic language, should throw us into the midst of things."[111] For poetic discourse opens up a world of possibility beyond, which may be subjected to empirical verification. As Ricoeur argues "a concept of truth as manifestation, in the sense of letting be what shows itself. What shows itself is each time the proposing of a world, a world wherein I can project my ownmost possibilities."[112] Therefore, in the transfer of text to life as exhibited through the experience of the texts of faith tradition, life becomes text. Because the

[108] Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred*, 222.
[109] Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred*, 222.
[110] Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred*, 222.
[111] Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred*, 222.
[112] Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred*, 223.

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religious texts already name God, naming God becomes a matter of participating in the world of faith.

Hence, religious texts, such as the biblical texts, are religious because they make use of this nondescriptive yet referential function of poetic discourse. In the preaching and in listening to these texts, the person of faith is drawn to an originary level of discourse, to a level of experience which precludes the experience of the world as differentiation, to a level at which faith speaks. This level of discourse is free from positivism's predilection for the manipulation of language and the dichotomization of the world in terms of subject and object. Indeed, God as a symbol is evoked at this originary level of discourse. As issued from this discourse, God-talk breaks free from the discursive strictures evocative even of the least speculative language of theology and philosophy.

"Letting go" as Hermeneutical Method

The possibility for the experience of truth as manifestation calls for a disposition from the listener that is akin to a "letting go" as Ricoeur frames it.[113] The philosopher must let go of any allegiance to onto-theological knowledge. This letting go can be seen in the Kantian emphasis on the limit-character of knowledge, that is, the "general conception of philosophy as knowing our limits."[114] Letting go, for Ricoeur, also entails relinquishing the claims to "mastery, sufficiency, and autonomy," which is emblematic of the modern obsession with self-actualization.[115] This letting go describes the symbolic character of religious language and hence the hermeneutical nature of faith. Language as

[113] Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred*, 223.
[114] Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred*, 223.
[115] Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred*, 224.

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referentially significant and nondescriptive, that is, poetic language, envisages lived experience in which God is already named.

The originary modalities of language shape the world, in which God is named, in the freedom of a polyphony.[116] Polyphony expresses the complexity of religious expression in all its forms. In the case of the Bible, narratives, proverbs, hymns, etc., are constitutive of the different forms or modes in which the language of faith is expressed. God is named in each form or mode of religious expression or faith confession in a unique but non-comprehensive way.[117] The relationship among the different originary modalities, be it narrative, prophecy, wisdom writing, or commandment (prescription), is one of "a living dialectic that will display their interferences with one another."[118] The author writes ,

> Thus God is named in diverse ways in narration that recounts the divine acts, prophecy that speaks in the divine name, prescription that designates God as the source of the imperative, wisdom that seeks God as the meaning of meaning, and the hymn that invokes God in the second person...The referent 'God' is thus intended by the convergence of all these partial discourses. It expresses the circulation of meaning among all the forms of discourse wherein God is named... The referent 'God' is not just the index of the mutual belonging together (*appartenance*) of the originary forms of the discourse of faith. It is also the index of their incompleteness. It is their common goal, which escapes each of them.[119]

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[116] "The naming of God is not a single tone, but polyphonic." Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred*, 224.
[117] Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred*, 224.
[118] Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred*, 226.
[119] Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred*, 227-228.

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From this perspective, then, the God that is revealed or named through the diverse originary modalities just discussed cannot be reduced to a philosophical concept even if that concept is being-itself. God reveals and conceals all at the same time. As a result, naming God remains a mystery. It remains manifest in an unresolvable dialectic, a reality that cannot be made into an object of knowledge. God is revealed as the one who is, the one who stands outside the limits of the power of language though manifest within in it, the one whose name is synonymous with mystery.

Jesus versus God

This understanding thus de-emphasizes Christian doctrine *per se*. It identifies the life and work of Christ with a New Testament event in which God is named. Jesus' kingdom is the kingdom of God for God is the God of Jesus Christ. Therefore, naming Jesus infers Jesus's God, leading to a Christological position that neither abstracts the Christ event from Trinitarian existence nor exalts the historical Jesus of Nazareth at the expense of the purpose of his life, which is to reveal God, for Jesus' life by its very nature is committed to the task of naming God.[120]

In this, another dialectic ensues between the God who is revealed in power in the Hebrew Scriptures, that is the God whom the Hebrew narratives name as deliverer, in whose name the prophets speak with authority and power, whose wisdom is the envy of the ages, to whom hymns and prayers are raised, and the God of weakness of the New Testament who is named through suffering and death. From this perspective, then, hermeneutics helps to understand the value of the quest for God in human existence throughout the history of the world.

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[120] "[Jesus is] the man whose existence is determined by the God he proclaimed." Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred*, 231.

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The crux of the argument is that poetic language possesses revelatory power such that when such language is deployed in religious discourse, it names God. This thesis may be summarized in the following three points: 1) poetic language is different than ordinary language. Though poetic language does not serve a descriptive function in differentiating between a subject and objects of experience, it retains its referential function. Poetic language occurs at the originary level of discourse as a nondescriptive, pre-philosophical form of expression. 2) By breaking the strictures of ordinary language, poetic language also facilitates the movement from text to life, and vice versa, opening the reader or listener to a world of new possibilities. 3) In the world of the text, the imagination is reoriented to new possibilities for the reader or listener. It is the world of new understanding, which is the world of hermeneutics.

Reclaiming Poetic Language

The poetic character of religious language expresses essentially, though not exclusively, the requirement for the possibility of naming God. Hence, the poetic does not necessarily translate into the religious except when it names God. As poetic language nondescriptively refers to the name of God, it exhibits the power simultaneously to reveal and to conceal that whose manifestation inspires the poem. Consequently, the diverse originary modalities discussed above (narratives, prophecies, laws, hymns, parables, etc.) are constitutive of the substance of a mutation of meaning which determines the religious character of the poem.

The notion of idol is a critical component of religious experience, of the experience in which God is named.[121] The dialectic of name and idol are constitutive of the mutation of meaning that takes place when poetry becomes religious language. This

[121] Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred*, 233.

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dialectic is important as the mutation is necessarily circumscribed by that which it names. Hence, there is a naming of God in the text of the poem, but it is framed in anthropomorphic language, which relates God to the faith community in necessarily human terms. In a dialectic of "complement and corrective," God is named but in terms of the limit-expressions of paradox, hyperbole, etc.[122] God is named but metaphorically as that which baffles the power of human language. God is named but remains effectively unnamable.

As stated above, poetic discourse is necessarily liberating in that it opens the reader or listener to a world of new possibilities. In this world of the text, the reader or listener is able to envision in new ways not only the way of life but especially the way of being in the world. The listener or reader is drawn into the world of the poem to envision new ways of being human. This new way of being must include new modes of expression, for the conceptual models of traditional metaphysics stand overwhelmed by this move to originary models of speech. New ways of being human entail a transformation motif, which also encompasses simultaneously the listener or reader, language, and history. In this, language is no longer concerned with itself but with the world which it opens up and uncovers as the issue of the text.[123] In other words, in concomitance with a new language that expresses being stand new ways of understanding concerning the sources of the self. This way of thinking carries within it deep practical theological implications for the human situation including the cosmic, the ethical, and the political.

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[122] Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred*, 233.
[123] Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred*, 235.

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Implications for Truth

The traditional relegation of poetic discourse to an emotional function as if it were devoid of referential power is then in question. Poetic discourse does lack a descriptive function, but the poem moves nondescriptive language toward a level of discourse that is fundamentally experiential. Poetic language uncovers dimensions of reality that precede the immurement of discourse within the category of an empirical methodology. Poetic discourse takes on the character of disrupting the predilection for the manipulable or controllable in a movement toward what Marcel calls the "mystery of being."[124]

Truth then is no longer bound to a series of propositions to be grasped and monopolized or manipulated by the one who has the strongest argument or the most rigorous method. It is neither the obedient slave of the dominant tradition or a utilitarian instrument to maintain the status quo. Nor is it simply to be determined by the outcome of a cosmic dialogue among metaphysical entities. Truth occurs as the substance of the movement from text to life. It is the presupposition of the act of faith that is exhibited in the event of reading or listening. Through poetic discourse, truth finds the atmosphere for its manifestation, as it reveals itself as that which evades definition and conceptualization. Truth is experienced through poetry, the language of symbol, the world in which metaphor is the rule of ordinary discourse. Truth is mystery. Therefore, it is simultaneously revealed and hidden.[125]

In this sense, truth is synonymous with the activity of God. Therefore poetic language insofar as it names God, specifies religious language. Truth is God revealed as the possibility of otherness, which is also the possibility of being in the world. God as

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[124] Gabriel Marcel, *The Mystery of Being, Faith and Reality,* (Chicago: Gateway Edition, 1960), 2:37.
[125] For Paul Tillich, mystery remains as such even in its revealing. Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., 1967), 1:109.

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symbol is the embodiment of otherness, but a mysterious kind of otherness. It is otherness undefined; otherness, which obtains in participation over against self-positing affirmation. God is otherness manifest in identification, a synthesis in which the conflict between the thesis and the antithesis remains unresolved, a critical point in which water and vapor appear as one and the same. God as symbol denotes reality rendered virtual, existence defined in terms of movement, the voice that echoes throughout eternity, a yes then a no, a nervous game of hide and seek. God as symbol prescribes a life that is full of life, a pulling to and fro, a mock-dialogue but more than that.

God as symbol is the poet's inspiration and uncooperative subject matter, the painter's vision expressed in the language of distance, propinquity untranslatable, meaning forming: a gentle prod, a stern whisper, freedom dis-played, a soul's dismay. Naming God is clearly a challenge. However, the challenge does not necessarily obtain from the complexity of Godself. Naming, as an exercise in the projection of power, an effort to demarcate between subject and object, poses a fatal threat to the future. Naming belongs to the past. It restricts present realities to the quality of past events. Naming may adumbrate future possibilities but is limited by the power of the one who names. Thus naming, that is, language, insofar as it seeks to determine definitively, that is, insofar as it seeks to insinuate God, must mean the utter embrace of mystery.[126]

Mystery means "encroachment," a notion of being that is inconceivable apart from an unmediated participation in otherness. It is expressed within subjectivity as the

[126] "Human talk about God merits being called responsible when its only intention is that God should be permitted to speak. We call that kind of human talk about God which wants to let him speak himself, 'corresponding to God.' Therefore, talk about God is responsible when it is its intention to correspond to God. And it *corresponds* to God in that it *lets him come*. That human speech corresponds to God which allows God to speak in such a way that it permits him to be the subject of the speaking, the one who speaks." Eberhard Jüngel, *God as the Mystery of the World: On the Foundation of the Theology of the Crucified One in the Dispute between Theism and Atheism* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2009), 227.

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matrix in which I-You is possible as a dynamic of human relating. This participation in otherness has the effect of transforming the self-understanding of the I with regard to the You and vice versa. "The more my existence takes on the character of including others," Gabriel Marcel observes, "the narrower becomes the gap which separates it from being; the more, in other words, I am."[127] In this, being is a becoming for it always presupposes that into which it is to be taken up, transformed, and affirmed.

Implications for Revelation: The Mystery of the Gift

The gift of God to humanity is Godself. As is the nature of all true gifts, the divine gift of self also reveals something about the giver, which supports Paul Tillich's notion that "God is manifest through God."[128] Through this gift of Godself, God has inserted Godself into the world. For Karl Rahner, that is the manner of God's dealing with the world. He writes,

> God has spoken his final, definitive word, which envelopes all…he has inserted it in actuality into the world in such a way that he cannot remove it, that he cannot interpret it in any new way by another word. He has spoken this word by inserting into the fabric of this world his own eternal word, which is an expression of his entire self, so that he himself has become in human flesh a piece of this world.[129]

Revelation is then no longer to be reduced to an event in history. If Godself constitutes the gift of God to humanity, then divine revelation remains undetermined. The

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[127] Marcel, *The Mystery of Being,* 37.
[128] Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 2:14.
[129] Original text: *Dieu a énoncé sa parole dernière, défintive, qui embrasse tout…il l'a insérée réellement dans le monde en sorte qu'il ne peut plus l'en retirer, qu'il ne peut plus l'interpréter d'une nouvelle manière par une autre parole. Il a énoncé cette parole en insérant au milieu de ce monde sa propre parole éternelle, qui l'exprime lui-même tout entier, de telle sorte qu'il est lui-même devenu, dans la chair de cette humanity, une pièce de ce monde même*. Karl Rahner, *Marie, Mère du Seigneur: Méditations Théologiques* (Paris: Éditions de l'Orante, 1960), 35.

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revelatory event is what ensues when faith hears the name of God in the texts of life. Those texts include the biblical texts in all their forms, but they are not limited to them. For the event of faith is itself a manifestation of faith. Understood in this light, Jesus reveals God by pointing beyond himself and initiating the movement from the text of his life to the life of God, which remains hidden.

God is indeed the God who is Spirit as stated in the biblical text: the God of all creation. According to Hebrew tradition, God is also the God who is named in the narratives of the Hebrew Scriptures: the God of the Exodus who appears on Mount Sinai and leads the Israelites to victory during the conquest of Canaan. The Prophets also name God. God is the one who speaks in promise and command, who mourns over the choices of the people. God is named in the Psalms as the exalted one of the ages. The diverse anthropomorphic figures refer to this God who is named among the people of God. God is also the God of Jesus the Christ, as mentioned above. In the New Testament, Jesus, being "wholly turned to God" in the Barthian sense,[130] names God as the Messiah whose passion symbolically reveals the indissoluble bond between the finite and the infinite, the beginning of all things and the end of all things, the impossible possibility of what it means to know God. So God is named in a combination of figures and idols, the dialectic which frames the character of religious discourse.

In terms of the implications of this hermeneutic for the relationship between the biblical texts and revelation, the texts constitute mediums of revelation in the Tillichian sense. Biblical texts are not to be understood as containing the revelation of God though tradition refers to them as the word of God. And this much can be conceded: they are the word of God insofar as their history is linked with the history of the naming of God. As

[130] Karl Barth, *The Humanity of God* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 37.

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such, they remain, in a manner that is contingent on faith. They are possible participants in the revelatory event. The primary concern here is with hermeneutics, with the naming of God in the polyphony of narratives, prophecies, laws, parables, etc. There is no concern for the historical-critical tradition's emphasis on the world behind and within the text or the perennial debate over the notion of historicity. What matters is the world of the text and the self-understanding that is modeled, as Ricoeur puts it, "in the face" of the text.[131]

Implications for Practical Theology

The theocentric orientation of this hermeneutic is rather consistent with practical theology's presupposition of God's unceasing participation in the affairs of creation. Practical theology assumes that the God who is active in history is also engaged in the lives of the people of God. The inductive nature of practical theology engages the practical theologian in a conversation both with this history of revelation and with what that revelation means for the present and future of the people. Therefore, practical theology listens to situations and assesses their needs. It resists deductive speculations based on propositions deemed representative of the truth as a matter of tradition or history. Rather, it addresses the questions as they emerge from the situation, while suspending or bracketing the presumptive theological answers.

Such an approach is in fulfillment of the method of correlation, which is grounded in the belief that the relation between God as revealed and the human response to revelatory events is one of interdependence. Divine manifestation presupposes the existence of a human structure that is capable of responding to that which is manifested. The idea itself correlates with the notion that God provides answers only to questions

[131] Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred*, 235.

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implied in human existence.[132] The method of correlation relies very much on a hermeneutical approach to theology. It relativizes truth in order to match theological answers with the questions at hand. Thus, God is encountered in the cruces of the implied questions, as both the one who inspires the existentially framed questions (the hidden God) and the source of their equally existentially framed answers (the revealed God).

Naming God, as a theological hermeneutic, also applies to the activity of God in non-biblical and non-Christian religions though it must be reconfigured in the light of the peculiarities of those traditions. Religions that do not draw from sacred written texts and/or peoples with high illiteracy such as the Haitian people require a mode of engaging that can identify the relevant *texts* of the culture and theologize therefrom. Oral religious traditions are not bereft of experiences of God. Christianity itself was birthed out of an oral tradition. Insofar as God is named from a disposition of faith whereby the language of religious expression reaches the level of originary discourse as framed in the practices of a particular culture, then the mystery of God makes itself known. Does practical theology not presume divine activity among all people? Does God not call all people to salvation? Does the symbol Jesus the Christ not embody a divine promise for the entire world? Is the call of salvation not an invitation into that world of new possibilities whose concreteness graces the brush of the painter with sublimity? These are questions with which practical theology must continue to wrestle, as the Haitian situation calls for adequate answers.

Finally, the power of poetic discourse to name the divine requires of practical theologians a move toward the poetic. Theologians must become poets; not as a matter of choosing verse over prose or waxing metaphorical, although that too has its place in

[132] Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 1:60.

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theological language but in the way they use language. Theologians are well known as masters of rhetoric who use words to persuade, dissuade, or simply to annoy. Unfortunately, the language of theology is often tainted with the scheme of subject and object of modern epistemology. Theological language must, like poetry, seize its audience with the power of a thousand lilies, capture, and reorient the human imagination toward the God who is named in encounter. Poetic discourse, in the way it opens up new possibilities which the listener or reader may inhabit, may offer hope to those whose language is adulterated with the predilection of historical humanity to control those that are weak and poor. It reveals the possibility of a liberated existence in which the individual, language, history, culture, and the future are transformed unto a vision that is determined by the mystery of God and not the way around. Naming God does much more than recall the past or engender hope to survive the anxieties of the present. Naming God makes the future possible. With the irruption of the oppressed into history, as Metz intimates, "even the future is no longer what it once was."[133] This is significant because through the past, the colonialist once held captive the future.

The following five chapters are offered as a practice in this new future. The future is lived experience re-visioned as possibility. That makes the future dangerous for those who wish to control future events. Haitian practical theology is the anticipation of this re-vision. It necessarily begins within history, and through history it reaches into the confines of the prison of colonialism to construct and articulate the language that names God from within the Haitian particularity. Armed with an unshakable suspicion and incontrovertible historical evidence that the language that lurks outside the prison has

[133] Metz, *Faith in History and Society*, 97.

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helped shape and sustain the walls of the prison, it speaks a language that echoes the voice of death.

The language of death may be intimidating, but it is at first essential because it accurately expresses the conditions from which Haitians have learned to speak. Haitian practical theology is intent on suspending talk about Easter morning until all the Haitian victims, alive and dead, have been taken down from their crosses.[134] Since the resurrection is still outstanding, too hurried an interpretation of this situation along Christological lines is premature and likely harmful because unlike the resurrection symbol, in death God seems absent. Haitian practical theology must tarry in the shadow of those crosses and inquire into the reason for such display of ignominy. Haitian theologians must learn to hear the voice of God and depend on the insights that emerge from among the Haitian context that they may know where and how to dig and make the prison disappear. As practical theology looks to encounter within Haitian history and lived experience for its inspiration, its way to resurrection might take a different course altogether than that taken by traditional Christian theology.

[134] Jon Sobrino, *Christ the Liberator: A View from the Victims* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2001), 48. I find that Sobrino too hurriedly invokes the resurrection. Why?

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CHAPTER TWO

Encountering God in Haitian History

It's the story of a man, and that of a woman; of an old man and of a child; of an afflicted people, of a panic-stricken nation, and of a terrorized country. It's the story of a citizen; the story of a Haitian; it's my story.

– *Aurélie M. Fièvre*[135]

I see that things are going badly [for you] with this drought. But that will change, that will pass. The good and the bad intersect at a crossroads. I, Legba, am the Master of the crossroads.[136] *I will guide my Creole children to the good path. They will come out of this path of misery.*

– *Legba*[137]

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[135] Aurélie M. Fièvre, "Mon Histoire" in *Ainsi Parla la Terre*, ed. M. J. Fièvre (Miami: Women writers of Haitian descent, 2012), 216. All translations are the author's except where indicated otherwise.

[136] "The crossroads, then, is the point of access to the world of *les Invisibles*, which is the soul of the cosmos, the source of life force, the cosmic memory, and the cosmic wisdom." Maya Deren, *Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of* Haiti (New York: McPherson & Company, 2004), 35.

[137] Legba speaks these words through a man named Fleurimond during a ceremony narrated in Jacques Roumain, *Gouverneurs de la Rosée* (Port-au-Prince: Fardin, 2007), 63. Legba directs human destiny. "[He] is the guardian of destiny, the one who holds the keys to that destiny and makes certain that a person's life follows the preordained plan sealed by *Bondye* [the Godhead] at creation." Leslie G. Desmangles, *The Faces of the Gods: Vodou and Roman Catholicism in Haiti* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 110. Paradoxically, Legba may disrupt the path of destiny and "cause human lives to deviate from the Almighty's plan" (110). In this text, Desmangles offers a detailed analysis of Legba's role and distinct manifestations in Vodou. The fourth chapter titled "The Faces of the Cosmic Gods" is particularly pertinent to understanding Legba's place in Vodou cosmology. As intermediary between the human world and the world of the *lwa*, Legba is an interpreter of sorts, as he assures the intelligibility of the prayers of humans to the *lwa*. "Legba is the interlocutor, the interpreter, the principle of crossing and of communication with the divine world. [He] is…the protector of the divine community." Leslie G. Desmangles, "African Interpretations of Christian Vodou Cross," in *Vodou in Haitian Life and Culture: Invisible Powers*, eds. Claudine Michel and Patrick Bellegarde-Smith (New York: MacMillan, 2006), 42-3. Legba is also the head of all other *lwa*. In his capacity as Master of the crossroads, his alone is the power to open the door to the spirit world. He also stands at the crossroads as a paradox. Of him, Laënnec Hurbon writes, "a wily *lwa*, Legba is the master of the crossroads, the guardian of the temple entrance, and the indispensable intermediary between the deities and humans." Laënnec Hurbon, *Voodoo: Search for the Spirit* (London: Harry N. Abrams, 1995), 72. Certain Vodou songs, such as the following quoted by Gerdès Fleurant, express the attributes of Legba.

Legba lan baryè a Legba at the cosmic gate

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Haitian culture is in full display inside the *taptap,* that icon of Haitian commute.[138] Inside the *taptap*, riders show acts of tremendous kindness, always greeting one another with *Bonjou* "Good morning" or *Bonswa* "Good afternoon or good evening" upon entering, whether or not they are able to secure one of the *taptap*'s limited seats. Some riders reach out and help fellow riders with their baggage, which may consist of foodstuffs such as small bags of rice, plantains, or a live chicken or two. Sometimes a gallon of kerosene or auto parts comprise the baggage. Riders take care to place their items on the *taptap*'s roof or slide them under one of the *taptap*'s two parallel wooden benches so as to clear the aisle for other riders to pass or avail of some 'standing' room.[139]

Other riders help out with the children who are riding with their mothers. This is an important act of kindness, particularly in Pòtay Lewogàn, as the *taptap* drivers typically keep their vehicles moving even while boarding. Passengers must hop on or get left behind, whether they are five or seventy-five years old. Other riders hold strangers in their laps when no seats are available. Children especially enjoy this privilege, and they sometimes expect it. A child needs only lean against the knees of any one rider to secure

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Se ou ki pote drapo	You are the flag bearer
Se ou ka pare solèy	You will prepare the way
Pou Lwa yo	for the *Lwa*

Gerdès Fleurant, "Vodun, Music, and Society in Haiti: Affirmation and Identity," in *Haitian Vodou: Spirit, Myth, and Reality*, ed. Patrick Bellegarde-Smith and Claudine Michel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 47.

[138] A *taptap* (also spelled *tap-tap*) is an early model pickup truck, up to 20 years old, with a canopy over it. Colorfully painted, it sits 12 to 15 people with relative comfort but typically carries 15 to 20 people during rush hour. For a children's book illustrating this icon of Haitian commute, see Karen Lynn Williams, *Tap-tap* (New York: Clarion Books, 1994). See especially pages 20-22.

[139] The *taptap*'s ceiling is much too low for anyone taller than four feet to stand comfortably. Riders must bend over and hold onto something or someone in order to keep from falling. With one foot firmly planted on the edge of the *taptap*'s rear and the other foot resting in the groove that serves as a step into the *taptap* or simply dangling freely while holding onto the edge of the canopy, riders readily hang from the *taptap*'s rear when no seats are available. The bright side is that bench space becomes available fairly quickly as riders continually get on or get off the *taptap* during the commute. Karen Williams, *Tap-tap*, 22.

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a warm seat for the journey. Young children show their character on the *taptap* as well. Sometimes no older than ten years old and ever precocious, they take responsibility for their younger siblings whom they place on their laps during their commute to and from school.

In Port-au-Prince, the *taptap* is used for short haul trips. It plays an important role connecting commuters to the suburbs of the city. Dèlma, Petyonvil, Kafou, among others, are all within the reach of the *taptap*. Some *taptap* drivers do not reach the center of the city or *centreville*. They rather connect commuters from Kafou to the southward regions of Lanbi, Gresye, and Lewogàn. Outside Port-au-Prince, the *taptap* may join the larger buses and connect travelers to major cities. One major example is the journey between Gonayiv and Kapayisyen. The *taptap*'s wooden benches and the practice of packing passengers like sardines make the *taptap* a less than ideal means of transportation for the more than three hours required to cross mòn Pilbowo into the country's second largest city. However, many travelers bite the bullet, so to speak, because the *taptap*'s small size means that it fills up quickly in contrast to the hours large buses require to fill up.

The atmosphere inside a *taptap* can change rather quickly as a driver's tactics may easily provoke the ire of commuters. If the *taptap*'s seats do not fill quickly then confrontation is inevitable. Populating every square foot of the *taptap* is the driver's imperative. For that reason, regardless of the conditions inside the *taptap*, which can become less tolerable with each passing moment or with each added passenger, a driver generally does not leave the station with empty seats.

One *taptap* passenger at a Gonayiv bus station, for instance, insists that the driver leave with the front seats empty. By that time, she had been sitting on the *taptap*'s

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wooden bench for about forty-five minutes. The driver refuses to oblige. She turns to her fellow riders to vent her frustration, *Yo tèlman pa respekte moun. Dat moun chita nan yon solèy cho, men pou di goud*[140] *wap fè moun soufri konsa? Se sa k fè Ayiti pap janm chanje!* "Those [drivers] have no respect for people. For as long as we've been sitting in this hot sun, yet, for ten *gourdes* you are making us suffer like this? That's the reason Haiti will never change!"

The driver rebuts with an attack against his attacker's gender, character, and intellect. Another woman chimes in by saying that such treatment would be unacceptable in other countries. The driver quickly rebuffs, insisting that suffering afflicts them all, including him. Besides, what would that woman know about other countries? She is here in Haiti dealing with the same struggles as everybody else. The dispute continues for a few moments, as other riders chime in. A few riders stay quiet, but their countenance shows that they are fully engaged.

One man decides to cover the cost of the empty seats so the driver can start moving, but he hesitates and reconsiders.

In between these bursts of intellectual energy, a woman sticks her hand inside the *taptap* and asks for food money. Next to her stands another woman selling cookies and other sweets. *Men ti bonbon pou n amize nou: de pou dola* "Here are some cookies to munch on! Two packs for a dollar."[141] One woman produces a five-*gourde* coin and buys

[140] The reference to money is significant as a front seat for a ride from Gonayiv to Kapayisyen costs an additional ten to twenty *gourdes* per passenger.

[141] The *dola* or dollar is an unofficial currency in Haiti. I am not referring to the practice among many place of businesses such as hotels and rental car companies to price their merchandise in American dollars. This is a practice that developed during the decades of relative stability between the Haitian and American dollar. Between 1960 and 1991, the exchange rate between the Haitian *gourde* and the American dollar was around 5:1, with some reasonable variations. Since Haitians had a five-gourde bill then, they simply referred to it as a dollar. This practice persists today, though the value of the American dollar has increased exponentially against the Haitian *gourde* over the past 30 years. The average exchange rate in 1984 was

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two packs of the cookies. One man reaches into his pocket and pulls out a five-*gourde* coin, also known as an *adoken*. Looking around the *taptap*, he petitions his fellow travelers for some money to offer the begging woman. *Se sen goud m'ka bay sèlman. M'bezwen rès la pou m peye machin*. "I can only spare five *gourdes*. I need the rest to cover my fare." No one answers. In fact, the two women sitting across from him look away to avoid eye contact.

The conversation about Haiti's condition continues. The driver's complicity in creating Haiti's woes becomes more 'apparent,' the more passengers share their stories. Scolded and embarrassed, the driver is now standing to the side seeking to persuade other travelers to take the open seats. The man with the five-*gourde* coin reaches into the side of the *taptap* and offers his coin to the begging woman who says, *mèsi cheri* "Thank you, my dear." The woman then moves to the back of the *taptap* to continue her plea for food money.

Suddenly, every eye looks to the left of the *taptap*, as a loud scream interrupts the conversation. *M tèlman grangou!* "I am so hungry!" utters a voice that has the character of a squeal; so intense is the emotion from which it springs. *M pa manje depi twa jou* "I have not eaten in three days!" The conversation inside the *taptap* comes to a halt. Everyone is now gazing through the small openings in the *taptap*'s left wall seeking out the source of the voice. All are mute! No one seems to recognize this man's voice, and

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5.27 *gourdes* to $1.00. Now four months into the year 2015, the rate has so far averaged around of 46.87 *gourdes* to $1.00 with a year-to-date maximum of 47.75 *gourdes*. If currency strength is an indication of economic stability and overall societal health, then the consistent and exponential decline of the Haitian *gourde* against the American dollar tells a macabre story. http://fxtop.com/en/historical-exchange-rates.php?A=1&C1=USD&C2=HTG&MA=1&YA=1&DD1=01&MM1=01&YYYY1=1953&B=1&P=&I=1&DD2=31&MM2=04&YYYY2=2015&btnOK=Go%21 (Accessed on April 21, 2015).

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his face is hardly visible, as the *taptap*'s angled windows limit the distance the eye can see.

Two people show up and purchase the front seats. The *taptap* rolls out of the station and heads for Kapayisyen.

Redeeming Hope

Se sa k fè Ayiti pap janm chanje! "That is the reason Haiti will never change!" is a common utterance in Haiti. Teachers shout it when government officials withhold their pay for months at a time. Young adults say it when politicians manage to deceive them once more. Young children echo it when their playmates disappoint them. Commuters say it when their *taptap* drivers antagonize them. The *komèsan,*[142] with grunts and sighs, mutter it when their costumers cheat them. The elderly whisper it when foreign powers intervene once more in the affairs of the nation. In the classroom, on the street corner, in the schoolyard, on the *taptap*, and in the marketplace, sometimes out of frustration, despair, or fear but always in disbelief, the Haitian people express a truth that comes to them through a reality that is as stark as it is enduring: *Ayiti pap janm chanje!* "Haiti will never change!"

The voices that utter these damning words have legitimate reasons to do so. For much of their history, Haitians have struggled to realize their hopes. Ever on the cusp of tragedy, their fears are more familiar to them than their dreams. They have gone from enslavement by Spain and France to liberation by their own hands and to political and

[142] *Komèsan* or *commerçants* in French is the term the people who sell on the streets use to describe themselves. It means storekeeper, which implies a physical shop or store where goods are exchanged. However, in Haiti, the people, mostly women, who sell their goods on the street or in the marketplace call themselves *komèsan*. They may not work from an actual building, but they are entrepreneurs who run all the aspects of their business. Due to this complexity and due to the fact that most *komèsan* are *Kreyòl* speakers, the term will appear in its *Kreyòl* form in the text with no further interpretation or commentary. For illustrations, see Williams, *Tap-tap*, 22.

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religious disenfranchisement by the rest of the world. Powers from within and from without have been oppressing them.[143] If some authoritarian regime is not terrorizing them, then a demagogue is conning them. If some European power is not exploiting them to death, then the United States of America is manipulating them, or the Dominican Republic is humiliating them.[144] Over the past five centuries, Haitians have been enslaved, terrorized, conned, held for ransom, invaded, "sandbagged,"[145] massacred, starved, abandoned, and altogether dilapidated by leaders and nations that have taken the people's simplicity for naïveté, their blackness for a curse, if not a threat, and their courage for insolence.[146] In all, Haitian lived experience has been and continues to be but a "management of coloniality."[147]

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[143] "Haiti's successes or failures since independence cannot be explained simply by the policies of individual leaders. Whether through embargoes, occupations, indemnities or more subtle forms of international pressure, Haiti has never been left alone to determine her destiny." Alyssa Goldstein Sepinwall, ed., *Haitian History: New Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 5.

[144] For a recent and concise analysis of the Haitian-Dominican saga, see Bridget Wooding and Richard Moseley-Williams, *Nécessaires mais indésirables: Les immigrants haïtiens et leurs descendants en République Dominicaine* (Port-au-Prince: Les Éditions de l'Université d'État d'Haïti, 2009). In the Dominican Republic, Dominican writers describe Haitians as a problem, *el problema haitiano*. "[In the Dominican Republic,] Haitians and their offspring – mostly poor, black, and 'foreign' – are routinely subjected to racial and ethnic discrimination, and their human rights have historically been ignored and blatantly violated. Being a Haitian in the Dominican Republic means being a foreign pariah, easily identified by your foreign-sounding name, by your accent, and, more often than not, by your black skin." See Ernesto Sagás, "Black – but Not Haitian: Color, Class, and Ethnicity in the Dominican Republic," in *Comparative Perspectives on Afro-Latin America*, eds. Kwame Dixon and John Burdick (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012), 324.

[145] James Weldon Johnson uses this term to describe the state of the United States' occupation of Haiti, an occupation that would last until 1934. See James Weldon Johnson, *Self Determining Haiti: Four Articles Reprinted from* The Nation *Embodying a Report…made for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People* (New York: The Nation, 1920). [available at http://www.archive.org/stream/selfdetermhaiti00johnrich]

[146] Those apathetic leaders include the wealthy minority that continues to wield considerable influence in Haitian politics and economics. Haiti's class struggle is well documented. In his early work on Haiti, James Leyburn describes the Haitian socio-economic situation as a caste system which "regulates a person's profession, speech, religion, marriage, family life, politics, clothes, social mobility – in short, his whole life from cradle to grave." James Leyburn, *The Haitian People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941), 4. See also Lyonel Paquin, *The Haitians: Class and Color Politics* (Brooklyn: Multi-Type, 1983), 213. While casting Leyburn's caste characterization as "tenuous," Terry Rey asserts that the elite and the masses occupy "two different worlds." For an analysis of the ways in which class structure affects religious life in Haiti, see Terry Rey, *Our Lady of Class Struggle: The Cult of the Virgin* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press Inc., 1999). See especially pages 7, and 237-334. For on-point analyses of Haiti's complicated history with its leaders and with other nations, see Alyssa Goldstein Sepinwall, ed., *Haitian History: New Perspectives*

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St Rose captures this idea in the following verses:

All forgotten and lost.

Abandoned and desecrated.

As if doomed forever,

their humanity disregarded,

their Afro-ethnicity, their crime.

Like the children of Ham,

A people cursed forever.[148]

The charges laid against you are:

Insolence

Impertinence

Disobedience

Delinquency

Because you, courageous child of Ham,

you challenged Eurocentricity,

At its core and gave birth to a first Black Republic.[149]

(New York: Routledge, 2013). This volume offers samples of some of the most recent and most pertinent works on these issues. The essays that introduce each of the text's three sections are particularly helpful. For example, see pages 215-240.

[147] Coloniality is a concept created by a decolonial perspective. Mignolo writes, "coloniality is always already a decolonial concept, a concept that was not created by any other way of thinking, discipline, or ideological frame than decoloniality." See Walter Mignolo, "Decolonizing Western Epistemology," in *Decolonizing Epistemologies: Latina/o Theology and Philosophy*, eds. Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz and Eduardo Mendieta (New York: Fordham, 2012), 20. While coloniality entails a decolonial disposition, it also implies the continued presence of (re)colonizing forces. For a concise analysis of the history of the relation between Haiti and other (colonizing) world powers, see J. Michael Dash, "Rising from the Ruins: Haiti in 200 years," in *Haiti Rising: Haitian History, Culture, and the Earthquake of 2010* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), 63-69.

[148] J. Lambert St Rose, *Helen and Her Sister Haiti: A Theological Reflection on the Social, Historical, Economic, Religious, Political and National Consciousness with A Call to Conversion* (Bloomington: Authorhouse, 2011), 34.

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Much of Haitian history supports the thesis, *Ayiti pap janm chanje!*, for much of Haitian history has been but an echo of grievances: unfulfilled promises, aborted dreams, and atrophied developmental projects. Those wounds, self-inflicted, abetted and/or directly perpetrated by hegemonic and opportunistic powers, interfere even in nature's own movements. Nature itself, ever more voracious and merciless, claims more than its fair share: the winds that twist and rip, the rains that erode crop, soil, and dreams, and the droughts that bring Haiti's face within an unnerving distance to the scorching sun, all contribute to Haiti's woes. On January 12, 2010, the Earth itself seems unable to maintain its integrity.[150]

Yet the teachers keep their commitments to their students. Dreaming and ever-hopeful youths still lucubrate underneath the street lamps; if they must, they use the feeble flashlight attached to their low cost cellular phones to light up the page. The children, for their part, continue to fill the air with their songs and giggles and never-ending questions and the sky with their soaring kites. The commuters continue to color

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[149] St Rose, *Helen and Her Sister Haiti*, 260.

[150] Nature afflicts all people at some point, but societal stability and advanced planning help soften the blows. As Martin Munro puts it, "Nothing could have prevented the earthquake itself, but human, historical, and social forces were to a large extent responsible for the terrible scale of destruction and the great loss of life." Martin Munro, ed., *Haiti Rising: Haitian History, Culture, and the Earthquake of 2010* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), 1. In Haiti, some of the environmental problems originate in the practices of the French planters. "By 1764 planters complained that they could only find wood suitable for building on mountain summits…Colonists were too eager to profit from sugar and coffee to invest in the far slower business of growing timber…In 1790, one French sugar expert observed how rainfall had diminished markedly in regions where coffee planters had cleared trees from the hillsides." John D. Garrigus, "The Legacies of Pre-Revolutionary Saint-Domingue," in *Haiti Rising: Haitian History, Culture, and the Earthquake of 2010*, ed. Martin Munro (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), 117. Other manmade problems such as shoddy construction projects and the appointment of apathetic and corruptible, if competent, leaders to prominent government posts keep the people in a state of perpetual unpreparedness, and consequently ever at the mercy of nature's whim. "Most of the damage [from the 2010 earthquake] was attributable to poor building construction in Haiti. It is believed that the destruction could have been limited if better construction practices had been employed in the country in the past. The government had allowed unsupervised construction in the regions despite receiving warnings by seismologists about the likelihood of earthquakes occurring in this part of the Caribbean plate boundary." Naim Kapucu and Alpaslan Özerdem, *Managing Emergencies and Crises* (Burlington, Massachusetts: Jones & Bartlett Learning, 2011), 77.

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the *taptap* with their stories, their kindness, and their courage. The streets and the marketplace still bustle with protest, energy, and laughter. The elderly still sing with conviction and pride the imperatives of *La Dessalinienne*, "United let us march! Let there be no traitors in our ranks! Let us be masters of our soil!"[151]

Thus, *Ayiti pap janm chanje!,* while an expression of absolute realism in the face of unending tragedy, resists being rendered overly transparent. It seems to entail neither imprecation nor resignation. However, in its diverse renditions, it implicates justice at every turn. Teachers shout it because they want government officials to stop working against them in their efforts to fill the minds of Haiti's youth and the bellies of their children. The *taptap* passenger utters it because she desires a dignified life in which drivers respect the passengers who rely on their services. Young adults say it because they want their political leaders to walk empathetically with them and help alleviate their anxieties about the future. Children say it because they want the rules of the game to apply equally to all players. The elderly say it because they want to see their children rule themselves without the threat of outside intervention. After all, some of them remember the first American invasion.

In its depth, this saying expresses hopes and fears so intimate and true to the Haitian people that it disrupts any inclination to romanticization. The continued labor of

[151] *La Dessalinienne* is Haiti's national anthem. It was written in 1904 in commemoration of the nation's hundredth anniversary of independence. Jeremy D. Popkin, *A Concise History of the Haitian Revolution* (Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2012), 145. Jon Sobrino captures the anthropo-theological ramifications of this will to live through suffering in *Where is God?* He describes the people as "saints" whose lives are both existentially and soteriologically significant, even if in a "primordial" way. He writes, "In the victims' will to live there is something that fascinates, overwhelms, humanizes, reveals the mystery. There is also something that saves and challenges us in an ultimate way…Saintliness is the will to live and to survive amid great suffering, the decision and effort that it requires, the unlimited creativity, the strength, the constancy, defying innumerable problems and obstacles. Even in the midst of catastrophe and daily hardship, the poor and the victims – especially the women, and their children – put into practice and fulfill with distinction God's call to live, and to give life to others." Jon Sobrino, *Where is God? Earthquake, Terrorism, Barbarity, and Hope* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 2004) 73.

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those who utter these words suggests that the saying does not encapsulate the people's disposition in life. Perhaps the statement, *Ayiti pap janm chanje!*, is but an abbreviation of a deeper, more complex idea whose full expression is concealed by the need for relief; a task the exclamation, "Haiti will not never change!" performs ably.

From this perspective, the statement takes on a conditional tone. *Ayiti pap janm chanje!* becomes *Ayiti pap janm chanje [si sa ou byen si nou ou byen si yo pa chanje!]* "Haiti will never change [unless things or we or they change!]" In this form, the exclamation echoes the deep truths which historians, philosophers, and poets have expressed over the years. First, it identifies the source of the problem: "Haiti's tragedy is not natural, but manmade."[152] Second, it brandishes the proverbial mirror for all to see and for all to *reflect*: "Haiti…from man and from the gods, even Mother Nature bedecked you with insurmountable cut-ass-trophies repeatedly…"[153] Third, it disrupts the perception of permanence: "Haiti's tragedy is…not destiny but history."[154] Lastly, it positions the Haitian people, the ones whose hopes and fears the statement embodies, in a privileged place to shape their own destiny.[155] The following poem strikes at the heart of this situation.

Our blood is witness

to the heroism of our ancestors…

It is steeped in nobility

and we are the dwellers of its court of honor…

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[152] J. Michael Dash, "Rising from the Ruins: Haiti in 200 Years," in *Haiti Rising: Haitian History, Culture, and the Earthquake of 2010*, ed. Martin Munro (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), 63.
[153] St Rose, *Helen and Her Sister Haiti*, 260.
[154] Dash, *Haiti Rising*, 63.
[155] "Who are better prepared than the oppressed to understand the terrible significance of an oppressive society? Who suffer the effects of oppression more than the oppressed? Who can better understand the necessity for liberation?" Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum Publishing Corporation, 1984), 29.

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It knows how to surmount affliction

whether occupation or enslavement

to write the most beautiful pages.

History has always borne witness to this fact:

Certain is our destiny…[156]

Those are some of the factors that emerge from an initial consideration of this important statement. Other important factors must remain obscure for now.

The 'God' of Haitian History

'God' figures prominently in Haiti's tragic history. From the outset, however, this 'God' has a peculiar character. Having placed humanity at the apex of 'his' creation, 'he' creates Haitians, more precisely, their predecessors, to serve their European masters.[157] This peculiar breed of creatures descends from the line of Ham, Noah's second son, whose insolence earns his father's curse and, thereby, condemns his son Canaan's posterity to unending servitude.[158]

[156] Louis Joseph Guy Marie Cayemitte, "Notre Sang," in *Ainsi Parla la Terre*, ed. M. J. Fièvre (Miami: Women Writers of Haitian Descent, 2012), 217. Original text follows:

Notre sang est témoin
des épopées de nos pères…
De noblesse il est oint
et nous sommes titulaires de sa cour d'honneur…
Il sait remonter le malheur
de l'occupation à l'esclavage
pour écrire les plus belles pages.
L'histoire l'a toujours prouvé,
certaine est notre destinée…

[157] The indigenous peoples are deemed human by both the pope and the king of France, Charles V, who, in 1530 abolishes the enslavement of the 'Indians.' Unfortunately for the natives, particularly in Hispaniola, the king's edict came too late, for the Spanish had committed genocide against their kind. See Louis Sala-Molins, *Le Code Noir ou le calvaire de Canaan* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2012), 22-23.

[158] A popular thesis among slavers and their supporters was that Africans were the descendants of Ham, the father of the Canaanites and the son whom Noah had cursed for not protecting the latter's nakedness (Gen. 9:22). By virtue of their cursed state, the Africans were deemed natural slaves according to the manner of Aristotle's reasoning. In another version of the story, Africans still represent Ham's accursed progeny.

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In practice, the very being of the early Haitians marks them for European disenfranchisement: their physical characteristics make them ideal for fieldwork in the Caribbean climate. Their culture, unimpressive and unrefined, is a perfect candidate for assimilation into European ways of existence. Finally, their religion, their pagan, idolatrous, and evil rituals, are best extirpated and their souls implanted with Eurocentric Christian affections through baptism, as that is the true end of their humanity. The early Haitians must find their way to heaven through enslavement.[159] Louis Sala-Molins offers the following formula to describe the colonial situation: "The 'black' slaves? Socially: animals, not to say things. Individually: human beings, susceptible of salvation through baptism."[160]

However, Ham, Noah's beleaguered son, and his wife, conceive a son, Cush, during the flood. This act is in direct violation of Noah's interdiction against sexual activity on the ark. As punishment, 'God' curses the child with blackness. Cush is thus the origin of Africans' darkness and the reason for their cursed existence. Even the renowned scholar Guillaume Postel submitted to this kind of narrative. See Sala-Molins, *Le Code Noir*, 24. Ottobah Cugoano, a formerly enslaved man, affirms this thesis when he writes, "Thus the wars of the Israelites, their exile and the enslavement of the Canaanites have always served as pretext to the cruel oppressors of the Africans. Those destroyers of the Blacks want people to believe that the law of Moses supports their barbarism." «*Ainsi les guerres des Israélites, l'exil et l'esclavage des Cananéens ont toujours servi de prétexte aux cruels oppresseurs des Africains. Ainsi les ravisseurs des Noirs veulent faire croire que la loi de Moïse est la sauvegarde de leur barbarie.*» Ottobah Cugoano, *Réflexions sur la Traite et l'Esclavage des Nègres*, traduites de l'anglais d'Ottobah Cugoano, Africain, esclave à la Grenade et libre en Angleterre, par Antoine Diannyère, Londres et Paris, 1788, 193-4. For an analysis of Cugoano's narrative in the context of the *Code Noir*, see Louis Sala-Molins, *Le Code Noir*, 15.

[159] Sala-Molins, *Le Code Noir*, 53-65. The implication is that the sin of the Africans does not consist only in inheriting Adam's fall from divine grace but from their non-European status, from "degeneracy." They are inheritors of a curse of their own by reason of Ham's sin, which has a dehumanizing effect in the eyes of Europeans. Thus the Africans are lesser humans "because with the curse comes a loss of the faculties of 'rationality,' memory,' 'intelligence,' and 'volition,' which inhere in the condition of being fully human and are, as Condorcet was later to argue, a sine qua non for the exercise of political sovereignty, of rights. However, …the Canaanite can through time, Christian teaching, and conversion to Catholicism (in the eighteenth century both usually provided in slavery) recover his lost faculties and thus his full humanity." John Conteh-Morgan's introduction to Louis Sala-Molins, *Dark Side of the Light: Slavery and the French Enlightenment* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), xxi-ii.

[160] Original text: «*Les 'nègres' esclaves? Socialement: des bêtes, voire des objects. Individuellement: des creatures humaines, susceptibles du salut par le baptême*». Sala-Molins, *Le Code Noir*, 21. The colonialist's discourse draws directly from the biblical narrative, particularly around the events involving Noah and his son Ham (Gen. 9: 20-28), but Aristotle influences it tremendously. See Sala-Molins, *Le Code Noir,* 36. Aristotle teaches that some men are born to rule while others are born to serve as a matter of nature. He argues, "The use made of slaves and of tame animals is not very different." While the master by nature uses his mind, the slave uses his body to contribute to societal life. Contradicting Socrates, he adds, "the slaves are only capable of an inferior kind of virtue," for their lot is analogous to that of "things."

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Undergirding the colonialist's discourse is a sophisticated soteriology that has Europeanism as its center. As for the enslaved, their salvation is a matter of promise the fruits of which they can never see in the here and now. The earthly biblical privileges promised to the recipients of Christian salvation do not apply to the enslaved. They must settle for that which lies in the by-and-by. Of all the 'converts' to Christianity, they are called to the blindest kind of faith.[161]

The colonialist's approaches to theology and anthropology are worthy of the Age of Reason.[162] During the Enlightenment, a time of great religious revivals coincides with a shift in attitudes toward religious authority.[163] A shift in attitudes means that practicing

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Thus, concludes the philosopher, "It is clear, then, that some men are by nature free, and others slaves, and that for these latter slavery is both expedient and right." As this is the natural order of things, slave and master "are friends and share a common interest" which is the wellbeing of the master. The slave essentially lives for the master. However, the master's existence is not bound to the slave and master relation. In addition, whereas the point of reference for the master is the "stem of the Gods," the beast is the most appropriate tool with which to compare the slave. Aristotle supports his claims with examples from daily Greek life. He is doing what practical theologians praise about his contribution to philosophy in that he makes practice the source of his theorizing. Aristotle's problem for practical theology is that he presents his theories as having universal application simply because that is the way of things in his Greece. He does nothing by way of a critical challenge to the views he expounds. On the contrary, he firmly rejects at least one thesis from among his contemporaries, which deemed slavery a conventional rather than a natural phenomenon. That is to be expected for the philosopher who belongs *ipso facto* to the noblest class of all. See Aristotle, *Politics* (Mineola, New York: Dover, 2000), 8, 25-53.

[161] "Slaves on earth, set free thanks to the slave trade in eternity and for eternity, the blacks have an unprecedented opportunity. Raided unto paradise, God shows mercy unto Ham and Canaan, and their posterity forever."«*Esclaves ici-bas, libérés grâce à la traite dans l'éternité et pour l'éternité, les Noirs ont une chance inouïe. Razziés pour le paradis, Dieu use de miséricorde pour Cham et Cannaan et toute leur semence dans les siècles des siècles».* Sala-Molins, *Le Code Noir,* 36

[162] This lengthy passage is worthy of quoting in full: "Let us consider the example of the most cold-hearted form of genocide by Modernity: that which accompanied Modernity from its dawn, remained with it throughout its course and well beyond it, getting bogged down in nothingness only in the twilight years of the nineteenth century and well into the contemporary period; a form of genocide that did not take place on the sly but in full view of everyone; one whose efficiency did not derive from the madness of bandits or from coded messages decipherable only by initiates but from very Christian members of royalty, solemn decrees and privileges, and from a legal code drawn up in clear language, publicized everywhere and readable by all; a form of genocide that did not cross out from humanity – on the basis of some assessment of degeneracy – the offspring of such and such a stateless people, of humans guilty of abnormal sexual practices, but one that vanished from humanity an entire continent, on the basis of a body deemed bestial and a mind considered fit for natural enslavement." ." Louis Sala-Molins, *Dark Side of the Light: Slavery and the French Enlightenment* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 5-6.

[163] "Pietism in Germany, Methodism in England, the Great Awakening in the United States" William C. Placher and Derek R. Nelson, *A History of Christian Theology: An Introduction* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2013), 203.

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Christians themselves view the world differently than their predecessors. While medieval Christians value their lives because they fit into God's story, Enlightenment Christians value God because God fits into their story. Humanity becomes the central focus of the human quest for self-understanding.[164]

With humanity, more specifically, European men squarely seated at the center of the world, philosophers seal 'man's' place at the apex of creation, and 'God,' ever more susceptible of conceptualization, retreats to the place reserved for ambiguous if not dispensable ideas: arguments. The consequences of such a move are that those who control the Christian narrative, who are well-positioned to manipulate the conceptualization of 'God' to their benefit, create both the world and 'God' in their image and according to their likeness. Consequently, from the outset, 'God' is the enemy of the colonized, for 'he' is the benefactor of the colonizer. In 'his' name, European colonialists invade, enslave, and destroy peoples, traditions, and cultures, while erecting chateaux and cathedrals to the glory of the 'God' and the wealth of the motherland.[165]

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[164] "Many of the [theological] details might remain the same, but the center of the story moved from God to human beings."Placher, *A History of Christian Theology*, 204.

[165] In the preface to Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, Jean-Paul Sartre makes the following proclamation: "you know full well we are exploiters. You know full well we have taken the gold and minerals and the oil from the 'continents,' and shipped them back to the metropolises. Not without excellent results in the shape of palaces, cathedrals, and centers of industry; and then when crisis loomed, the colonial markets were there to cushion the blow or divert it. Stuffed with wealth, Europe granted humanity *de jure* to all its inhabitants: for us, a man means an accomplice, for we have all profited from colonial exploitation." Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 2004), lviii. See also Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000), 32-33. Sartre is merely offering rhetorical fervor to a situation averred early on by Moreau de Saint-Méry in his *Description*. He observes, «*La partie Française de l'île Saint-Domingue est, de toutes les possessions de la France dans le Nouveau-Monde, la plus importante par les richesses qu'elle procure à sa Métropole et par l'influence qu'elle a sure son agriculture et sur son commerce*.» "The French part of the island of Saint-Domingue is, of all French possessions in the New World, the most significant in terms of wealth procured to its metropolis and in terms of its influence on agriculture and commerce." Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description Topographique, Physique, Civile, Politique et Historique de La Partie Française de l'Isle Saint-*Domingue (Paris: Société Française d'Histoire d'Outre-Mer, 1984), 25. Translation from Paul Farmer, *Uses of Haiti* (Monroe, Maine: Common Courage Press, 1994), 62. In the same vein, Albert Memmi asks rhetorically, "What is fascism, if not a regime of oppression for the benefit of a few?" Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991), 62.

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'God' sanctions whatever means is necessary to placate European demands for luxury goods and wealth and forgives the means by which the Europeans force their captives into submission including rape, castration, dismemberment, and all sorts of unutterable brutalities, as long as the masters baptize and instruct the enslaved into the Roman Catholic and apostolic religion, to use the language of the *Code Noir*.[166]

The 'God,' which the European colonialists transport into Haiti, the concept that can be proved or disproved by argumentation, apprehended or dispelled by reason, is the fabrication of European minds, the child of a narcissistic and xenophobic society. This 'God' moves in and out of existence according to the whim of human reasoning ability, a fact that ties 'God' directly to every significant idea or major world event, whether in its Aristotelian modality as unmoved mover or in its Nietzschean form as a decomposing corpse, as long as it bolsters the standing of European civilization around the world. Every significant paradigm shift, from the Reformation to the Enlightenment to the slave trade, has as a corollary, explicitly or implicitly, a significant shift in the conceptualization of 'God.'

When this reasoning is followed to its logical conclusion, then enslavement of entire peoples, the systematic rape of the African continent, and the continued exploitation and dehumanization of Latin America and the Caribbean are justifiable as acts of divine providence, just as was the decimation of the Hittites and the Canaanites at

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[166] The brutalities of European colonizers against the enslaved are well documented. For an analysis of the *Code Noir*, see Louis Sala-Molins, *Le Code Noir ou le Calvaire de Canaan* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1987). See especially pages 84-197. For Sala-Molins, "the crucial test case for the Enlightenment is the slave trade and slavery." He adds, "how can the Enlightenment be interpreted? Only with the *Code noir* in hand." Sala-Molins, *Dark Side of the Light*, 9. Michel-Rolph Trouillot supports Sala-Molins' thesis when he asserts, "the more European merchants and mercenaries bought and conquered other men and women, the more [Enlightenment] European philosophers wrote and talked about man." Michel-Rolph Trouillot, "An Unthinkable History: The Haitian Revolution as a Non-Event," in *Haitian History: New Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 35.

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the hands of the Israelites. Such a 'God' does not desire the manumission of the enslaved. 'He' in fact ordains the enslavement of the children of Ham to the children of Shem and Japheth. Slavery is thus a missionary endeavor, the gift of 'God' to redeem Ham's accursed descendants from Adam's curse. Their curse by reason of Ham's impertinence, however, remains outstanding, and hence, the necessity of their chains.

The history of 'God' in Haiti is characterized by reinforcements of various conceptualizations of this 'God.' Missionary movements of various Christian stripes, one after another, abetted by government officials and a paternalist community of nations eager to 'civilize' Haitians, bombard Haitian soil with their castigating rhetoric. Haiti's leaders, envious, greedy, and often shortsighted, identify the former and new master's approbation with the best interests of the young nation. Their miscalculations have cost Haiti incalculably over the course of the past two centuries, as the Haitian people, taxed in every way by a wicked history and a continuous state of siege, struggle to stay alive.[167]

Goudougoudou as Calamity

The *taptap* is also an ideal place to discover the things that are important to the people of Haiti. Four years after *Goudougoudou*[168] – the onomatopoeia the locals use to refer to the 2010 earthquake[169] – killed nearly a quarter of a million people around the city. Even today *Goudougoudou* lives on. Broken bodies and troubled minds are a difficult reminder that healing still evades many people long after scars have formed over

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[167] For a brief history of religion in Haiti, see Terry Rey, *Our Lady of Class Struggle: The Cult of the Virgin* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press Inc., 1999), 26-84. Petit-Monsieur's work offers a comparative analysis of the competing religions of Haiti. Lamartine Petit-Monsieur, *La coexistence de types religieux différents dans l'Haïtien contemporain* (Immensee, Switzerland: Nouvelle Revue de science missionaire, 1992), 37-61. See also Charles-Poisset Romain, *Le protestantisme dans la société haïtienne: Contribution à l'étude sociologique d'une religion* (Port-au-Prince: Deschamps, 1986).

[168] For personal stories and various perspectives on the earthquake, see Martin Munro, ed., *Haiti Rising: Haitian History, Culture, and the Earthquake of 2010* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010).

[169] Nancy Dorsinville offers a glimpse into the process by which the earthquake acquires the name *Goudougoudou* in Paul Farmer, *Haiti after the Earthquake* (New York: Public Affairs, 2011), 273-281.

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bleeding wounds. Many people, still aghast, continue to revisit the memory of that day's events. They remember the crushed limbs. They remember the hurried and all too brutal amputations-en-masse.[170] They remember the young victims who were still in their seats or at the blackboard when their school buildings crushed their little bodies. Now standing from a relatively safe distance outside of those infernal seconds, they can begin to reflect and commit their experience to language, as reflected in the following lines.

> Darkness had victory over light,
> The dawn turned back its gaze.
> The Haitian people buried in dirt,
> While still outside the cemetery.
> Haiti screamed of terror,
> So loud that Guinea heard
> Blackout could not hold back the news
> Rescue came bit by bit.
> (*Tenèb te kente sou limyè,*
> *Douvanjou t'ap gade dèyè.*
> *Pèp Ayisyen kouvri anba tè,*
> *San l' pa rive nan simtyè*
> *Ayiti te rele anmwe,*
> *Menm nan Ginen yo te tande.*
> *Nouvèl te kabre blakawout,*

[170] Marlène Rigaud Apollon, "Manman, Pa kite yo koupe janm mwen! Mommy, don't let them cut my leg!," in *Haiti Rising: Haitian History, Culture and the Earthquake of 2010* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), 12-14.

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Sekou te rive bout pa bout.)[171]

Some elements of the stories do not always emerge in the *taptap* but in face-to-face encounters or in small group discussions that spontaneously erupt in homes or on the street corner or under the mango or *lam veritab* (breadfruit) tree, both of which doubled as shelter for days after the earthquake struck. One or two persons usually excuse themselves quickly so as to avoid reliving the event.

Those conversations about *Goudougoudou* can become very serious as one story follows another and then another until everyone becomes enthralled in the details. The storytellers typically compare notes as they recall where they were and what they did to survive, which usually elicits expressions of disbelief, and sometimes gratitude and laughter. They describe the strangeness of feeling the ground move underneath their feet or watching homes wobble from side to side as if dancing or simply collapse.[172] They describe feats of agility and solidarity, of running to the streets for shelter and using rocks for pillow. They also talk of the decomposing bodies of their loved ones lining various streets of the city or piled inside makeshift morgues around the city. Some still struggle with the memory of death's literal stench. They remember finding a new use for toothpaste in those days.[173] They also remember the eventual commitment of those

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[171] From Yvette Leroy's "12 Janvye" in *Ainsi Parla la Terre*, ed. M. J. Fièvre (Miami: Women writers of Haitian descent, 2012), 242.

[172] Danny Laferrière captures this feeling in his aptly titled work, «*Tout bouge autour de moi*» "Everything around me is moving." Danny Laferrière, *Tout bouge autour de moi* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 2011). Monsignor André Pierre recounts, "My house collapsed with my baby in it. She was a year and some months. Two houses collapsed in front of mine, so I had to climb across the roofs of all three houses to get there, but every time I tried to climb up the houses kept dancing, so I had to wait a couple of hours." Beverly Bell, *Fault Lines: Views across Haiti's Divide* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2013), 16.

[173] A strip of toothpaste applied just above the top lip provided some relief from the smell of decomposing bodies. This is drawn from accounts by family members who survived the earthquake.

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unnamed persons to mass graves outside the city. In language that evokes horror and disgust simultaneously, one poet offers the following verbal depiction.

> Haiti, you've turned into maggots, you've become flies
> You stink of death. O, look at the corpses of the little angels!
> Look at the poor dead! O…rich people die?
> What a stinking slaughterhouse?
> At death's crossroads we are all one.
>
> Look at all that blood, poor people's blood, rich people's blood…
> Titanyen[174] they did not even call upon you
> Do you not speak English?...
> Move, next, make room one on top of the other.
> O! Look at the broken legs.
> Zenglendo,[175] get off of me!
> Can't you see I've no hands?
> Can't you see I've no eyes?
> My head is split in two;
> My brain has fallen out.
> (*Ayiti, ou tounen vè, ou tounen mouch*
> *Ou santi mò. O, gade kadav ti zanj yo!*

[174] Titanyen is a village that sits north of Port-au-Prince. The Duvalier regime used it as a dumping ground for the bodies of its victims. It is also the burial site for many of *Goudougoudou*'s victims.
[175] *Zenglendos* tormented Haitians beginning with the 1991 coup against Jean-Bertrand Aristide's government. They were armed and enjoyed partisans in the military government. They pillaged at their pleasure and with impunity. Elizabeth McAlister describes *zenglendo* as a "type of violent criminal." She proposes that *Zenglens*, a mid-nineteen century paramilitary group developed by Emperor Soulouque, is the likely origin of the term. See Elizabeth McAlister, *Rara! Vodou, Power, and Performance in Haiti and Its Diaspora* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 176, 233n.27.

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Gade pòv! O…apa moun rich te konn mouri?

Apa s'on labatwa vyann santi?

Nan kalfou lanmò nou tout fè on sèl.

Gade san, san pòv, san rich…

Titanyen yo pa menm di ou lonnè

Ou pa pale anglè?...

Avanse lesuivan, fè plas youn sou lòt.

O! Gade bout pye.

Zenglendo, leve sou mwen!

Ou pa wè m'pa gen men?

Ou pa wè je m' pete?

Tèt mwen ouvri de bò;

Tèt mwen san mwèl.)[176]

Goudougoudou also makes itself felt in the many monuments, religious and national, that have yet to be rebuilt. Walking the streets of Port-au-Prince gives a glance into the events of January 12, 2010. Buildings that once represented divine glory, human ingenuity, and political power among Haitians now stand as ruins, skeletons that struggle to hold the memory of their former days. The presidential palace has recently been razed. Debris can still be seen through the covered fence around the small structure that houses the current administration. St. Anne Catholic Church sits derelict. Its few still standing stones look lonely without the magnificent ceiling they once supported. The city's cathedral is the same. So are the many protestant churches. These once majestic edifices,

[176]From Lucie Mercure Gelin's "*Ayiti , se pa fòt ou, se pa fòt mwen*" in *Ainsi Parla la Terre*, ed. M. J. Fièvre (Miami: Women writers of Haitian descent, 2012), 248.

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which physically and symbolically mediated the divine-human encounter, turned a deaf ear, as it were, to the screams of terror of the faithful, killing lay and cleric alike. There is a question to be asked here, if one has the courage to do so. If the expectation was that the seat of the divine-human encounter would be immune from so calamitous a happening, then *Goudougoudou* lifted a critical veil on what actually happens inside these sacred buildings. From the "entrails of scrap metal and of dust" of the buildings and from the poured "viscera and blood" of the human victims, all signs point to the absence of God, unless, of course, *Goudougoudou* victimized God as well on January 12, 2010, and that the heavenly entrails and voice are intermixed with their earthly counterparts within Haiti's obscene display of "forced nakedness."[177]

Goudougoudou as Theological Motif

If calamity signifies the absence of God, then Haitians are without hope. *Goudougoudou* is but one incident in the country's assured destruction! However, if calamity and the presence of God are not mutually exclusive realities, and that the

[177] In *Failles*, Yanick Lahens personifies Port-au-Prince and imbues the dilapidated city with all the characteristics of a victim of the gravest of calamities at the hands of a bloodthirsty deity: "Hair unkempt, eyes rolled upwards, legs dislocated, genitalia exposed, exposing its entrails of scrap iron and dust, its viscera and its blood. Unmasked, undressed, naked, yet Port-au-Prince was not obscene. Its imposed nakedness was obscene. The scandal of its poverty was obscene." «*Cheveux hirsutes, yeux révulsés, jambes disloquées, sexe béant, exhibant ses entrailles de ferraille et de poussière, ses viscères et son sang. Livrée, déshabillée, nue, Port-au-Prince n'était pourtant point obscène. Ce qui le fut, c'est sa mise à nu forcée. Ce qui fut obscène et le demeure, c'est le scandale de sa pauvreté*». Yanick Lahens, *Failles* (Paris: Sabine Wespieser, 2010), 13. When paralleled with the incident involving the children of Noah and their father's nakedness, this metaphor raises crucial questions. How will Haiti's children react to their national exposure? Perhaps Haitians should not completely dis-own the colonial interpretation of Ham's story; they need only reinterpret it. Ham saw his father's nakedness as an opportunity for dis-closure, to see beyond the coverings, as it were. In this, Ham finds occasion for a comparative analysis in terms of similarities and dissimilarities. In terms of similarity, he finds occasion to identify with his father. In terms of dissimilarity, he sees the things he might wish to question or completely avoid in his own life. Such a critical opportunity has the potential to be constructive, for it forces Ham to place his father's history in conversation with his own. In his father's nakedness, he finds the opportunity to live in light of his own nakedness, in light of the risk of being exposed by his own children. *Goudougoudou* forces Haitian thinkers into a crossroads: Like Ham, they can dare to glance at that which threatens their existence. Or, like Shem and Japheth, they can choose the path of ignorance and naïveté and cover things up for the sake of the privilege such a disposition affords.

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destruction of sacred places does not signal abandonment by God, any more than the razing of the national palace indicate the absence of a government or political power – rather, it means the opposite in this instance – then *Goudougoudou* might have lifted the veil on the fallibility of the practice, doctrinal and ritual, of linking holy presence to holy ground. This applies as much to the heaps of rubble once called a cathedral or a peristyle or a temple, as to the heaps of broken bodies in Titanyen's mass graves, once called Jean, Marie, Dieufort, Lifèt, or Mr., Mrs., Pastor, Inmate, Doctor, Mambo, Senator, Archbishop, Sergeant, etc.

Goudougoudou can be a useful motif, a shaking of the foundations, as it were, for understanding the encounter with God in Haiti, particularly in light of its history of suffering.[178] As a theological motif, *Goudougoudou* puts in question narratives that bind God to beliefs and actions that exalt only certain places or save a select few, as it relativizes both places and peoples. Besides churches and temples, other buildings fell too: schools, homes, businesses, and others. No one's cries seem to reach God's ear on that day: not those of the children or those of the elderly whose schools and homes turned into sepulchers, nor those of the people who watched in anguish as loved ones succumbed to their injuries, nor those of a president who watched his efforts come to a catastrophic end in a matter of a fraction of time. All are guilty or something other than guilt is responsible for suffering, for God is bound neither to suffering nor to its absence;

[178] This lengthy passage from Jon Sobrino in response to the earthquakes that struck El Salvador in 2001 aptly applies to the *Goudougoudou*. "To reflect on the historical and social aspects of the earthquake is a decisive change of perspective – a paradigm shift, we say today. It shows the injustice that prevails in the country and the planet, which people have spared no effort in hiding, but which the earthquake has clearly revealed. Is it right to learn so much about other planets and not about how to make our own as safe as possible? To spend astronomical sums on lethal weapons, and on such trivial things as cosmetics, manufacturing, and marketing offensive entertainment, music, sports? This reflection leads us to *demand* accountability (as the Enlightenment did with God), with all the seriousness that the situation entails. It does not let us shift the blame to nature, or hide behind mere emergency aid." Sobrino, *Where is God?*, 17-18.

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at least that is the implication of *Goudougoudou* as a theological motif. Haitian history and contemporary life are such that to immure the human encounter with God within a designated place or consign it to specified hours or a season of plenty, and to 'put a lid' on the facts of life that inspire the people's songs and testimonies, is to draw nefarious conclusions not only about the extraordinary events such as *Goudougoudou* but also about life in the marketplace, in the home, and at most meals. Worse yet, to separate God from the ordinary impugns the integrity of the most ordinary thing of all among Haitians, that thing which is most present to each and all Haitian people: their very bodies.[179]

Haitian life and history point to something beyond themselves. However, that something does not seek to transcend the lived (bodily) experience of the people or reduce Haiti's story to a footnote in some cosmic *heilsgeschichte,* for that something, as the *Goudougoudou* motif suggests, is other than a condemning presence or an apathetic judge or a hope whose object lies in the beyond. Perhaps the Vodouisants' concept of the mirror most helpfully describes it.[180] Haitian history and contemporary life point to a cosmic mirror that renders visible that which is invisible.

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[179] Embodiment is central to the practice of liberation theology, according to Marcella Althaus-Reid. She writes, "Latin American liberation theology is based on the search for the materiality of transcendence." Marcella Althaus-Reid, *Indecent Theology: Theological Perversions in Sex, Gender, and Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 148. According to Mayra Rivera, "that search leads liberation theologies to people's stories, to everyday experiences, 'because they reveal the falsity of the border limits between the material and divine dimensions of our lives.'" Mayra Rivera, "Thinking Bodies" in *Decolonizing Epistemologies: Latina/o Theology and Philosophy*, eds. Ada María Isasi-Díaz & Eduardo Mendieta (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012), 211.

[180] For a discussion of this important concept, see Maya Deren, *Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of* Haiti (New York: McPherson & Company, 2004), 34-38. Noteworthy is the way Vodouisants link the concept of the mirror to the symbol of the cross. "Hence, in Vodou, the relationship between the cosmic mirror and the mundane reality which it reflects takes the cosmographic form of the cross. In the cross, Vodouists see not only the earth's surface as comprehended by the four cardinal points of the universe, but also the intersection of the two worlds, the world of men as symbolized by the horizontal line, and *Ville-aux-Camps* as represented by the vertical." Leslie G. Desmangles, "African Interpretations of Christian Vodou Cross," in *Invisible Powers: Vodou in Haitian Life and Culture*, eds. Claudine Michel and Patrick Bellegarde-Smith (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 46.

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Worlds Converge in the *Goudougoudou* Motif

The dialectic of the presence and absence of God, or the visibility of God over against the invisibility of God in the midst of suffering, stands as an important heuristic to study the history of God in Haiti.[181] As with *Goudougoudou*, the dialectic resolves itself, but in tension that disallows easy answers. The dialectic resolves itself in question form whenever a victim or a reliable witness comes forward or a historian recounts the story of the Atlantic passage or a statistician weighs the genocidal effects of colonization upon the colonized or a school child sings *Pour le pays, pour la patrie, mourir est beau*.[182] The following passage about life in colonial Haiti from Vastey, Henri Christophe's secretary, captures the gist of the tension:

> Have they not hung up men with heads downward, drowned them in sacks, crucified them on planks, buried them alive, and crushed them in mortars? Have they not forced them to eat shit? And after having flayed them with the lash, have they not cast them alive to be devoured by worms, or onto anthills, or lashed them to stakes in the swamp to be devoured by mosquitoes? Have they not thrown them into boiling caldrons of cane syrup? Have they not put men and women inside barrels studded with spikes and rolled them down mountainsides into the abyss? Have they not consigned these miserable blacks to man-eating dogs until the

[181] This is distinct from Derrida's notion of the trace. See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's introduction to Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1997), xlii.
[182] First line of the Haitian national anthem, *La Dessalinienne*: "For the country, for the nation, to die is good."

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latter, sated by human flesh left the mangle victims to be finished off with bayonet and poniard?[183]

Lucie Mercure Gelin lifts up the same dialectic tension in contemporary Haiti in her poem "*O Grann Sentàn*."

Haiti, what a difficult labor. You've been pushing for a long time.

Will you ever be delivered from this burden?

Haiti, your sky is vexing, your cheeks are swollen.

For a while now you've suffered disappointment.

(*Ayiti tranche a rèd. W'ap pouse lontan.*

Kilè w'ap delivre manman vant sa a?

Ayiti, syèl ou miba, machwè w' gonfle.

Gen kèk tan w'ap pran koutba.)[184]

Then again,

Look at the sky's angry face

Its belly's swollen to the point of bursting

Surely this is a bad omen, an evil presence is lurking outside

It's like a woman who is unable to push

While in the middle of labor pangs

This must be Satan's child.

(*O gade jan machwè syèl la gonfle*

Vant li miba, lonbrit li pwèt pou pete

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[183] Robert Debs Heinl and Nancy Gordon Heinl, *Written in Blood: The Story of the Haitian People 1492-1995* (New York: University Press of America, 2005), 23.

[184] Lucie Mercure Gelin, "Ayiti," in *Ainsi Parla la Terre*, ed. M. J. Fièvre (Miami: Women writers of Haitian descent, 2012), 246.

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Sa se siy malè, movezè deyò, ap galope

Se tankou yon fanm ki pa ka pouse

Ki nan yon tranche, maldanfan

Gen lè sa se pitit satan!)[185]

Gelin's approach doubly intensifies Vastey's already trenchant interrogation by her turn to the metaphorical. She chooses a symbol whose power to express anguish transcends the barriers of culture, time, and language, the pangs of a woman in the midst of a complicated labor. She directs her query at Haiti itself, casting a Sisyphean shadow upon an already belabored situation. That way, she shows that the proverbial road has ended and that the only way to stave off despair lies in the hope for something more, the hope of an encounter.[186] And so passion segues into a paradoxical prayer for a healing hand.

O Grandmother St. Anne

Please send for a midwife

To get things unblocked

To unravel the umbilical chord

That chord of death

In the great crossroads

That leads to the cemetery

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[185] Lucie Mercure Gelin, "O Grann Sentàn," in *Ainsi Parla la Terre*, ed. M. J. Fièvre (Miami: Women writers of Haitian descent, 2012), 244.

[186] For Marcel, despair is synonymous with capitulation. He writes, "the truth is that there can strictly speaking be no hope except when the temptation to despair exists. Hope is the act by which this temptation is actively or victoriously overcome." Gabriel Marcel, *Homo Viator* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1951), 36.

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Before *mouche Bawon*[187]

Evil and bad luck

Have assaulted your child

Make her ablutions with *maskriti* leaves

Give her some ginger tea

So she can be delivered

Add aloe, *bazilik* and *gwo nèg* leaves

Bundle them up together

[Then] go before the cemetery

and trace a *vèvè*[188]

to pay homage to the invisible.

(*O Grann Sentàn*

Tanpri voye chèche fanm saj

Pou vin fè deblokaj

W'a demakonnen kòd lonbrit

Ki mare ak fisèl lanmò

Nan kalfou gran chimen

K'al di lonè nan simityè

Kay mouche Bawon

Move zè ak madichon

Flank pitit ou yon so kabrit

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187 This is a reference to *Bawon Samdi*, the *lwa* or god of the dead. For more detail, see Maya Deren, *Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti* (New York: McPherson & Company, 2004), 49.

188 Vèvè or vevers are sacred symbols corresponding to specific *lwa* drawn during Vodou ceremonies. See Deren, *Divine Horsemen*, 34.

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W'a ba l' yon beny fèy maskriti

Ak yon bon te janjanm

Pou manman vant ka sòti

Ak lalwa, fèy bazilik, fèy gwo nèg

W'a makonnen tout ansanm

Devan simityè

W'a va l' trase yon vèvè

Pou di lone, ak tout sa w' pa ka wè)[189]

Where is God? How and where is God to be encountered in Haiti's history of suffering? Who and what is God in these passages?[190] Is God the cause of the suffering or its remedy? Does either/or have a place in this conversation? Is it safe to assume that God was there when, for their own pleasure, Europeans established in the Americas economies based on slave labor?[191] Is it wise to surmise that God was there, anywhere, when, like cattle, human beings lived for the sole purpose of enriching Portugal, Spain, France, Britain, the United States, and their conniving partners who turned a deaf ear to the cries of the Taïnos, the Africans, and their children?[192] Was an encounter with God possible in the midst of rape, castration, dismemberment, familial separation, cultural decimation, religious terrorism, and complete dehumanization, when the Caribbean soil drank its fill of the sweat, tears, and blood of men, women, and children whose fate was

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[189] Gelin, "O Grann Sentàn," 244.

[190] Does Eli Wiesel's suggestion suffice that God hangs in the gallows? Elie Wiesel, *Night* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006), xx.

[191] Popkin asserts, "the island [of St. Domingue], like all of France's Caribbean possessions, was a society based on slavery and racial hierarchy, institutions whose principles were largely alien to the metropole." Jeremy D. Popkin, *You Are All Free: The Haitian Revolution and the Abolition of Slavery* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 26.

[192] The poet Father St Rose writes, "the machinery and mule power of production; the heart and soul of America's sweet gold, yes, Europe's sweet gold too. Africa's aided dehumanization of her sons and daughters." St Rose, *Helen and Her Sister Haiti*, 37.

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sealed by papal pronouncement and royal decree, in other words, in God's name, to be traded and discarded upon use as soulless refuse? Pope Borgia, Pope Nicolas V, King Louis XIV of France, King and Queen Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain, Bartolomé de Las Casas, Thomas Jefferson to name just a few, force the question again and again in their actions: Is the encounter with God limited to a fan club, exclusive to a culture and its respective phenotypical and religious features? Can God be encountered in Haitian history and contemporary life in a normative way?

These questions concerning the encounter with God in Haitian history quickly take the form of lament. They are not rhetorical questions in the least. They emerge from lived experience and presuppose that appropriate answers are possible; answers that do justice to the cries of the victims of Haitian history.[193] Part of the task of Haitian theologians is to find appropriate answers to these questions, not in an overweening manner but through struggle, which requires their participation in Haiti's existential situation.[194] These questions are not intended to mock the idea of God either, as in the case of Nietzsche's Zarathustra. They are rather prayerful queries, though their precise aim is more akin to a summons than an interrogation. If genuine answers are the goal, then the questions must be addressed to God directly. "Where is God" becomes "Where are you, God?" "Where is God" or "Where and how is God to be encountered" occurs in the context of a soul searching for meaning in a place of seemingly insurmountable torment, a soul that is dissatisfied with the answers of old, which locate Haitians outside of God's favor.

[193] As Metz asserts, if the cries of the crucified ones are left out, then history is nothing but the conqueror's myth. Johann Baptist Metz, *A Passion for God: The Mystical-Political Dimension of* Christianity (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1998), 126.
[194] Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 2:15.

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In this context, address is protest and protest is constitutive of hope. Hence, the idea of God can be prime target for the work of decolonization, just as it was prime target for colonization. The affirmation of God by the oppressed even in lament is the disaffirmation of the narratives that bind God to a special people or special places at the expense of history's victims. Gustavo Gutiérrez traces the encounter through the Hebrew Scriptures.[195] For him, the encounter with God among the people is a matter of divine promise, which culminates in the incarnation, an event by which humanity becomes God's dwelling place.

In tracing the encounter with God in (Hebrew) history, the Gutiérrez highlights the processes by which the modes of encounter evolve, from initially linking God to sacred places such as the mountain, the tent, the Ark, and the sanctuary of Solomon's temple, or to a special people, such as the Israelites, to taking on a more universal form in the heart of every human being. He writes,

> on the one hand, there is a universalization of the presence of God: from being localized and linked to a particular people, it gradually extends to all the peoples of the earth. On the other hand, there is an internalization, or rather, an integration of this presence: from dwelling in places of worship, this presence is transferred to the heart of human history; it is a presence which embraces the whole person. [196]

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[195] "Human history, then, is the location of our encounter with God, in Christ." Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of* Liberation (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2010), 106-116.

[196] Gutiérrez, *A Theology of* Liberation, 106-116. See also Eberhard Jüngel, *God as the Mystery of the World* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2009), 49. Jüngel discusses the question "Where is God?" in relation to the Israelites' quest for the "right God." The question calls the very integrity of God in question, and hence, gets directed at Godself in relief to the presence/absence dialectic in the midst of suffering. As both Gutiérrez and Jüngel aver, the bible is a good place to witness the encounter with God in the context of the Israelites' quest for identity.

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In the encounter with God, those modes of divine manifestation correlate with the forms of the encounter. Hence, God is encountered in solidarity with the neighbor.

The Legacy Continues

So much has changed, yet so much remains the same. In 1803, Dessalines takes the French flag, rips out the white from the middle of it, then Catherine Flon, needle and thread in hand, sows together the remaining bands to produce an emblem of national unity and pride. On October 17, 1806, Dessalines, the hero of the revolutionary war and the first at the helm of the new nation, comes to an untimely death, assassinated by his fellow revolutionaries. The decades that follow see the country divided, its independence held for ransom by the French, abandoned by the Catholic Church, embargoed by the United States, and altogether ostracized by the community of nations. The decades that follow see a Haiti that struggles to stand on its own.

Today, over two centuries since Dessalines inaugurates the world's first Black Republic, Haiti struggles to stand on its own. The proliferation of NGOs and the virtual branding of the nation by donor countries testify to an international consensus that Haiti is in need of salvation. Often portrayed as victims of outside intervention, and rightly so, Haiti's children are often the target of international fundraising campaigns and food drives. Even from among Haiti's children, murmurs and conjectures indicate a slight but sustained desire to forgo national pride and independence for a chance at the American dream or membership in the European Union.

Today's Haitians share a characteristic that is as endemic in the twenty-first century as it was in the sixteenth. This characteristic is perhaps not pervasive enough to be deemed of ontological significance. However, conditioned by the very factors of

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culture, ethnicity, and religion, by virtue of which the world continues to ostracize Haitian people, this characteristic maligns Haitian existence at the most fundamental level: colonialism conditions much of the interacting among Haitians and between Haitians and the outside world.

At the most fundamental level, colonialism was a success in Haiti, a fact that becomes clear as one recognizes that Haiti is structurally the product of its colonizers.[197] Its idea of progress was forged in the minds of Enlightenment philosophers. Its politics, like that of its conquerors, stands faithfully in the Roman tradition. Its notion of beauty continues to emulate European ideals, gauged as they are by their proximity to European standards. Its economy is a case study for capitalism at its best and worst: With a deteriorating sliver of a middle ground, a small elite largely controls the country's resources with the majority of the population living in want.[198]

In many ways, Haitians live in a colony in which the interests of the donor countries and those of the elite supersede those of ordinary Haitian citizens. Much of the rest of the world looks to them as though they were passive participants in a process initiated and controlled by others.[199] Their portrayal in foreign media inspires visions of destitution and desperation. Their very survival is a matter of discussion for the political

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[197] In terms of religion, this matter is extremely complex. See Lamartine Petit-Monsieur, *La coexistence de types religieux différents dans l'Haïtien contemporain* (Immensee, Switzerland: Nouvelle Revue de science missionaire, 1992), 37-61.

[198] Responding to critics who cast Haitians as backward and disconnected from the world, Paul Farmer asserts, "but depicting Haiti as divorced from 'the outside world' turns to be a feat of Herculean oversight, given that Haiti is the creation of expansionist European empires – a quintessentially Western entity. There is, simply, no other way to understand Haiti." Farmer, *Uses of Haiti*, 56.

[199] For a snapshot of the world's handling of Haiti in the nineteenth century, see Alyssa Goldstein Sepinwall, ed., *Haitian History: New Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2013). The second section titled "Independent Haiti in a Hostile World: Haiti in the Nineteenth Century" is particularly telling.

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elite of Europe and North America, as the "world powers" of old still manage the affairs of governing the country.[200]

Goudougoudou as Redemption

Perhaps colonialism's most destructive feature is its persistence long after it has allegedly ended. The wounds of the past – spiritual, physical, emotional, and intellectual – unattended and at times neglected, like the bridle of a horse, may become tools for easy manipulation as the colonized, impoverished, ill-prepared, and altogether incompetent, respond to one disastrous event after another, never empowered to stand and think and envision a day beyond the persistent present. From this perspective, the post-colonial is the truly redemptive. These select stanzas from St Rose's poem, "Grieving Souls" bring this point to concrete focus.

> Two hundred years have come and gone.
> Like an incurable cancer,
> People are still writhing in pain,
> Still suffering from cultural dislocation
>
> No panacea, no healing process has been named.
> The mourning, the weeping,
> The lamentations and anguish persist.
> The bones of the ancestors are restless;
> a restlessness expressed in our own restlessness today,

[200] As recently as this year, the Haitian president met with his American counterpart to discuss the next elections in Haiti. As it turns out, elections in Haiti are unreliable, if not farcical, without financial support and observers from outside. The implication continues to be that Haiti's salvation lies outside, out of the hands of the Haitian people.

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Two hundred years have come and gone.

Still, millions of Mother Africa's children

are displaced and searching for an identity,

still searching for an expression in the diaspora.

Two hundred years have come and gone.

Yet, their spirits still yearn for redemption.

Who will set them free?

When will the healing process begin?[201]

Goudougoudou opens the door to new conversations. It raises old questions anew and reimagines the answers of old. It seeks in the beginning a vision of hope, a healing hope: the hope of redemption.[202] The encounter with God in the history of Haiti sees history as a broken mirror. Redemption is more than seeing in the variegated pieces the way back to a lost wholeness or the possibility of a new image. It is rather to reimagine the very substance of the mirror in search of something more. That which appears as a broken mirror may be the shimmering surface of the watery abyss, to use another Vodou imagery.[203] The perceived brokenness is a reflection of something less rigid that simultaneously reflects and deflects preconceived ideas. The pieces may be reimagined as stepping-stones that quickly dissipate in the embrace of the all-encompassing abyss.

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[201] St Rose, *Helen and Her Sister Haiti*, 33.

[202] To contemplate redemption is to ask openly, is there a point to any of this? Redemption does not entail putting the pieces back together.

[203] Patrick Bellegarde-Smith's "Broken Mirrors" touches on this Vodou theme in Patrick Bellegarde-Smith and Claudine Michel, ed. *Haitian Vodou: Spirit, Myth, and Reality* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 19-31.

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Redemption is to stare through the abyss, not discounting the emotions it evokes or the images it reflects, but to dare reach through the perceived danger of spilling precious blood or the real threat of being swallowed up, or the supposed threat of apostasy, and to despise surety itself. Talks of "salvation" then underwhelm, as the perceived end is but a beginning.[204] *Basen an fon* "The water's deep," sings Boukman Eksperyans.[205] Understandably, some people may choose to swim around the edges. However, the company of God, *Ezili*, and the saints requires risk. Redemption is a paradox in which the risk of drowning is synonymous with salvation itself.

The phrase 'hope of redemption' is a tautology. Redemption is not the object of hope but its reification through participatory action. The broken mirror poses serious threat unless re-visioned as grace. A vision of hope claims the present for itself by breaking itself free of its metaphorical mold. It is a re-imagination of the visible and the chronological for the sake of that which lies in the through. It appears in the form of a "world of the future," as Jacques Derrida proposes, a world "which proclaims itself at present, beyond the closure of knowledge,"[206] at which point it reaches beyond the realizing power of the imagination.[207] However, knowledge is neither its aim nor its end. It is a menacing future because it is a present future, a true conflation of the unexpected

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[204] In Christian theology, salvation has the character of an end point. It is that which God does in Jesus as the Christ. This translates into traditions that idolize Jesus, texts, places, and other traditions. However, Jesus clearly states that he is the way to God, not the end point. The possibilities of this understanding overwhelm the traditional approaches to salvation.

[205] Boukman Eksperyans is a music group of the *rasin* "roots" movement, which combines traditional rhythm and lyrics with elements from American rock music. The "Boukman" portion comes from Dutty Boukman, the supposed leader of the Bwa Kayiman ceremony that catalyzed the Haitian Revolution. The Eksperyans portion reflects the band members' appreciation for the work of the American rock 'n' roll legend Jimmy Hendricks. Boukman Eksperyans, "Basen an fon," in *La Révolte des Zombies*, Bacchanilism, 2009.

[206] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 4.

[207] Gabriel Marcel, *Homo Viator* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1951), 45.

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and the mundane.[208] The hope of redemption has the character of anticipatory action and its object is hope's true end: the possibility of encounter.

To the young scholar, for instance, whose faith seeks an understanding that is conducive of authentic living, who hears echoes of the voices of history's victims in his own groaning, who stares into the stained canvas of history in hope of something more, history is more than stories written on a page and God more than the hero of a parable. "History is our myth," urges de Certeau.,[209] And myth is alethic! History is a continuum along which the sufferers of today and the victims of old encounter one another in "equal regard,"[210] to use Browning's phrase. Encountering God in the history of Haiti may begin with a cosmic shake, that is, in suffering, but it quickly moves beyond it. It requires initiation into a new way of seeing and a new mode of being. It calls for a way of imagining in which holy Scriptures and holy places take on vulgar-ness and the mundane takes on the character of the truly exceptional.[211]

[208] "The future can only be anticipated in the form of an absolute danger. It is that which breaks absolutely with constituted normality and can only be proclaimed, *presented*, as a sort of monstrosity." Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 5.

[209] "History is probably our myth. It combines what can be thought, the 'thinkable' and the origin, in conformity with the way in which a society can understand its own working." Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History* (New York: Columbia, 1988), 21. "To enter the world of the myth is a moment of initiation." Maya Deren, *Divine Horsemen*, 24.

[210] "Equal regard, then, is the inner rational structure of the Christian ethic. It forms the rational structure of both mutuality in intimate affairs and brotherhood/sisterhood in public affairs. Equal regard is the normative structure of practical reason – its inner core. It is a rationality, however, that depends on certain beliefs – most specifically the belief that all persons are ends rather than means." Don Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology: Descriptive and Strategic Proposals* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 159. Equal regard figures at the center of the encounter with God in Haitian history, not in its abundance but in the suffering that ensues from its systematic denial.

[211] Walter Mignolo expresses a similar idea in his description of decolonizing epistemology. He writes, "decolonizing epistemology means, in the long run, liberating thinking from sacralized texts, whether religious or secular." While I accept Mignolo's assertion as a necessary condition for the encounter of God in the history of Haiti, I do not share his skepticism concerning theology of liberation. For Mignolo, theology of liberation figures among "Western liberating options" over against which "decolonial options need to be asserted." Walter Mignolo, "Decolonizing Western Epistemology," in *Decolonizing Epistemologies: Latina/o Theology and Philosophy*, ed. Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz and Eduardo Mendieta (New York: Fordham, 2012), 25.

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CHAPTER THREE

Encountering God in Language

Whatever may be the nature of religious experience, it comes to language, it is articulated in a language, and the appropriate place to interpret it on its own terms is to inquire into its linguistic expression.

– *Paul Ricoeur*[212]

The language of a people is vital in their understanding of the world around them, vital in helping them prosper.

– *Jan Mapou*[213]

[Decolonization] infuses a new rhythm, specific to a new generation of men, with a new language and a new humanity.

– *Frantz Fanon*[214]

The Breaking of the Corn

One sunny afternoon in the month of April 2014, after a couple hours of research at CERFAS[215], I start my daily routine. I set a course for *Pòtay Leogàn* by way of Champs de Mars to catch a *taptap* and begin my commute to Mariani. On this particular afternoon, I purchase two ears of roasted corn at ten *gourdes* a piece. As I approach

[212] Paul Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative, and Imagination* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 35.
[213] M.J. Fièvre and Danielle Legros Georges, "Creole Not Allowed Here: An Interview with Jan Mapou, Haitian Creole Advocate," in *Ainsi Parla la Terre*, ed. Jessica Fièvre (Miami: Women Writers of Haitian Descent, 2012), 328.
[214] Frantz Fanon, The *Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Groves Press, 2004), 2.
[215] CERFAS is a Jesuit institution and stands for Centre de Reflection, de Formation et d'Action Sociale. It is located on *1ère Avenue du Travail* in Bois Verna, Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Visit http://www.cerfashaiti.org for more detail.

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Champs de Mars, I am part of the way into the second ear of corn when a man selling various goods on the sidewalk looks straight at me and says, *Banm on ti bout nan mayiw la frèm?* "Give me a piece of your corn, brother?" I hand the corn over to him to allow him to break a piece for himself. He breaks the piece of corn in two and proceeds to hand the rest over to me. *Ou mèt pran tout* "You can have it all," I insist. *M manje youn deja. Se de m te genyen* "I already ate an entire piece. I had two [to start with]." Then I walk away.

As I resume my journey toward *Pòtay*, my mind is flooding with ideas about my encounter with this man. I wonder, was I rude in letting him keep the corn? Was I too concerned with the germs, which, I believed, inevitably covered his dirty hands? After all, I had seen enough people stick their fingers into their nostrils, a phenomenon I did not notice much when I lived in Haiti. Did he see my gift as a show of generosity or as a refusal to ingest something he had touched with his hands? Had I missed an opportunity to share a meal with this "brother" of mine who had only asked for a piece but seems upset to receive the whole? Had I violated some ethical norm? Why was he looking at me that way? I walk farther and farther away from the man, but his face remains fixed in my mind's eye: his tired but seemingly disappointed face, prodding and compelling me to see more.

I am at a loss. Now his face is hunting me as I see its reflection on every face that passes me along the way: a saleswoman here, a schoolgirl there, a *taptap* driver over there. The more I see his face, the more my mind races. It is as though every theologian and philosopher I have ever read is present with me, engaged in a fierce debate, castigating me along the way. I consider beauty, then colonialism, then the colonizer's

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distortion of beauty. I consider the face, the face of every woman, man, and child on the streets of Port-au-Prince, the face that epitomizes abjection, which the world's magazines avoid in their pontifications on beauty. I consider God: Is God really so partial? I wonder. Has God ordained European characteristics to a place of primacy for the duration of human existence? What am I not seeing? Am I a pilgrim and this man the Christ?" "What is it about this face?

Then I consider Haiti. Yes, I consider the mountains and the sea, nature's handiworks whose glories poet and king alike have praised. But those pulchritudinous features of Haiti that are ever aglow with delight, those relics of the big cosmic incident whose majesty remains undeterred in spite of history's punishing blows, history attributes to God and chance. The smells of the stagnant ravines, the buzz of the streets, the undone governments, the disheveled rooftops, the receded tree line of the mountains, those, the legacy of resentful and conveniently forgetful parents, history credits to the arrogance of African pride, to the cost of listening to the voice from within. If the face tells a story, this one speaks the words of a nation. If the face speaks, then it insists that I heed its words.

At this point, I can no longer keep my composure. I am still walking, but I can no longer hold back the tears. I can no longer protect my blindness. And then something happens: I can see the face no longer. I see only light! Well, that is incorrect. I know very well that light makes things visible as its rays bounce off a given object depending on the eyes' ability to detect specific wavelengths. I suspect that it is not so much that I see light everywhere but that my eyes are open to a reality that has evaded detection for a very long time. So the experience of the Haitian face occurs to me as the experience of

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exposure to light after a long period of blindness. And, my eyes, altogether overwhelmed by this strange apparition but no longer covered, discover the truth about the face.

I am in shock! Every face is as bright as the next one. I cannot save my eyes. The face is compellingly bright. I cannot look at it yet I cannot keep my eyes away. Now I am ashamed. My tears are as abundant as the sweat that runs down my brow. I want to run. I want to hide. I look to my right, a gas station; I look to my left, a sea of street merchants. I am exposed! I feel that every face knows my feelings and failings exactly as I am experiencing them. I seek shelter in the back of a *taptap*, hoping that the enclosed space would protect me. That is not the case. I feel more exposed. The face is now close enough to detect my tears and sense my distress. In addition, I am also close enough to hear the words that the face speaks. I am close enough to smell the bodies that hold the face up. Those too take on new meaning. A woman across from me suspects my tears, but I think my sweat camouflages them well enough that she eventually turns her questioning gaze away from me. Thank God. I do not think I could survive another moment in her gaze.

The Anatomy of Corn?

That which is present in corn, its corn-ness, that which manifests itself as palatable and sustaining to the fowl, the worm, and the human alike, shows itself as beyond edibility qua edibility. Thus, that which is present in corn-ness includes an absence, a corn-less-ness qua corn-ness, an absence unperceivable to the senses. The worm does not seem to notice this absence. After all, corn is corn, and corn-ness equals edibility. The fowl's constant pecking affirms the presence of the absence: It eats the worm along with the corn. After all, corn is corn, and worm is corn. The human fares no better. It blames the worm for invading the corn and may blame the corn for tolerating

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the worm. After all, corn is corn, and worm is foul. Blissfully and ignorantly, the human sets out to destroy the worm that invades but also destroys the corn that tolerates. The corn's perspective is simply irrelevant to human, fowl, and worm alike. The human perspective is clear: A new corn must be grown: intolerant, wormless, but edible. To all, corn is but corn, and corn-ness equals edibility.

The human does not easily escape this conundrum, for, of the three, it alone is capable of double entendre, of intuiting paradox. It alone can be confronted by an Other manifest to it in intuitive prowess. The human is confront-able and, when confronted, confronts. The human is susceptible to the face that calls itself 'brother,' the phenomenon that interrupts and penetrates with a question that uncovers triply. First, it uncovers that which is covered, shining light on the discoverable. Second, it uncovers that which passes itself as uncovered, exposing the false as false. Finally, it uncovers that which in presence remains absent as a matter of to be or not to be. All three modes of uncovering or 'showing' may coincide in a singular event. Time times the event and establishes the space each mode of uncovering shall occupy.

Time itself does not adjudicate. Hospitable and ever self-effacing, it retreats and reveals.[216] The presence of the face, which seems to disrupt the event while affirming it, appears as time's personification, as the apparition that introduces into the event its character as guarantor of simultaneity, as the arbiter of timeliness. Perhaps mystery most aptly describes this third type of uncovering.[217] It is an uncovering that reveals absence,

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[216] For Martin Heidegger, "time in its timing removes us into its threefold simultaneity, moves us thence while holding out to us the disclosure of what is in the same time, the concordant oneness of the has-been, presence, and the present waiting the encounter." Martin Heidegger, *On the Way to Language* (New York: HarperOne, 1982), 106.
[217] Marcel draws a clear distinction between problem and mystery. Whereas a problem is or may be caused to be exterior to the self, and, as such, can be solved by 'substitution' of order for disorder, a mystery does

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not as a mere derivative of presence or a mere shadow side of its enduring power. Absence is a permanent feature of the very possibility of presence. Life and death, that is, the living and the dead, tell but one story.

In its depth, presence has a paradoxical nature. Thus, that which is manifest and that which is perceived, are essentially unified. The perceivable lacks transparency. It seems only to infer from itself that whose manifestation it simultaneously discloses and adumbrates in the most literal sense. The fullness of the manifest seems to retreat in the shadows, so "coy" is its demeanor.[218] It casts doubt upon itself in so doing, but for the sake of the perceivable, for the sake of subjectivity. That way the manifest strengthens its relation to the infinite by limiting its presence to apprehension's shadow side. That is the surest way to affirm the identity of the finite with the infinite without conflating one in the other or defining one in terms of the other or one over against the other. As suggests Marcel, "the truth of the finite is in the infinite."[219] That is the way of paradox.[220]

Paradox requires change both in the mode of perception and in perception itself.[221] Method naturally follows methodology. Thus, presence embodies itself and its

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not allow for any clear abstraction of the self from the reality that calls for a response. Gabriel Marcel, *Homo Viator* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1951), 69.

[218] Schopenhauer likens truth to so "coy a beauty" that no sacrifice is too great to win her affections. He writes, "truth is no harlot who wraps her arm round the neck of him who does not desire her. On the contrary, she is so coy a beauty that even those who sacrifice everything for her sake cannot be certain of her favor." Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation* (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1969), 1:xix.

[219] Gabriel Marcel, *Philosophical Fragments* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1965). 45.

[220] Kant is happy to leave some things as unknowable or condemned to the noumenal. Thereby he avoids the back and forth required of dialectic thinking. Husserl thinks Kant is simply taking too much for granted. Hegel's dialectic critique opens Kant up to phenomenology's corrective. This study leans on Gadamer's resolution of the matter. He writes, "I regard statements that proceed by wholly dialectical means from the finite to the infinite, from human experience to what exists in itself, from the temporal to the eternal, as doing no more than setting limits, and am convinced that philosophy can derive no actual knowledge from them." Gadamer offers a dialogical approach, in "the movement of dialogue, in which word and idea first become what they are." Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Continuum, 2006), xxxiii.

[221] This statement supports the Lacanian notion that "all relation to presence is achieved against a background of absence." See Jean-François Lyotard, *Why Philosophize?* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2013), 26.

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purported antithesis. Both sameness and difference are present in the same and in the different or other in a unified identity, all the while maintaining the distance between the same and the other. I and the other are simultaneously *I* and *other*. In Levinasian language, "we are the same and the other."[222] Being surrenders its claim to presence and takes shelter in the shadow of presence as absence qua presence and absence.[223] The whole affair is couched in desire.[224] As if dancing, the face-to-face assures the integrity of the identity. To the worm, corn-less-ness might designate the end of existence itself. The human sees corn-less-ness as inseparable from corn-ness. In a procession of self-giving-ness, essence and possibility meet to offer the phenomenon lasting power. The face asks simply "Give me a piece of your corn, brother?" as if the answer to the question, undetermined yet anticipatable, inheres within the question itself, which really seems to ask, "Is corn but corn or is it other?" in more poignant language, "Am I your brother?"[225]

"And Who is my neighbor?"

This last question lies at the heart of the phenomenology of encounter. "Am I your brother?" addresses itself as disruptively to the self as it does to the other, as both self and as other. The presence of the other, manifest initially in the question, in language, puts in question and, thereby reifies in language, the I's or the ego's

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[222] Lévinas notes that "the absolutely other is the Other. He and I do not form a number." Lévinas maintains the identity of the 'I' or the same and the other without impugning the integrity of alterity. The same exercises no power over the other and does not take possession of the other in the name of universality. Emmanuel Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2012), 39.
[223] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (New York: Harper, 2008), ¶2, 9 [26], ¶3, 9 [29].
[224] Lyotard, *Why Philosophize?*, 38.
[225] "It is no longer I who faces being, but the other who faces me. I am looked upon. I am asked after. Here, I lose a certain hold over myself, and find that I am no longer the one who interrogates and questions; rather, I am the one who is faced by the other's interrogation and questioning." Terry Veling, *Practical Theology: "On Earth as It Is in Heaven"* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 2005), 127-28.

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irreversible relation to itself and to the other.[226] The "Am I?," the question concerning the who? of the I which finds itself entrenched in a confrontation with the other, looks to the other to affirm that which it in itself is unable to ascertain. This is the problem of the what of the who, that is, the problem of a corresponding what in the relation of the I to the other.[227] The face addresses both itself and the other, and in the questioning, *giving-ness* asserts itself over against *given-ness*. *Given-ness* does not disappear, for separation remains the possibility of alterity. However, the movement which the face institutes in the "Am I?" disrupts *given-ness* as the condition for separation, and sets the course for the face-to-face.[228]

"Am I your brother?" assumes the form of the third mode of uncovering, aside from those addressed to the self as self and other and to the other as self and other. The question emerges from the anxiety that inevitably accompanies the silence, the delay, more precisely, the void that extends between the question and answer that mysteriously implicate both the ego and the other.[229] The question in its third modality coincidentally assumes the third person and asks openly, "Who is my brother?" The openness of the question and its deflection to the third person, rather than softening its directness,

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[226] "[The] relation between the same and the other . . . is language." Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 39. "He who speaks to me and across the words proposes himself to me retains the fundamental foreignness of the Other who judges me; our relations are never reversible." (101).
[227] "To be sure, most of the time, the *who* is a *what*." Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 177.
[228] For Lévinas, truth requires separation. The separation, "the distance" is essential for intersubjectivity. "Without separation there would not have been truth; there would have been only being. Truth, a lesser contact than tangency, in the risk of ignorance, illusion and error, does not undo 'distance,' and does not result in the union of the knower and the known, does not issue in totality." Emmanuel Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 60.
[229] Another way of describing mystery in Marcel is unity of presence. He writes, "the unity is less a *given* principle than a *giving* one, because it is the root from which springs the fact of my presence to myself and the presence of all else to me." Marcel, *Homo Viator*, 69.

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intensifies its appeal: it now addresses itself to any other as in the story about the good neighbor.[230]

[230] This question takes a strange tone in the New Testament story involving the robbed and wounded traveler and his would-be saviors (Luke 10: 29-37). The occurrence of the question in its New Testament form epitomizes the desirous and deathlike forcefulness with which the face seeks a response from the other. At the outset, the story as narrated lends itself to misinterpretation. It draws clear lines of separation along stereotypical lines to make its point. In so doing, it overemphasizes the given-ness of each of the story's characters. Presumably, such an approach would have edified the listeners and is therefore legitimate. However, in its simplism, it caricatures the characters and robs them of their depth.

Strikingly in this story, the one who is in need utters not a word. In fact, only the Samaritan man speaks. There might be a deliberate effort here to elevate the marginalized people of Samaria in the midst of their despisers. That point is well taken. However, whereas the priest and the Levite are clearly of the Jewish tradition, the victim's identity never comes to light, which brings into question the Samaritan's motives: Perhaps the victim too is from Samaria, or is a kin to the Samaritan man, in which case, that which appears as overt magnanimity and solidarity could be but an expression of communitarianism, ergo, favoritism. Still, no harm is done. The victim receives the answer to his perceived need, the Jewish leaders receive their condign punishment, albeit in symbolic form, and the listeners, particularly in the person of the lawyer, receive a subtle but forceful rebuke.

Now to the pericope's crucial question in verse 36 "Which one of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" Now this is no simple question. In fact, it is but another form of the lawyer's original question in verse 29, "And who is my neighbor?" However, this is the question in its post-narrative form. This is the question stripped of its original abstractness and sarcasm. This is the question bearing potential for encounter. At the outset, the question emerges from the lips of an insincere intellectual who wants nothing more than an opportunity to showcase his cleverness. In this latter form, the question reverberates from the experiences of the silent, anonymous victim of a colonizing mob. So the question is not simple at all. Now it confronts and judges. But it also invites.

Of course, there could be *no* alternate answer to this poignant question! The story allows no other! After all, who wants to identify with priests and Levites in such a time as this? Permit the anachronism: Definitely not a lawyer! Then, hesitantly the words roll off the tongue of a defeated inquirer, who now must answer his own question and betray his presumed sincerity. So rejoins the young lawyer, "The one who showed him mercy" (v. 37). Evidently, this parable does not constitute an act of revelation but of conscientization. The lawyer calls mercy by name upon seeing it. The two are clearly old acquaintances. As Bonhoeffer puts it, "The questioner in his heart knows the answer to his question. But in the moment he asks it, although he knows the answer, he wishes to evade the obligation to obey the commandment of God." Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1959), 66.

However, neither the lawyer's answer nor the Samaritan man's action passes muster with the face that calls itself 'brother.' The Samaritan man does exhibit a rare kind of generosity, but history repays him, by all reasonable estimates, incommensurably. He receives divine approbation in the form of millennia of commanded emulation. His position remains secure in the annals of philanthropy. This man, the Samaritan man whose kind of goodness even heaven applauds, is the most lavish beneficiary of his own generosity. In giving all, he retains all, while the victim recedes into anonymity.

To be fair, the Samaritan man shows no desire for such approbation. The story paints his actions as nothing less than sheer altruism. In addition to offering first aid to the victim, the Samaritan man takes responsibility for his beneficiary's future needs. He asks for nothing except for the full weight of the victim's financial needs. If generosity is a problem, the problem is not with this man but in generosity itself, in its presumed inherent goodness. Perhaps tradition is to blame. Generosity can be a pitfall for those who equate altruism with neighborliness. The disinterested nature of altruism is in fact its shadow side. Altruism's problem is integral to the idea it represents – *alteri huic*, "to this other," for the other's need is the altruist's motive.

Philanthropy is the hobby of those who are too powerful to be affected by their giving. Insulated and disinterested, philanthropists can change the world without any threat to themselves, without living in hope. They speak through their possessions and thus speak of themselves. As with the 'Good' Samaritan,

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their motives may be pure. However, they are victims of their own having. Their possessions speak for them, and so they measure the distance between themselves and the 'brother' in monetary terms. Marcel offers some words for consideration: "[Only] those beings who are entirely free from the shackles of ownership in all its forms are able to know the divine light-heartedness of life in hope." Marcel, *Homo Viator*, 61. Due to his generosity, the Samaritan man loses nothing. On the contrary, he seals his place in the ranks of those who give without receiving, and thereby retain the only thing worthy of *giving*. The one who would be authentically generous does not make possessions a condition for giving, nor assimilation a legitimate mode of relating. The call of the face is not a problem for solving but an invitation to shared responsibility and risk: a face-to-face. Veling, *Practical Theology*, 129.

The encounter between the fatigued traveler and the woman of Samaria, recorded in John 4:6-30 (NRSV), offers a refreshing approach to answering the question, "Who is my neighbor?" This time, the face presumably belongs to an itinerant preacher, but that is only part of the story. Also, this time, the traveler's need is for water, a commodity that all require, including his would-be savior, the woman of Samaria. The stage opens with this man sitting by a well, perhaps leaning his head against a nearby tree or against the well itself. Not a moment too soon, a woman enters the scene. She has come to draw water. While she makes ready for this most mundane of chores, the man makes his request, "Give me a drink" (v. 7). Upon hearing the man's request, the woman immediately establishes the absolute distance between herself and her interlocutor, a distance she presumes untraversable. "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" At this point, the narrator of the story interjects a rather peculiar hermeneutical note. He ascribes the woman's puzzlement at the man's request to history. That may be the case. Nonetheless, this historical problem comes to light only at the outset of their conversation. Evidently, the man's presence is not a problem for the woman. At least, she does not express any discomfort with his presence. She finds him at the well and does not accuse him of trespassing nor does she avoid the well altogether. That which causes the woman consternation, however, is that the man speaks to her. More than that! The man speaks to her in language that simultaneously confronts her and requires her to answer: "Give me a drink[?]" he broaches in hope. From this moment on in the conversation, the water retreats into the background, while this woman and this man engage in a face-to-face.

The revelation that follows has all the marks of encounter. The interlocutors both traverse the perceivably untraversable distance of a request for water. In spite of and in light of their difficult history, they receive the other's sameness as gift and invitation. The distance of the water, of that which is possessable and which possesses in turn, gives occasion for something new. The secret burdens and the burdening secrets of them both come to light. The paradox of the face is clearly visible in the face-to-face. The woman's desire for living water, which signifies justice and truth, becomes an occasion for the manifestation of justice and truth in the presence of the traveler.

The woman looks to the past, to a promise of old, "Messiah is coming" (v. 25). The man looks to the future, to a coming day that is already at hand, "But the hour is coming, and is now here" (v. 14). Time retreats and establishes the simultaneity of the man's future present with the woman's past present in a phenomenon that binds their lives to a common destiny in the present-at-hand. That which manifests itself fully in presence, though absent, is present to them both. As Ephrem the Syrian puts it, "blessed are you, drawer of ordinary water who turned out to be a drawer of living water. You found the treasure, another Source, from whom a flood of mercies flows." Ephrem the Syrian, *Hymns* (New York: Paulist, 1989), 355.

St. Ephrem is addressing the woman in this poem. As it were, the absolute distance between the two interlocutors is clear. This point is most pertinent in the events of disclosure of verses 19 and 26, in which both parties aver the facts of their respective identity. Equally clear, however, is each interlocutor's desire to traverse that irreversible but traversable distance between them. So the line between the two of them is not so clear after all. Ephrem's words apply to both. Both come to the well to avail themselves of its content's properties. Both are thirsty. Desire drives them both. Furthermore, no clear line demarcates ordinary from living water. The meaning of the man's living water issues from its relation to the water the woman alone is able to provide. Yet from the woman's need, the man intuits her desire to draw water once and for all (v. 10) – which elicits an actual request from her in verse 15 – which in turn betrays the man's desire for the same. Thus, the man requests out of desire and thereby offers the gift of desire. This last statement also applies in reverse, for implicitly or explicitly, as the man himself avers, "Give me a drink[?]" is a prayer common to both. Thus, the answer for the one applies to both.

One final note comes to bear at the end of this story. The man does not actually receive the ordinary water nor the woman the living water. Their thirst remains quenchless. Their desire remains

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> He to whom the question is put *has already presented himself*, without being a content. He has presented himself as a face. The face is not a modality of quiddity, an answer to a question, but the correlative of what is prior to every question. What is prior to every question is not in its turn a question nor a knowledge possessed a priori, but is Desire.[231]

Perhaps the ubiquity of the face subsequent to the breaking of the corn, that is, after having crossed the world of the corn, the world of possible possessions, is but a witness of the movement of desire.[232] Already at this stage, solidarity is presupposed, if not commanded, in the language of the face.

Thus, language gives structure to the interpretation of phenomena. It witnesses to the effective operationalizability of the facts of encounter. Never completely removed from the encounter as event and never withdrawn from the phenomenon as concrete actuality, that is, never removed from the *cogito* as reified in the *sum* nor from the *cogito*

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unabated. However, the evidence for a meaningful exchange is strong. Their confrontation ensues in revelation: they are bound together in desire. They are living together in hope. The evidence for this claim is manifest in the behavior of the interlocutors in the moments subsequent to their encounter. The woman leaves her water jar behind and returns to the city (v. 28). She has experienced that which is present-in-absence in the man. The man, in turn, declines his companions' offer of nourishment. He too has experienced that which is present-in-absence in the woman. They both have experienced that which is always present-in-absence in the mundane. A simple request from a fatigued traveler to a puzzled woman brings an entire city to experience the possible possibility of salvation.

This dramatic exchange thrusts into question the practice of linking generosity and altruism to the power of having. The woman and the man share a common experience. They both need water. They both need the well. The man is at the mercy of the woman's giving at times. She is correct: he has no bucket with which to draw water from the deep well (v. 11); he is also very tired. At other times, the woman is at the mercy of the man's promise: "Sir, give me this water" (v. 15). Their thirst is not a problem for solving with water, but a desire for a relation in which possessions are irrelevant. Theirs is quite a revealing relation. In it, they show encounter's sway into the boundaries of time. Those who are absent, regardless of status or name, whether living or dead, can participate in the hope of their encounter. The key hermeneutical criterion is this: Power does not determine the relation of the woman to the man, or of the man to the woman. Both participate in the revelation irreversibly. As in the face-to-face mediated by the roasted corn, both interlocutors participate in the movement that makes its home in a request that enraptures all, "Give me a drink[?] That is the way of infinity: It overflows the vessel that would contain it. Such is the way of encounter. See the notes on lengthy footnotes CMOS 14.35, 14.39, and 14.51.

[231] Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 60.

[232] Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 76.

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as abstracted from the *sum*, that is, as method, language is experience's modus operandi, and as such it is encounter's possible possibility; it is subjectivity intuited as gift. [233] Language is gift and, as such, it resists the state of being given, of being rendered the *domestik*[234] of an arbitrary system of signs. In this sense, it rejects colonization for it allows the same and the other to participate in a singular linguistic reality.[235] As with gift, language is revelation reified as participation, not in the infinite but as infinition.[236] It announces its purpose in itself and as itself. It is absence's most daring display of intentionality, paradox paraphrased as simplicity.

Language as Solidarity

Language finds in liberating praxis its most fitting occasion. It alone assures the possibility of what Gutiérrez calls "authentic fellowship and authentic justice."[237] This

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[233] Thus language's true nature manifests itself as movement, as language belongs to being itself as that which persists in existence. "Language…is proper to what moves all things because that is its most distinctive property. What moves all things moves in that it speaks." As Heidegger notes, this relation of language to being obscures rather than elucidates the meaning of speaking. Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, 95.

[234] I opt for the Kreyòl *domestik* in lieu of the English cognate 'domestic' due to the pejorative nature of *domestik*'s meaning in Haitian culture. By resisting *domestikasyon* or domesti*k*ation, language reveals itself as the possibility of incorruptibility. In this way, it manifests itself as a possible possibility, as the possibility of ever-new ways of saying.

[235] For Lévinas, language "offers things which are mine to the Other." Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 76.

[236] Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 50, 76.

[237] The liberation, which Gutierrez envisages is based on solidarity as a form of praxis. Praxis, that is, liberative praxis, is itself that which in its movement creates the fellowship of solidarity. Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2010), xxx. By mother tongue, I intend a double meaning: 1) mother tongue as the language of one's rearing and 2) mother tongue in the theological sense, as the language that expresses one's ultimate concern. In Haiti, both aspects are lacking. Kreyòl, the mother tongue of the vast majority of Haitians, still suffers from stigma. Much prestige is attached to Haiti's status as a francophone nation, whereas the Kreyòl-speaking majority speaks only Kreyòl. Flore Zéphir remarks, "Regardless of what terminology one uses to describe the language situation of Haiti [whether in terms of diglossia or bilingualism], one can hardly deny the fact that French is still considered the more prestigious language, the High language, which is used in situations perceived as more formal or as requiring the speaker to convey elite status. The Low and less prestigious language is Creole, used when speakers are less guarded, less formal, and more intimate." This reality is rather ironic and becomes significant for encounter. As Zéphir notes, Kreyòl is the language of intimacy and authenticity. Though Zéphir allows that the situation has improved during the past few decades, pointing to the use of Creole in Parliamentary debates and in the media, she warns that "many, (not all) French speakers continue to think…that they belong to a 'better' social class than Haitians not knowing French." Flore Zéphir, "The Languages of Haitians and the History of Creole," in *The Haitian Creole Language: History, Structure, Use, and*

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notion is particularly crucial for a people without a mother tongue. As Heidegger observes, "it is language alone which speaks authentically; and, language speaks lonesomely. Yet only he can be lonesome who is not alone, if 'not alone' means not apart, singular, without any rapports. But it is precisely this absence in the lonesome of something in common which persists as the most binding bond with it."[238] This aspect of language as the relativization of singularity, as the possibility of intersubjectivity,[239] facilitates the movement of death as absolute, that is, as absolute end, to death as possible possibility, in a word, as infinity, as that which puts on subjectivity.[240] Maya Deren's understanding of death seems to presuppose such a view of language when she writes, "thus the ending is, for man, the beginning: the condition of his first consciousness of self as living. Death is life's first and final definition."[241]

Education, ed. Arthur K. Spears and Carole M. Berotte Joseph (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2010), 61. The ideologically framed association of French competency with the elite and non-French competency with the uneducated mass is one reason for the turn to language. Patrick Bellegarde-Smith identifies Kreyòl with Vodou as forms of "organized responses to oppression, created *from* African foundations." Patrick Bellegarde-Smith, "Resisting Freedom: Cultural Factors for Democracy – The Case for Haiti," in Claudine Michel and Patrick Bellegarde-Smith, *Invisible Powers: Vodou in Haitian Life and Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 103. President Jean-Bertrand Aristide reifies this symbol when he chooses to take the presidential oath in Kreyòl, "and received the presidential sash from a *manbo* (female Vodou priest) in February 1991" (110).
For a first-hand account of the struggle for Kreyòl under the Duvalier regime, see M.J. Fièvre and Danielle Legros Georges, "Creole Not Allowed Here: An Interview with Jan Mapou, Haitian Creole Advocate," in *Ainsi Parla la Terre*, ed. Jessica Fièvre (Miami: Women Writers of Haitian Descent, 2012), 328-52.
Aristotle describes humans as "political animals" on this very basis: speech. "Now the reason why man is more of a political animal than bees…is evident […in that] man is the only animal whom [nature] has endowed with the gift of speech…[and] the power of speech is intended to set the expedient and inexpedient, and likewise the just and the unjust." Aristotle, *Politics* (Mineola, New York: Dover, 2000), I.2, 29.

[238] Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, 134. Lévinas concurs when he asserts, "Language…lays the foundations for a possession in common…it is what I give." Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 76.

[239] Ethics naturally obtains from this line of thought. Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 53.

[240] This is Lévinas' thesis in *Totality and Infinity*. He writes, "this book [*Totality and Infinity*] then does present itself as a defense of subjectivity, but it will apprehend the subjectivity not at the level of its purely egoist protestation against totality, nor in its anguish before death, but as founded in the idea of infinity." Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 26.

[241] "No man has ever witnessed the moment when life begins; it is in the moment of its ending that the limits of life, hence life itself, are manifest. Death, as the edge beyond which life does not extend, delineates a first boundary of being. Thus the ending is, for man, the beginning: the condition of his first consciousness of self as living. Death is life's first and final definition." Maya Deren, *Divine Horsemen:*

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Language is the possibility of solidarity, the corollary of liberating praxis, and consequently is foundational to decoloniality. Language finds in hope, encounter's matrix of operation, the syntactical rules that render it simultaneously open and disruptive.[242] Conceived in hope, language echoes the voice of despair, the voice of death, rendered intelligible in the fluidity of hope. Commensurable with the facts of existence, language is ambiguous.[243] Commensurable with the nature of hope, it is unconditional and resistive of usurpation.[244] It issues from despair itself, that is, in Marcelian language, "the consciousness of time as closed or, more exactly still, of time as a prison."[245] Language is thus a healer of time perceived as breach. For Heidegger, "it relates, maintains, proffers, and enriches the face-to-face encounter of the world's regions."[246] Language is the practice of adducing an appropriate response to the 'Let there be' of existential possibility.

The Living Gods of Haiti (Kingston, New York: McPherson & Company, 2004), 23. Heidegger adds, "The essential relation between death and language…beckon[s] us toward the way in which the nature of language draws us into its concern and so relates us to itself, in case death belongs together with what reaches out for us, touches us." Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, 108.

[242] Rebecca S. Chopp, *The Power to Speak: Feminism, Language, God* (New York: Crossroad, 1991), 35.

[243] "Ambiguous modes of expression are rooted in the very nature of language and thought." Donald Levine, *The Flight from Ambiguity: Essays in Social and Cultural Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 2. As Levine cautions, language is not necessarily ambiguous. However, he concedes, "The toleration of ambiguity can be…an invitation to deal responsibly with issues of great complexity." Levine, *The Flight from Ambiguity*, 17. Susan Ross, in her feminist approach to sacramentality, advances an argument for linguistic ambiguity which supports Levine's notion. She argues that a feminist approach to sacramentality resists "'complementary' dualisms" and dichotomies that are at odds with "the complexity of human interactions." Susan A. Ross, *Extravagant Affections: A Feminist Sacramental Theology* (New York: Continuum, 2001), 91.

[244] For Marcel, "in so far as I make my hope conditional I myself put up limits to the process by which I could triumph all successive disappointments." Marcel distinguishes between "to hope" and "to hope that." "I hope that" is analogous to "I believe that, and it is distinct from "I hope" in that the former is restrictive and uncharacteristic of hope's unconditionality. Marcel, *Homo Viator*, 46.

[245] Marcel likens prison or captivity to a state of being hedged in on the self by factors external to the self. He writes, "I should consider myself captive if I found myself not merely precipitated into, but as it were pledged by external constraint to a compulsory mode of existence involving restrictions of every kind touching my personal actions. In addition, that which characterizes all the situations we are evoking at the moment, is that they invariably imply the impossibility, not necessarily of moving or even of acting in a manner which is relatively free, but of rising to a certain fullness of life, which may be in the realms of sensation or even of thought in the strict sense of the word…all captivity partakes of the nature of alienation." Marcel, *Homo Viator*, 39, 53.

[246] The world's four regions are: "earth and sky, god and man." Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, 107.

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Language as Revelation?

The face's inquiry renders the fluidity of the linguistic dynamic practicable by forcing the face-to-face encounter. The roles are now reversed, for that which fluid-hope embodies is not inferable from the perceivable yet fully present therein. One appropriate illustration of this phenomenon might be glossolalia in Christianity or possession in Vodou. The seeming opacity of the perceivable, rather than occluding, renders perceivably simple the wisdom that hides in plain sight. Such is the manner in which the face effaces falsity. Such is the method by which inquiry confuses the line between subject and object. Such is the way encounter saves.[247]

The face's inquiry itself takes on new meaning.[248] The language of the inquiry reveals in itself, though at first it appears as a placeholder for something else.[249] The exclusivity and intimacy in which it receives an audience, however, betrays its inherent character as encounter's home.[250] Thus, language emerges as that which facilitates and *fulfills* the identity between presence and absence. It generates the movement of encounter's possibility. In the manner in which it moves heart, mind, and soul and saves the one as the many and the one as well as the many and vice versa, encounter institutes desire. Its most appropriate and ever tangential corollary is the language of *prayer*.[251] Prayer marks the way encounter inhabits. Thus, encounter, in and like prayer, is

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[247] Even in its most dogmatic expositions, salvation is inseparable from authentic living as achieved through "authentic fellowship and authentic justice," to borrow Gutierrez's language. Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, xxx.
[248] "Inquiry is a cognizant seeking…guided beforehand by what is sought." Heidegger, *Being and Time*, ¶2, 5 [24]. Also Emmanuel Lévinas writes, "things manifest themselves as answering to a question relative to which they have a meaning." Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 177. Paul Tillich highlights this ineluctable bond between epistemology and ontology in Paul Tillich, Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), 1:71.
[249] "The idea of Infinity is revealed, in the strong sense of the term." Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 62.
[250] Heidegger writes, "Language is the house of being because language, as Saying, is the mode of appropriation." Martin Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, 135.
[251] I owe the insight about the relation of desire to the language of prayer to Max G. Beauvoir, Head of Vodou in Haiti.

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institutive of, and as a corollary of language, constitutive of desire, for, in its depth, language entails desire. Within desire lies the drive for desire. As Lyotard insists, "desire is inflected, it reflects itself; it desires itself."[252] Desire carries within itself, in the

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[252] For Lyotard, desire is that which maintains the paradoxical nature of the presence/absence dynamic. He writes, "desire is really raised into being, set up by the absence of presence, or vice versa; something that is there is not there and wants to be there, wants to coincide with itself, to realize itself, and desire is simply that force that holds presence and absence together without mixing them up." Lyotard, *Why Philosophize?,* 24 [21]. Turning to the dialogue between Socrates and Alcibiades in Plato's *Symposium*, he then adds, "the very possibility of desire…actually means the presence of an absence and perhaps the whole of wisdom consists in opening our ears to this absence and tarrying with it." Finally, he draws the following conclusion, "To philosophize is not to desire wisdom, it is to desire desire…" (ellipsis in original) Lyotard, *Why Philosophize?,* 38. Also Plato, *Symposium* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 45. Then what is desire? If it is an end achieved through its own act, that is, desire begets desire – it is its own end or object – then no end or object really ever ensues from this movement of desire for desire allows no duality. "Desire does not establish a relationship between a cause and an effect…desire, rather, is the movement of something that goes out toward the other as toward something that it itself lacks" (23 [20]). "[The] movement of desire makes the apparent object appear as something that is already there in desire without however being there 'in flesh and blood', and the apparent subject appears as something indefinite, incomplete, which needs the other to define it, to complete it, something that is defined by the other, by absence" (23-24 [20-21]). From this perspective, then, Lyotard's proposal that «*toute la sagesse consiste à ouvrir l'oreille à cette absence et à séjourner auprès d'elle*» "The whole of wisdom consists in opening our ears to this absence and tarrying with it," though suggestive of temporariness, in fact evokes the state of being enduring. Jean-François Lyotard, *Pourquoi philosopher?* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2012), 38. «*Séjourner*», which is rendered as "tarry" in the English translation, is stripped of its brevity by the disposition for practice inherent in desire's reflexive character. Desire then becomes a dispositive seeking for the presence of absence, that is, to enter into the substance of absence and thereby imbuing presence with possibility. The pilgrim seeks not the what? of its seeking but its why?. «*Au lieu de chercher la sagesse, Alcibiade ferait mieux (et vous et moi) de chercher pourquoi il cherche*». "Instead of seeking wisdom, Alcibiades would do better (as would you and I) to [seek] why he is seeking». Andrew Brown translates «*chercher*» "to seek" in «*chercher pourquoi il cherche*» as "wonder" and his text reads "to wonder why he is seeking." The translator must have important reasons for his choice, though he does not divulge them. Nonetheless, translating «*chercher*» as "to seek" in lieu of "to wonder" is consistent with Lyotard's tone throughout this text. The philosopher is called actively to seek the why?, that is, the absent presence, or the object-less object, of his seeking. That requires active participation in the movement of desire, wherein seeking itself rather than wisdom obtains as the philosopher's vocation. All of Lyotard's argumentation comes to bear on the identity of philosophizing with desiring. «*Philosopher est obéir pleinement au movement du désir, être compris en lui, et en même temps tenter de le comprendre sans sortir de son cours*». "To philosophize is fully to obey the movement of desire, to be understood within it, and at the same time, to try and understand it without leaving one's own path" (41 [42]). Here in the expression «*être compris en lui*» "to be understood within it," the literal translation maintains the force of the saying better than the translator's interpretation, "to be included within it," for it leaves room for the (hermeneutical) exchange, which Lyotard indicates in the following clause "to try and understand it without leaving one's own path," which in turn is consistent with the author's earlier assertion that wisdom be understood as the awareness of an exchange, not the object of said exchange but "a fully aware exchange, an awareness that there is no object, but only an exchange" (36-37 [36]). Commenting on Augustine's *Confessions*, Lyotard further asserts, «*nous lisons parce que nous ne savons pas lire*» "we read because we do not do not know how to read." Part of the reason for this is that human beings are in fact part of the text, which is placed before them. They are «*Déchiffreurs déchiffrables, dans la bibliothèque de l'ombre*» "Decipherable decipherers of the library of shadows." Jean-François Lyotard, *La Confession d'Augustin* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1998), 63-64. Then the following saying by Lyotard becomes more decipherable,

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obedience that inheres within it, the movement that unites the one to the other, and binds singularity to communality, defining with and within the movement the authentic nature of experience of which speech or language is a *sine qua non*. Desire means presence-of-absence-in-presence-as-absence. Lyotard elaborates,

> [desire] is the movement of something that goes out toward the other as toward something that it itself lacks. This means that the *other* is present to what desires, and is present in the form of absence. That which desires has got what it lacks, without which it would not desire it, and yet it does not have it, it does not know it, otherwise it would not desire it either.[253]

Hence desire anticipates in the ego the forward movement of the other. It does not do so on the basis of need or 'lack.' On the contrary, it does so as a matter of justice, which affirms the distance that spans the intersubjective space.[254] The other experiences the same. Desire effectuates the movement, the back and forth, of truth and justice and, through language, institutes "the *co-*

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particularly in light of this chapter's theme of language: «*[P]hilosopher est se laisser aller au désir, mais tout en le recueillant, et ce recueil va de pair avec la parole*». "To philosophize is to let oneself go along with desire, but while gathering and meditating on desire, a gathering that is inseparable from speech" (42 [43]). Here Lyotard comes very close to affirming Heidegger's notion of experience as "to be underway." "To experience something means to attain it along the way. To undergo an experience with something means that this something, which we reach along the way in order to attain it, itself pertains to us, meets and makes its appeal to us, in that it transforms us into itself." Heidegger, *On the Way to language*, 73-74. Aimé Césaire identifies a number of other paradoxes, in addition to presence and absence, which help deepen the meaning of desire: myself and the world, the new and the old, the complex and the simple, the dream state and the real, and night and day. Aimé Césaire, *La Poésie* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1994), 5.

[253] Lyotard, *Why Philosophize?*, 20. CMOS 14.35, 14.39, and 14.51

[254] For Lévinas, the intersubjective space marks the distance required for truth. "Truth is sought in the other, but by him who lacks nothing. The distance is untraversable, and at the same time traversed." Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 62.

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naissance of discourse and meaning" that characterizes the event of speech.[255] Thus prayer is the gift of the possibility of justice and truth.

Speech, that is, language as saying, affects meaning to create "the order" of discourse.[256] In the end, language goes beyond abstraction and assumes concreteness in discourse, imbuing discourse with the character of an event.[257] Discourse is then the practice of grounding language in concrete actuality. It imbues history, culture, truth, and intentionality with the potential to bear good news. As language, discourse is lived action. It holds the potential for transformation, as it constantly overwhelms its supposed limits with possibility.[258] Such is the way the experience of language creates what it speaks out of the desire that issues from encounter.[259] Put differently, encounter issues in the desire to speak which issues in (infinite) creative discourse. Truth, meaning, and discourse thus are as much inseparable from desire as desire from the idea of revelation as infinite possibility.[260] Such is the hope of encounter.

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[255] *Co-naissance* means co-birth. As Lyotard puts it, "meaning is modified by the fact that it is said, and this is why saying something, naming it, means creating it, not from nothing, but setting it up in a new order, the order of discourse." Lyotard, *Why Philosophize?*, 77.

[256] "[Speech] changes what it utters." Lyotard, *Why Philosophize?*, 78. Lyotard continues, "you can transform this world only by listening to it…when the lack from which we suffer, as individuals or as collectivities…is named and, by being named, transformed" (122). Rebecca S. Chopp concurs. She writes, "language…can birth new meanings, new discourses, new signifying practices…[It is] a creative process." Chopp, *The Power to Speak,* 14.

[257] For Ricoeur, "discourse is the event of language." Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth: The Texas Christian University Press, 1976), 9.

[258] Rebecca S. Chopp sees in discourse the possibility for a creative encounter with alterity. She writes, "through language and discourse...emerges emancipatory transformation, an emancipatory transformation that invokes, blesses, and pours out multiplicity and otherness through the constant blending of strategies, genres, terms, and sources." Chopp, *The Power to Speak*, 18.

[259] "[Language] shapes consciousness and has the power to constitute reality." Kwok Pui-lan, *Postcolonial Imagination & Feminist Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 129.

[260] "It is Desire that measures the infinity of the infinite… It is revelation." Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 62.

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Yet revelation is not the final aim. Encounter is indeed undetermined but within it roll the drums of justice. Turning to language calls into question the epistemic presuppositions of the discourses that occlude in the name of truth, God, nation, or peace.[261] The turn to language is a move toward justice as a condition for truth, especially if justice, as Chopp suggests, "means…that all have equal access to speak, and equal rights to deliberate and converse in community."[262] The turn to language is a way to ground possibility in possibility itself, just as in the way hope can be placed against itself for the sake of itself. From this perspective, Haitian narratives, as constitutive of Haitian lived experience and lived history, take on normative hermeneutical significance. Foreign or borrowed narratives have a role to play as well;[263] not as givens whose

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[261] "One finds the truth in language, in the symbolic." Ross, *Extravagant Affections*, 140.
[262] Chopp, *The Power to Speak*, 97.
[263] It is the genius of the writers of the Hebrew Scriptures that they locate Hebrew history at the center of God's salvific work in the world. In these narratives, the telling of God's story coincides with the beginnings of the Hebrews as a people. In the process of constructing these narratives, which amounts to a process of historical praxis, the stories of the Hebrews become enmeshed with the story of God. The result is an inevitable admixture of myth and history, which creates a paradoxical co-concentricity whereby the biblical God and the Hebrews take turns affirming one another. Even in judgment for the gravest possible sin, the Hebrews remain ensconced in the grace of a merciful God, whose judgment and mercy proceed in a singular paradoxical act of promise and command (Barth). As the prophets convey again and again, Israel's sin is never too great. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be like snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool" (Isa. 1:18). And this commitment is unconditional and irrevocable. The apostle Paul harks back to Isaiah 27:9 and allows, "And so all Israel will be saved," for God has covenanted to purify the people (Rom. 11:26-27).

That God takes a prominent place in the Hebrew narratives is then understandable. If the Hebrews are a people, they are God's people, and God exists as their savior and sole judge. As God's privileged biographers, the Hebrews get to tell God's story, arguably from the perspective of their particularity, which puts the Hebrew experience at the center of God's concerns for the world. More poignantly, the writers of those scriptures oftentimes make God the narrator of the Hebrew story. They use God's voice to imbue their narratives with a significance that is as indomitable as it is universal, for they tell their stories and forge their identity through the same voice whose utterance seals the stars in the firmament, instructs the sea of its limits, and in its Christian modality, self-incarnates, bearing in his person the promise of life without end. If power is required for identity formation, then this quasi-mutual arrangement is a formula for an absolutism that ushers from and issues in a limited perspective on God and an unlimited political sway for a singular tradition: God rules absolutely via the mediation of a people with an absolute claim to God's favor.

That a group of people should interpret their history in light of their notion of self and at the service of their vision of their own future is admirable. Delimiting the Hebrew tradition is not intended to

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relevance and truthfulness go unquestioned, but as conversation partners that are willing to cross the distance of the corn and submit to the beckoning of the face who asks, "Am I your brother?"

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erase its witnessing power but to highlight it as a model for others to follow – it may be used to open rather than close access to God. This is precisely what the New Testament writers accomplish in their narratives. The apostle Paul goes on to make this very claim: "Branches were broken off so that [others] might be grafted in" (Rom. 11:20). However, the Christian authors make the political move of claiming for themselves the place the Hebrew writers reserve solely for the descendants of Abraham (Deuteronomy 10:15). Declares Peter, echoing God's reiteration of the same promise in Leviticus 26:12: "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy" (1 Pet. 2:9-10).

The Hebrew writers' approach to historiography is clear. Their hermeneutic of self-assertion is of the utmost significance. Their ethnocentrism is less admirable, particularly when God seems to condone, if not, ordain the systematic exclusion, and at times, destruction, of outsiders. What is most clear, however, is the inseparable link between theological and political discourse, more specifically, the conflation of religious and political praxes, which immediately implicate language. With the theoretical apparatus operating only implicitly, the significance of theological reflection dissipates under the pressure of unmediated politico-religious praxis. [For a detailed analysis of the relation between theology of the political and religious praxis, see Boff's chapter on dialectic in Clodovis Boff, *Theology and Praxis: Epistemological Foundations* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2009), 206-220.] For all practical purposes, the Hebrews' theological interpretation of their history endows Hebrew life and culture with unparalleled political power. That is one explanation for the scriptures' shameless display of Israel's failures and shortcomings. With God as a captive audience, weakness is strength. This move categorically invalidates encounters with God outside of the Hebrew, and subsequently, the Christian tradition, a fact that imbues the Hebrew and Christian traditions with the power to create religious others. It concomitantly renders those traditions complicit in the subjugation and marginalization of the historical other: Their complicity in colonization is perhaps their most egregious transgression, and Haiti their most battered victim. The Hebrew and Christian traditions are not the sole perpetrators of colonialism, but, as accomplices, they bear responsibility for its sins. The following quote about Christianity applies to the Hebrew tradition as well: "Power operates in Christian theology's construction of religious others, and the exercise of power introduces blind spots in the resulting theological formulations." David R. Brockman, *No Longer the Same: Religious Others and the Liberation of Christian Theology* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 7. Those "blind spots" are analogous to the shadow sides of the leaders of those movements:

> Jesus, thus, clearly discerns between insiders and outsiders to the coming kingdom (an understandable and very human discrimination). In doing so, however, he sets up dynamics of inclusion and exclusion which were to be developed in rigid and pernicious ways later on…The die is cast in Jesus' ministry for the creation of in-groups and out-groups and for the political process of inclusion and exclusion which has haunted Christianity at all times and in nearly all places ever since. Stephen Pattison, *The Challenge of Practical Theology* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2007), 235.

In other words, 'Jesus' as a symbol, is prime example of a classic that inspires both constructive and destructive acts, for the establishment of the 'Kingdom of God' on earth has come at great cost to the "Others" created in the process. CMOS 14.35, 14.39, and 14.51

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'Brother' as Practical Theological Motif

The image of the corn, with which this conversation begins, now fulfills a key practical theological role. The 'attitudes' of the worm and the fowl are appropriate. Devoid of any perceivable power of deliberation, they experience the corn to the fullest of their abilities. They seem to enter into that presence which the corn mediates and receive the fullness of the experience. The myth of the corn enraptures them, yet their behavior is as mundane as can be.

For the human, the Haitian human, corn epitomizes the distance which the I and the 'brother' must traverse for the possibility of truth. This distance, like death, is the 'brother's' prerogative. None other can assume it! The breaking of the corn, which signifies the threat of death, is thus of the essence of the corn's mediating power. To offer the corn in its wholeness, unbroken and unsusceptible to the irreversible *dying* of the 'brother,' is a totalizing act even when performed in the spirit of generosity. Generosity as enjoyment is at the expense of the other.[264] It belongs to the 'I' in its absolute separation and issues from need. At its most sacrificial, it issues from an exercise of power though the exercise results in self-emptying.[265] From this perspective, acts of perceived generosity that do not issue from desire, that is, in justice as a first movement, are always at risk of 'thingifying' the other. [266] They do so most perniciously, in spite of their

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[264] For Lévinas, enjoyment is in fact synonymous with exploitation. Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 115.
[265] "The face speaks to me and thereby invites me to a relation incommensurate with exercised power, be it enjoyment or knowledge." Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 198.
[266] The alternative is untenable, for it becomes susceptible to the dilemma that ensues in Aristotle's treatment of the slave and master relation both in the *Politics* and in *The Nicomachean Ethics*. In *The Nicomachean Ethics*, the philosopher argues that friendship and justice are very similar, at least to the degree allowed by the relation, which they characterize. He writes, "the objects and the personal relationships with which friendship is concerned appear…to be the same as those which are the sphere of justice. For in every partnership we find mutual rights of some sort, and also friendly feeling [among the

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perceived indispensability, because they require the denial of the other's absoluteness.

Authentic generosity issues from desire, not from power. In the asking, the face does not surrender its "ownness."[267] In presenting itself, the face makes the movement of infinity – open, vulnerable, unashamed yet unassimilable. The 'I,' who asks, moves from a heteronomous position, for it moves not out of need but out of desire. But desire, as a mode of being of the face, whether of the 'I' or of the 'brother,' does not proceed without conscience;[268] hence it moves within history, for language occurs within history.[269] The breaking of the corn denotes the necessary re-ordering that ensues when the 'brother,' conscious of its place in history, initiates the movement of desire: it gives itself without forsaking itself. It thus participates fully in that which desire creates through speech: justice.[270]

The key practical theological motif then is not the corn. It is not even the encounter, but the 'brother,' the one who traverses historical and existential particularity in hope. The 'brother,' the face that risks in hope, gives concrete

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partners]…limited to the extent of their association." Business partners then owe a type of justice to one another. So is it among siblings and between parents and their children, etc. Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics* (Ware, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 1996), XIII.1, 217. The dilemma is this: either friendship issues in justice that is commensurate with the extent of the relation, or that friendship reflects the character of the master and slave relation, in which case, it is no friendship at all. Now, should the reader wonder, justice is active in the master and slave relation but by virtue of the slave's natural duty to the master, the slave's natural lord and benefactor. "The natural benefits by subjection to a master." Aristotle, *Politics*, I.8, 25-53. For a discussion of the apparent contradictions in Aristotle's treatment of the master and slave relation, see Thornton C. Lockwood, Jr., "Is Natural Slavery Beneficial?" *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, vol. 45, no. 2 (2007) 207-21.

[267] Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1960), 92.

[268] Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 101.

[269] Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, 133.

[270] "The face resists possession, resists my powers. In its epiphany, in expression, the sensible, still graspable, turns into total resistance to the grasp. This mutation can occur only by the opening of a new dimension." Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 197.

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expression to the language of justice instituted in desire.[271] The discourse that ensues from the encounter, that is, from the event in which the face asks in hope, "Who is my brother?" is itself hope's reification and active participation in the vision it in itself institutes by virtue of the language of the 'brother.' In other words, the 'brother' is hope's incarnation instituted through language, desire's purpose reified as solidarity. This originary form of discourse is the beginning of the decolonization of knowledge, for it institutes itself as the mode of knowing and the mode of speaking that are consonant with the possibility of justice and truth for Haiti's particular historical situation.

Therefore, the speaking face of the 'brother' figures at the heart of decoloniality. Conceived in hope, it institutes itself as decoloniality's originary form. It is in essence that which infuses the revolutionary spirit with vigor, kindling within it the desire for a dignified life.[272] It is that which imbues the *Goudougoudou* motif with the power to redeem, in the sense of showing in and through the visible, in its brokenness and mundaneness, in the wanting, questioning face, the possibility of things unseen. It is that which imbues the 'ought' of ethical responsibility with credibility and vigor.

The face of the 'brother' is the event in which encounter makes its mark. It emblazons its image on all living things beginning with those that suffer for want of life. The desire of the face is but a simple meal of roasted corn.

Give me a piece, only a piece.

No hands need washed. No feet need soiled.

[271] "The manifestation of the face is already discourse." Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 66.
[272] Language entails both speaking and listening. Heidegger writes, "we do not merely speak *the* language – we speak *by way* of it. We can do so solely because we always have already listened to the language." Heidegger, *On the Way*, 124. From this perspective, language assures encounter's undetermined character by introducing a delay. Encounter issues in language and as language event.

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No mounts need moved. No mounts need climbed.

Break me a piece, only a piece.

No need to talk. No need to balk.

You see my face? You sense my trace?

I read your stride. I sense your pride.

I see your face. I know the pace.

What can I say? What can I pray?

You walk away, as if to say,

That in my face, you see menace.

But in your gaze, I see malaise.

Give me a piece. Receive my peace.

Enter my nave. My turn to save.

You see my face? You have my grace.

As for becoming the ward or servant of generosity's wielding hand, this the face defers to the one who already owns all things.

All things are born in and of language including the encounter. The face, the face that characterizes Haitian-ness and humanizes the Haitian body, the speaking face, the gift that transforms the threat of the abyss into possibility, resisting with each moment within its movement the institution of death's totalizing power, is encounter's most

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significant witness. Yet the face speaks what it hears: the face speaks good news to the pilgrim!

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CHAPTER FOUR

Encountering God in the Footsteps of the Ancestors

Atibo Legba, open the gates (to Ville-aux-Camps) for me

Papa Legba, open the gates so that I might enter

When I will go (to Ville-aux-Camps) I will salute the loas

When I will go in, I will thank the loas.

– *Vodou prayer/song*[273]

The First Steps

On January 27, 2014, I traveled to Haiti for my first official dissertation research trip. The day went very well. I had a safe flight into Port-au-Prince, the capital city. I found my cousin and godson smilingly waiting for me. He had with him a family friend, a kind gentleman, who had taken time off work to pick me up from the airport. During the drive to my sister's house in the town of Mariani, which is located just outside Port-au-Prince, I received a short but extremely helpful briefing on the current situation in the country from our family friend, who is a policeman. He wanted to allay my fears about my security. I think he especially wanted to correct some of the misinformation about Haiti, to which he was sure I had been exposed in the United States.

He was right. I was fearful for various reasons. I had traveled to Haiti three times in the previous two years as a delegate with the Center for Community Engagement at St. Thomas University, part of the Archdiocese of Miami's effort to connect with its sister diocese in the northwest of Haiti. However, as is the nature of those trips, I was rather sheltered by the Center's partners in Haiti in every way. The practice of the CRS partners

[273] Leslie G. Desmangles, "African Interpretations of Christian Vodou Cross," in *Invisible Powers: Vodou in Haitian Life and Culture*, ed. Claudine Michel and Patrick Bellegarde-Smith (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 43.

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was to scoop up our delegation at the airport with two of those Japanese-made vehicles, known on the street as *zo reken* [shark bone], that have become ubiquitous in Haiti since the earthquake struck on January 12, 2010. From there we either made our way to the regional airport for a short flight to Port-de-Paix or the group immediately started on the six-hour road trip to Port-de-Paix through some of the most difficult terrain in all of Haiti. Those trips with the Center doubled as research trips for me. They gave me the opportunity to connect with the people and culture of the northwest, particularly the members of the Coffee and Cacao cooperative KOKANO in ways I could not have done on my own.

When I traveled to Haiti with the Center for the first time in 2012, I had not set foot on Haitian soil for thirteen years, except perhaps for the occasional visits I had made to the Haitian consulate in Atlanta, Georgia, which is considered Haitian territory. Thus, when my police friend's ride turned into a security briefing/lecture about the foreign misperceptions about Haiti, I welcomed the opportunity to set aside some of the notions I had been grappling with since I informed my mother of my intention to travel alone to and through Haiti in search of encounters with God.

I was indeed struggling with anxiety not only because of security concerns but especially because of the reason I had flown to my home country. A strange feeling filled me. I knew that I was taking a leap of faith in my goals of researching religious practice in Haiti. I intended to experience some of the places sacred to the Vodouisants, the practitioners of Haiti's indigenous and majority religion.[274] As a Christian, a Protestant Christian, a Pentecostal Christian, I was especially concerned for my safety because of

[274] Rey and Stepick put Haiti's Vodouisant population at "a slight but seemingly declining majority of the [Haitian] population." Terry Rey and Alex Stepick, *Crossing the Water and Keeping the Faith: Haitian Religion in Miami* (New York: New York University Press, 2013), 6.

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the stories I had heard growing up in the church and, knowing the thoughts I had inside of me and the beliefs that were forming within me, I was also fearful for my salvation. Everyone knew of my intention for my first official research trip. No one knew the extent of my consternation. Nonetheless, I had resolved to stake my dissertation on the fruit of this and subsequent research trips. Having engaged in extensive research in postcolonialism during pre-candidacy, I needed to connect with Haiti. I needed to know Haiti. I was on a quest to find myself. I was on a quest to save myself.

The first test of my resolve came without delay. On my first night in Haiti, I experienced the most anxiety-filled moments of my life. My sister had told me about a peristyle located not far from her house. She had told me that the *oungan* or Vodou priest who oversaw the temple had recently died. She had also told me that the *oungan*'s son came every year to hold ceremonies at his father's former temple.

The drumming began around eleven or eleven thirty in the evening. At first, I thought nothing of it. I was even a bit excited, as one of my research goals was to experience everything Vodou that I could find. "Ah! A Vodou ceremony is taking place not far from here. The *oungan*'s son must be in town," I muttered to myself, half rejoicing and half really concerned. Having washed the day's sweat and dust off of my body, I then crawled under the mosquito net, which another cousin had helped me set up earlier in the day. I then lay comfortably in bed reflecting on the day's events and taking stock of my emotional state at this early stage of my fieldwork.

Around midnight, the drumming seemed to be getting louder. Now I could hear singing, loud cheers, and seemingly reveling voices pounding against my open window. I had read extensively into the literature on Vodou during my pre-candidacy years and

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watched enough YouTube videos of Vodou ceremonies to identify some of the music, and all the signs indicated the presence of the playful and ever sexual *lwa Gede*.

As the moments passed, the stories from my childhood were undoubtedly and frighteningly coming alive. I was on my first solo trip to Haiti since my parents brought my brothers and me with them to the United States when I was fifteen years old but the stories I heard as a child had stayed with me. The voices seemed to be getting closer. "It must a *bann chanpwèl*,"[275] I thought to myself. They do come out at night and attack people for no reason at all." Without any effort to retrieve them, I could hear the echoes of the stories playing over and over in my mind. There was my mom's story about her run-in with a group of white-clad women carrying plates of presumably good-smelling fried human meat. There was my dad's story of the pack of dogs whose odd behavior, precisely the fact that they were traveling in pack at night, betrayed the fact that they were a band of *lougawou* assuming the shape of dogs. They were probably on their way to a cemetery to exhume a corpse or to zombify the recently deceased as my dad surmised.

There was my older brother's account of an event that occurred around two in the morning during a family trip. He was riding in the back of our father's pick-up truck from which he could see flying human beings out in the distance. He could not make out any

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[275] A secret society within Vodou. See Rénald Clérismé, "Vodou, Peasant Songs, and Political Organizing," in *Haitian Vodou: Spirit, Myth, and Reality*, ed. Patrick Bellegarde-Smith and Claudine Michel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 62. According to Mauro Peressini and Rachel Beauvoir-Dominique, the secret societies of Vodou were essential to the struggle for Haitian independence. In the communities in which they are active, those secret societies continue to help maintain order and uphold justice. «*En effet, des problèmes relevant de l'admininstration de la justice sont fréquemment soumis aux sociétés secrètes. Celles font alors enquête pendant des mois, consultant les témoins and les lwa, et délibèrent pour en arriver à un jugement et à des sanctions équitables*.» [Include translation] Peressini Mauro and Rachel Beauvoir-Dominique, *Vodou* (Québec: La Société du Musée canadien des civilisations, 2012), 94. For a discussion of the *chanpwèl* society in relation to *rara*, see Elizabeth McAlister, *Rara! Vodou, Power, and Performance in Haiti and Its Diaspora* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 88.

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human characteristics to these airborne *dyab*,[276] but he was certain that those lights moving about in the starry sky at two in the morning could be nothing but flying humans. I was there that night and I remember my brother and others pointing at the sky. I simply did not share the certainty with which even my dad, who was driving at the time, supported my brother's postulate. There were also the explanations for my childhood nightmares, that feeling of something pressing down on my back and hindering my speech while I slept. The common explanation was that some *lougawou* was trying to ride me the way someone rides a horse. My best course of action during those times of seeming paralysis, my mother and others had instructed, was to utter if at all possible the name of Jesus.

There were the prayers for protection against the *enemy* and for God to send angels to stand sentinel at every door and window of our house. Those prayers, which were part of a nightly ritual during summertime, provoked fears of their own in my young and active imagination. The prayers were uttered so loudly as if to intimidate the *enemy* who was presumably eavesdropping. There was that night when I saw a 'giant' creature heading toward the Catholic Church at the stroke of midnight on New Year's Eve. Everyone was sure I had seen one of the neighbors in her nightly form. There were so many other stories of Christians coming up against donkeys, black cats, nocturnal fowls, and all sorts of other creatures. In those instances, the name of Jesus reportedly compelled the *enemy* to abscond the scene. All of those stories were alive to me on the night of January 27th.

With my imagination fully engaged and my reason nearly incapacitated by the presence of my deathly fear, the drumming had moved within an arm's length of my

[276] Devil or demon.

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window. It was my first night at my sister's house, and I struggled to remember the amount of yard space that extended between my window and the road. "They must be walking down that strip of road behind the house," I thought to myself. That thought breathed life into the caricatures that lived in imagination, the ones I had created as I attempted to visualize the characters in the stories of my childhood.

Those creatures were strange in both form and behavior. Each stood close to the ground. Each had a spine that appeared discontinuous but still linking the limbs and the head to form a unified body. Each of the creatures' hands appeared like a mass of undifferentiated tissue with a single bone extending from a visibly rigid but angled wrist to the tip of the hand, which resembled a closed fist or a nub of flesh. Each creature had a head that looked like no hair ever grew on it. Serious in demeanor and menacing in movement, those creatures carried drums and *banbou*[277] and various other instruments associated with *rara*, which they played in the manner I had seen in the neighborhood in Port-a-Piment. As a group, the creatures were aglow with a light, which their skin or colorful clothing emitted. Most terrifying of all was the transparency with which I was able to perceive the evil of the creatures' intentions.

I was certain that I could see my childhood imagination's tormentors if I glanced outside my window. Only I lacked the courage to lift the curtain that completely covered my window. What if they see me? What if they can squeeze through the metal bars on the

[277] "The *banbou*, or *vaksin*, are the instruments most immediately associated with *Rara* music. They are hollowed-out bamboo tubes with a mouthpiece fashioned at one end." "Rara is the yearly festival in Haiti that…belongs to the so-called peasant classes and the urban poor." For a thorough study of *rara* in Haiti including detailed study of the instruments associated with it, see Elizabeth McAlister, *Rara! Vodou, Power, and Performance in Haiti and Its Diaspora* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002). For the history and anatomy of this indigenous instrument, see McAlister's discussion beginning on page 44. The above quotes come from pages 46 and 3 respectively.

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window? Surely they knew of my presence and wished me harm. But surely they could sense the depth of my relationship with the Spirit of God, so they dare not try.

I was also very ashamed. I remember thinking: "how does a Ph.D. candidate succumb to such trivialities?" To no avail, I asked myself that question as a way to bolster my pride and extricate my mind from a manic episode that was beginning to feel more like a trance. Stories were part of my problem: their ability to hold hostage the imagination and thereby stultifying reason in the process. Reason does lose its sway when the mind perceives imminent danger.[278] As a child, I could not escape those stories. They figured at the heart of Haitian folklore. I heard them at night before going to bed. I heard them at home and at school. I saw them acted on stage. I heard them in popular songs. The worst place was the church. People claiming to be former practitioners of Vodou offered story after story of supernatural events in which they participated. Their tales were often seasoned with accounts of inhuman and inhumane acts, which they presumably committed prior to converting to Christianity.

The trouble was that none of the Haitians I knew drew any distinction between folklore and reality. My community had no tolerance for alternate interpretations of these particular phenomena.[279] My cause for shame was that those stories had infiltrated my belief system even though I had consistently advocated for alternate interpretations among family and friends. Most shameful of all was the fact that I studied science in college and was well versed in the languages of the philosophers and theologians. I was

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[278] Writes Blaise Pascal, "If you put the world's greatest philosopher on a plank wider than he needs, but with a precipice beneath, however strongly his reason may convince him of his safety, his imagination will prevail. Many would be unable to contemplate the idea without going pale and sweating." Blaise Pascal, *Pensées* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 3.

[279] Leon-Francois Hoffman remarks, "Haitian schools do not encourage critical thought and challenges to accepted opinion." Leon-Francois Hoffman, *Haitian Fiction Revisited* (Pueblo, Colorado: Passeggiata Press, 1999), 29.

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ashamed to be thirty-six, an upcoming practical theologian in the penultimate year of my doctoral studies, and I was afraid of the dark. In spite of repeated attempts to deny those beliefs any influence on my life, they were very much part of me.

The authors of the tales that shaped my childhood imagination and disposition toward Vodou bore the all too indefinite and unidentifiable appellation *Yo*, the Kreyòl version of the English 'People,' as in "people say Bigfoot was bathing in our swimming pool last night." Or, "people say that your mother will suddenly drop dead if you walk on your knees." The teller of the story is rarely speaking firsthand. Five different people may tell the same story without any one of them knowing the story's origin or, least of all, being the story's originator. The person who actually lived the event of the tale is almost always unidentifiable.

Thus my childhood fears, my caricatures, and the forces that had the power to conquer both the fears and the creatures in the imagination of my youth were fully awake to me. I was sure of my power, but my sleeplessness and severe anxiety exposed my vulnerability before the battle raging within me. After all, I was no longer a child. I was a Ph.D. candidate who had worked those stories out scientifically and theologically while living in the United States. I knew the difference between fact and fiction and could distinguish between the one and the other.

My mind was racing uncontrollably, my heart was pounding furiously against my chest, I was sweating so profusely that I wetted my bed because I was afraid. I doubted my very ability to study Haitian religious practice in any holistic manner, if that meant experiencing Vodou in a real way. By one in the morning, the drumming had become a real nuisance. I wanted to fall asleep so badly. My usual remedies were not working.

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When I had trouble sleeping in the past, I usually recited texts from memory, whether from the Bible or from various authors I had read. The drumming was so loud that my usually faithful memory was missing in action. My attempts to remember came up short every time as I could not recall more than a couple of lines and only in a jumbled sort of way.

Around two in the morning, my restlessness had turned into anger. I wanted to scream and demand that the torture stop. Powerless, I did the one thing of which I could think. I turned on my iPhone, put on Beethoven, and turned up the volume. It was difficult at first. Beethoven's music felt overly gentle. It was flowing with a subtlety too coy for my disposition at the edge of insanity. Beethoven initially exacerbated my situation, for the sound coming out of my ear buds seemed to be battling to silence the fierce, unrelenting drumming, the rhythm that had rattled my entire being for the best part of nearly three hours. A few minutes later with Beethoven's concertos blasting in my ears, I felt safe. No longer fearful, I felt myself calming. The sweating stopped, and my anxiety subsided, which suggests that the drumming had been the direct cause of my episode.

I fell asleep.

The next night, in anticipation of another bout of terror, I developed a stratagem to preempt further entrancement of my imagination. My stratagem involved a lot of mind games to convince myself that my fear was a matter of perception and not real. I even planned to venture to the window, move the curtain ever so slightly, and observe the object of my fear, if indeed it was lurking hither. Then the night came and, to my relief, I heard no drumming, singing, or shouting. There was no visitation from *Gede*. In fact, no

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other ceremony took place for the duration of my stay of nearly a month. It was as if the drums had been aware of my arrival on that day and intended to test my resolve to get to know Haiti and hear the sound of its voice. Perhaps the drumming had been in my honor, Haiti's gift to me to attune me to the rhythm of its heart. If only I could have recognized the meaning of the gesture.

Discovering the Mythical in the Public

Religion figures prominently in Haitian lived experience.[280] Its practice extends beyond church attendance on Sunday morning or afternoon prayer at the local mosque. Haitians surround themselves with their religiosity. Important aspects of their theologies are constantly and unabashedly on public display. From the names they choose for their children to the signs they post on their places of business, be it a *taptap*, a hardware store, or a private school, references to the divine or to religious texts and/symbols among Haitians create the impression that Haiti itself is a living temple.

As commonly as elsewhere in the Christian west, many Haitian parents name their children after biblical figures.[281] Other parents do not borrow Hebrew names but they adopt the practice of including the divine in the children's names especially when the child is born from a complicated labor. There are people named Mericidieu, Jesula, for example. This practice has the advantage of telling part of the child's story or revealing the parents' faith or discloses the facts of a spiritual experience. They also borrow heavily from the New Testament.

[280] "Not all Haitians are religiously devout…[but] for most Haitians in Miami, as in Haiti, religion is a central guiding force in life." Rey and Stepick, *Crossing the Water*, 8.
[281] My father, whose name is Isaac, has four siblings with the following names: Jacob, Sarah, Abraham, and Luc.

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The *taptap*, and generally most commuter vehicles, are well known spaces for the public expression of religious beliefs. *Bondye bon* "God is good" is a popular name for a *taptap* or a *pappadap*. *Christ est my victoire* "Christ is my victory" is another popular moniker. Motorcyclists have photos of Catholic saints and other prayers pinned to the headlights of their motorcycles. The *bwa fouye*,[282] most popular in Port-au-Prince, is a mural on wheels. Colorfully painted, it is a great place to experience an important way the religious fervor extends to sports and politics. The rear end of the *bwa fouye* typically displays a large portrait of a favored soccer, music, or political star, national or foreign, surrounded by Bible verses and other religious sayings and/or symbols be it a cross or the all-seeing eye.

Those signs, in addition to the commuting women clad in white or blue clothing, and the well-dressed canvassing members of the local Kingdom Hall, the traditionally dressed Muslim couple heading to afternoon prayer at the Kafou Fèy mosque, and the *bòkò* in Port-de-Paix dressed in white and blue heading to the cemetery to pay homage to Bawon Samdi[283] on the day of the dead, convey a sense that the divine lurks all around Haiti, and consciously and perhaps mostly unconsciously, implicitly and explicitly, the people and their signs are collaborating to acknowledge the fact of this presence.[284]

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[282] *Bwa fouye*, from *bwa* "wood" and *fouye* "to dig or carve" literally refers to the canoes that are produced by carving out a single piece of wood. In the above context, the term applies to a type of bus whose appearance gives the impression of having been carved from a single piece of wood.

[283] Also spelled Baron Samdi is "the loa of the dead." Maya Deren, *Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti* (Kingston, New York: McPherson & Company, 2004), 49. For a discussion of Bawon Samdi in relation to Petwo v. Rada rituals as well as to its Indian connections, see Deren, *Divine Horsemen*, 69-70. Bawon Samdi is usually associated with Bawon Lakwa and Bawon Simityè. The three «*sont les pères des Gede*». They form a "triad" of lwa. «*Ils sont parfois considérés comme trois aspects d'un même esprit…[Baron Samdi] exprime bien le lien indissoluble entre la vie et la mort*» "They are sometimes considered three aspects of the same spirit…[Bawon Samdi] expresses the indissoluble link between life and death." Peressini and Beauvoir-Dominique, *Vodou*, 56.

[284] As shown in other parts of this study, this constant remembering and reminder of the ubiquity of the divine in fact affirms the divine presence. It also suggests that any moment carries the potential for a transformative encounter with the divine. To what degree the faithful whose words and movement fill the

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When the theologies embedded in these various practices are taken into consideration, a highly complex mythical world emerges.[285] At any given moment in the Haitian religious imagination, angels and demons are doing battle, spells are being cast and warded off, spirits are being conjured or exorcised, and people are choosing between faith and *apostasy*.[286] Terry Rey and Alex Stepick sum it up this way: "most Haitians expect that God, the saints, the Holy Spirit, or the lwas will intercede in their lives, and they petition them to do so through prayer and ritual."[287]

The Kreyòl language itself boasts a wealth of proverbs and idioms that show a clear predilection among the people for the mythical. The wisdom of the proverbs lies in their ability to deploy this mythical language to produce metaphors that strike at the heart of the listener. Therefore, daily conversations contain references not only to the divine presence, but especially to the perceived antagonizing forces to which faith intends to respond: *lougawou*, *zonbi*, *baka*, *chanpwel*, *dyab*, just to name a few.[288] Though many

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public space are cognizant of that possibility is put in question by their insistence in identifying the divine with certain places, dates and times, and/or certain ritual practices.

[285] This reality represents more precisely the myth above the myth, which speaks to the polyvalent character of religious phenomena.

[286] The term has a relative application in this instance. The movement I describe is a movement from one faith tradition to another. As it happens, the faith of one group may be the apostasy of another. To the Catholic, Protestant, and Vodouisant alike, the spiritual realm is as active as it is real among the people. Thus the prayers, the symbols, and the dreams connect the people to the spirit world of God, the lwa, and the ancestors in a real, and often "protective" way. "A related integral feature of the Haitian religious collusio…is the incorporation or conception as 'real' what might be called nonmaterial forces or spirits that have an assumed, often unquestioned, role in one's day-to-day life; and, what we call religion is an institutional means for utilizing, protecting, and addressing those forces in a practical way. All forms of Haitian religion tend strongly to incorporate or embody this characteristic, even as they claim to combat some of these very forces or spirits." Rey and Stepick, *Crossing the Water*, 197.

[287] "Protection, security, and survival are all things that people need, obviously, and that in Haitian religion, whether in Haiti or the diaspora, are ultimately provided by supernatural forces." Rey and Stepick, *Crossing the Water*, 198.

[288] Drawing from André Corten, Rey and Stepick affirm the presence of a common "persecutory conception of evil" among Vodou, Catholic, and Protestant practitioners in the Haitian religious collusio. Rey and Stepick, *Crossing the Water*, 196. This persecutory conception of evil raises important questions about Haiti's state of affairs from the perspective of the majority of the Haitian people. Hunger and a dearth of resources do much less to move the Haitian imagination than the mention of any of those perceived antagonisms such the *lougawou* or the *baka*. To many Haitians, poverty is not their greatest threat. I

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people view these concepts negatively, they sometimes refer to them in language without directly implicating the 'reality' in which they purportedly operate.

For instance, the proverb *Pa janm pale lougawou mal devan moun*, which translates into "do not speak evil against a werewolf to anyone," urges caution and, frankly, suspicion, in dealing with people, for anyone could be a *lougawou*.[289] Some other similar proverbs: *Konplo pi fò pase wanga* "a plot is stronger than magical works" decries the power of collusion.[290] *Houngan*[291] *pa janm geri maling li: Houngan pa janm rich* "an *oungan* does not heal his own wounds: An *oungan* is never rich" highlights the need to seek help from others rather than always relying on one's own powers.[292] Those

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overheard two men in a Gonayiv station, one pushing a wheel barrow, presumably for most of the day, selling water and bottled carbonated drinks and his customer, describing their situation not as poor but as unfortunate because they both had means to make a living. This information emerged in their casual conversation – without solicitation. The line these two men drew between the poor and the unfortunate seemed thin, but they were adamant in identifying the poor with the beggar, which they were not, proud working men that they were. Many other Haitians undoubtedly disagree with the perspective of these two interlocutors, but they would not dispel the notion that as hard-pressed as their situation may indeed be, that talk of poverty fails to evoke the deep unease if not trepidation which the simple mention of, say, the word *wanga* evokes. Remarkably, this persecutory conception of evil determines intra-Haitian modes of relating. The neighbor is perceived as the source of the gravest possible danger.

[289] Edner A. Jeanty and O. Carl Brown, ed. *Paròl Granmoun: Haitian Popular Wisdom* (Port-au-Prince: La Press Evangélique, 1996), 163.

[290] The English translation from the text reads, "A plot is stronger than a witchdoctor's fetish." Jeanty, *Paròl Granmoun*, 163. *Wanga* is much more complex than represented in this text. According to Elizabeth McAlister, the term means more precisely "magical works." She writes, "*Wanga* are material objects infused with spirits and medicines; they use a series of visual puns to admonish the spirits to work. These *wanga* are then said to be 'working' for their owners." McAlister, *Rara!*, 80. Also, Elizabeth McAlister, "A Sorcerer's Bottle: The Art of Magic in Haiti," in *The Sacred Arts of Haitian Vodou,* ed. Donald Cosentino (Los Angeles: Fowler Museum of Cultural History, 1995), 302-21. Conversely, Maya Deren describes *wanga* in terms of "evil" works against which a *houngan* must protect his community. Deren insists that these magical works are not part of Vodou and do not originate from the *lwa*. Deren, *Divine Horsemen*, 77n.

[291] *Houngan* or *oungan* and its female counterpart *manbo* are generally translated as Vodou priest and Vodou priestess in the literature. However, as Patrick Bellegarde-Smith and Claudine Michel caution, "A *houngan* is far more than a priest, or a *manbo*, a female priest – their calling involves far more and the preparation for sacerdotal functions lasts a lifetime…and beyond." Patrick Bellegarde-Smith and Claudine Michel, ed. *Haitian Vodou: Spirit, Myth, and Reality* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), xxvi.

[292] Jeanty, *Paròl Granmoun*, 64. Another proverb carries the same meaning, *doktè pa janm trete tèt li* "doctors do not treat themselves." Text modified for clarity. Jeanty and Brown, *Paròl Granmoun*, 67. But notice the harsher and less pleasant language in the proverb about the oungan. Whereas the doctor, a well respected member of society, does not treat himself or herself, the oungan's illness is a *Maling* or *Maleng*, meaning wound but a festering, presumably malodorous wound. In this latter sense, it also denotes impurity.

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ritualistic and symbolic forms of religious expression highlighted above are in fact very practical ways of countering evil in the minds of those who engage in them, particularly due to the fact that those symbols significantly shape the Haitian imagination and predispose Haitians to interact with their lived experience in very predictable ways.

The predictability extends to the meaning those concepts convey when the people deploy their literal significations. The concern is with the ideas that are implied in the sayings and/or signs themselves. Thus seemingly neutral statements may carry connotations that are explicitly metaphorical but implicitly nefarious, which betrays an underlying predisposition to disavow the beliefs of those whom the proverbs implicate. In this regard, the proverb's poetical façade conceals a shadow side, namely that destructive prejudices are deeply embedded in the so-called *paròl granmoun* or "the words of the elders/wise." Thus though deployment of the sayings may obtain in the name of cultural expediency, the end result is colonialistic in nature. This is a complex matter that requires further explication.

Prayer contra Prayer

In context A, a proverb may deploy the metaphorical sense of a term that has a literal application in context B. For instance, a proverb such as *Konplo pi fò pase wanga* "a plot is stronger than magical works" expresses a clear idea about the power of a plot. It is strong; the implication being that a plot or conspirators are to be taken seriously. Presumably the statement is also deploying the meaning of *wanga*, that is, they are magical works with protective and healing power. However, contrasting *konplo* with *wanga*, and casting *wanga* as the weaker of the two entities, the statement is in effect diminishing the meaning of *wanga* and, thereby, delimiting the reach of its power. That

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which appears as a simple contrast between two indefinite terms serves a disparaging blow to a neighboring community.

Substituting a culturally acceptable term like prayer or the Eucharist for *wanga* maintains both the metaphorical power of the statement and its signifying power in so far as it intends to highlight the destructive power of conspirators, but such a move would probably arouse the passion of Haiti's religious conservatives even though *wanga* share certain characteristics with prayers and the Eucharist. Like prayer for the Christian, *wanga* is a source of protective and/or healing power for those who believe in its efficacy. *Konplo pi fò pase priyè* "a plot is stronger than prayer" strikes to the core of the belief system of many Haitians. By delimiting the efficacy of prayer, it disrupts the sensibilities of those in power and is thus unlikely to find many takers. The inability of groups of people to deploy the term in a manner that is consistent with the sensibilities of those who practice *wanga* casts a shadow on the mythmaking process of which the proverb is a significant part. It also calls into question any genuine metaphorical use of the term that is not predicated on disregard for the practice it represents. From this perspective, the usurpation by the dominant culture of language denoting concepts and practices that another group valorizes amounts to an act of grave injustice. That the *wanga* is a Vodou practice suggests that Vodou practitioners are the likely target if not the victims of the sayings.[293]

Another example may clarify the point further. The second proverb quoted above, viz., *Pa janm pale lougawou mal devan moun* "do not speak evil against a werewolf to anyone," as indicated above, urges prudence in speech. This saying has an interesting

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[293] See Elizabeth McAlister, "A Sorcerer's Bottle: The Art of Magic in Haiti," in *The Sacred Arts of Haitian Vodou,* ed. Donald Cosentino (Los Angeles: Fowler Museum of Cultural History, 1995), 302-21.

المنارة للاستشارات
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parallel with the biblical passage urging charity and hospitality in the treatment of strangers. As the passage asserts, “for by doing so some have entertained angels without knowing it” (Heb. 13:2). However, in contrast with the positively framed Hebrews passage, the proverb deploys arguably one of the most sinister terms in the Haitian language to push its point. In Haiti, *lougawou* is a generic term for a Vodou practitioner. Protestant Christians and many Catholics use it with great prejudice.[294] Anyone who participates in anything related to Vodou practice is subject to the label. The term is identified with all forms of vulgar supernatural phenomena and wickedness, which explains its common deployment as an insult in everyday language,[295] and those who bear its stigma are generally treated with great suspicion if not disdain. Once stigmatized, a person receives little consideration in the larger society, and those who inflict violence on such a person often meet with societal approbation in the form of impunity.[296]

Already in parsing this proverb, the consequences of the manipulation of the Haitian language by the dominant groups are becoming apparent. The practice of narrative writing and narrative manipulation by dominant groups is now a fact of

[294] Haitians use *lougawou* interchangeably with the equally opprobrious *dyab*, meaning devil. When the latter is used with the article *la*, as in *dyab la*, it means *the* devil.

[295] Sometimes accompanied by the gendering modifier *manman* or *papa* to indicate the recipient of the insult. Use of this offensive term by Catholics and Protestants is consistent with the historical demonization of the Vodou religion. “Protestants and many Catholics, for instance, disavow Vodou and generally label it as devil worship. Yet, their approach does not deny the power of spirits. Instead, they re-label the spirits as evil or satanic; they enjoin people to pray and be devout to combat such demonic nemeses, which are conceived of as being altogether real, however nonmaterial that they might seem.” Rey and Stepick, *Crossing the Water*, 197. For a detailed analysis of the anti-Vodou – branded as “antifetish and antisuperstition” – campaigns in Haitian history, see Terry Rey, *Our Lady of Class Struggle: The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Haiti* (Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, Inc., 1999), 51-60. “Vodou and those who serve the spirits have been perpetual objects of hatred, fear, and persecution, from colonial times to the present.” Carrol F. Coates, “Vodou in Haitian Literature,” in *Invisible Powers: Vodou in Haitian Life and Culture*, ed. Claudine Michel and Patrick Bellegarde-Smith (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 184.

[296] Boukman Eksperyans, a Haitian roots music group, decry the dismissal of their music as *mizik lougawou*, the devil’s music. *Se manti*! “That’s a lie!” they object emphatically in Boukman Eksperyans, *“Nou Pap Sa Bliye,”* in *Vodou Adjae*, Island Records Inc, 1991, MP3.

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history.[297] This brief analysis is suggesting that perhaps the exercise of power operates at the linguistic level as well, if not primarily, in Haitian society. From this perspective, then those that are endowed with the power of the written word, who have wielded the pen to secure their prominence in Haitian society, are susceptible to the charges implied in this inquiry. The Kreyòl language, written or unwritten, is susceptible to the charge of dehumanization.[298] If, to borrow from Chopp, language "is a political activity"[299] that directly determines "the ability to take one's place in whatever discourse is essential to action and the right to have one's part matter,"[300] then the decolonization of the Haitian language figures at the epicenter of the struggle for justice for all Haitians.[301] The implications of this thought apply to all levels of Haitian society as language is foundational to the lived experience of all people.

Suspecting Death!

The prejudices embedded within this proverb expose a *demon* at work in Haitian lived experience: fear. The personal story that opens this chapter makes this point clearly. Suspicion in large part creates the condition for fear to grow. Yet suspicion is mostly what the proverb achieves. The proverb is a self-fulfilling prophecy that becomes more convincing, and dangerous, the longer it endures. It turns kinfolks into enemies. It twists love into a farce, and engenders antipathy among strangers. When contrasted with the Hebrews passage, which evokes a positive and active response to the stranger, the

[297] See Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 31-69.
[298] Although French has historically been the language of choice of most Haitian writers and opinion shapers, the ideas and biases of the educated elite usually find their way very quickly into the Kreyòl language.
[299] Rebecca S. Chopp, *The Power to Speak: Feminism, language, God* (New York: Crossroad, 1991), 3.
[300] Chopp, *The Power to Speak*, 2.
[301] "Decolonization is an encounter between two congenitally antagonistic forces that in fact owe their singularity to the kind of reification secreted and nurtured by the colonial situation." Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 2004), 2.

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proverb teaches suspicion and self-concern as the proper Haitian response. So the stranger becomes the enemy, and by implication unworthy of trust. Such a cynical disposition transforms the face of the stranger into a potential threat that bids 'Keep your distance!' Not just any potential threat, but the supposed threat that the face of another could be the face of an *other*.[302] St Rose decries this prejudicial spirit when he writes,

> Prejudice has clouded your judgment…
>
> Now deaf to kindness
>
> Blind to strength and love
>
> Forgetful of trust
>
> In your courtroom
>
> As judge and executioner
>
> Even the innocent are guilty
>
> Communication an impossible dream[303]

Suspicion engenders fear and fear turns risk into threat. The risk required by all deep and life-giving affections is caricatured by suspicion's ever more constrictive grip on the imagination. The stranger's face thus takes on the form of the strangest of faces: Distanced and passed on, touch-less, care-less, speech-less, and worth-less: death-less: condemned to hell.

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[302] This is in essence what happens in encounter. Paradox turns risk into possibility. Fear is thus a menace to possibility, and ergo a clear sign that encounter is of divine grace. The face of the feared other becomes the face of the possibility of otherness or the way of infinity. By denying the other, the other becomes lost, so do all possibilities of a genuine encounter. This failure has the double effect of calling into question the nature of faith itself. "Our images of divine transcendence inform our constructions of interhuman otherness. Ideas about the divine Other are always related to our perceptions of and relationships with the human Other." Mayra Rivera, *The Touch of Transcendence: A Postcolonial Theology of God* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 128.

[303] Ellipses are part of the original text. J. Lambert St Rose, *Helen and Her Sister Haiti: A Theological Reflection on the Social, Historical, Economic, Religious, Political and National Consciousness with A Call to Conversion* (Bloomington: Authorhouse, 2011), 281.

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Perhaps this disposition, this faith-less[304] inclination to abscond and deface the face, is the pathway to hell, for it also inhibits the possibility of empathy and faith. A fear-effaced face fails to feel: faith, a glance, askance, a feinted wince, a hellish squint – the lesson has been learned.[305]

Hell may be lonely but bustling with content. Perhaps such is the reason for the unending torment: to be surrounded by unending possibility, by the face that evades with perpetual anonymity. To abscond is to discard and abandon, seeing in the face only menace; that which absconds also self-defaces; oppressor and victim are one, lonely prisoner in a community of one. The fear of the face means death for the race: Death to language! Death to hope! Death to possibility! Death to justice! Death to death!

Hospitality in turn is held captive, the hostage of a life-less insinuating grip.[306] The simple request for a cup of water or a piece of corn suffices to reduce the face of the stranger to the mirage of the fiend rather than suggest the covert touch of a heavenly trend. Conditional and ever constricting, the wisdom of the ancients – *paròl granmoun* –

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[304] Paul Tillich prescribes courage in lieu of suspicion. Whereas suspicion engenders fear and death, courage overcomes estrangement and engenders faith in spite of death. "There is no faith without a definite 'in spite of' and the courageous affirmation of oneself in the state of ultimate concern." Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith* (New York: HarperOne, 2001), 24. Doubt occurs here in its paradoxical role as the possibility of faith and though not yet as its affirmation. "Courage as an element of faith is the daring self-affirmation of one's own being in spite of the powers of 'nonbeing' which are the heritage of everything finite. Where there is daring and courage there is the possibility of failure. And in every act of faith this possibility is present. The risk must be taken…Ultimate concern is ultimate risk and ultimate courage." Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, 19-20.

[305] This lengthy passage from Mayra Rivera captures the gist of what I am able to render only poetically: "When we encounter the Other, the process of representation has already begun. We arrive too late. The Other has already been repeatedly encountered, named, and represented, and so have we. Our first glance at the Other is already tainted by endless denials, appropriations, and erasures. We know, or think we know, who the Other is and what she looks like…We 'recognize' her face…But there is always more than we see or know, deny that we see or know…An elusive mystery glows in the bodies of Others. The Other still calls us, as if from beyond." Rivera, *The Touch of Transcendence*, 102-103.

[306] "The unconditional claims of hospitality need to be continually tried and tested within the difficult conditions of our neighborhoods, our societies, and our nations – all of which are crisscrossed with fences, restrictions, and borders. Only by practicing the difficult demands of hospitality can we ever approximate the lasting peace it promises to the human community." Terry A. Veling, *Practical Theology: "On Earth as It Is in Heaven"* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2005), 231.

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urges suspicion and engenders fear.[307] The justification for this is: 'some have entertained *demons* unawares.' Thus the stranger's face is a battleground – more compatible with listless fear and spent hope – doubtfully measured and disdainfully plumbed – overdetermined from within and from without.[308] The future's foundations are laid in sorrow.

Borrowing from a commonly meme often found within their Catholic counterparts over the centuries,[309] Protestant denominations generally exploit this fear as a political tool for recruiting souls.[310] The effects of this practice are deleterious at best, particularly for a culture that has yet to deal with its predilection for the colonial. Thus language, at the tip of the tongue or pen from the colonially minded person's unfortunate pen, can become the tool that eternalizes prejudice and encages those minds at the receiving end of its mythmaking powers.[311] Those who sow fear and exploit the same in the name of a name, be it nation, prophet, messiah, or *lwa*, bring shame to Haiti's face

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[307] "Such is the quandary of practicing hospitality – we cannot fully 'prepare' for it…quite 'defenseless – it lets its guard down and stands unprotected. Perhaps this is why hospitality is so difficult because we are so fearful." Veling, *Practical Theology*, 232.

[308] Perhaps the Haitian situation falls between that of the Jew as perceived by Sartre and that of the colonial subject of Fanon's concern, overdetermined from the outside and from the inside. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 2008), 95.

[309] For a history of the Catholic efforts to combat Vodou and conquer the imagination of the Haitian people, see Terry Rey, *Our Lady of Class Struggle: The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Haiti* (Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, Inc., 1999), 51-60.

[310] Rey and Stepick liken the Haitian situation to a "competition over souls" Rey and Stepick, *Crossing the Water*, 10. Quoting Charles-Poisset Romain, Rey and Stepick assert, "Protestantism [in Haiti]…exploits to the hilt a certain psychosis of fear, presenting itself as a refuge that offers a kind of security." Rey and Stepick, *Crossing the Water*, 198. See also Charles-Poisset Romain, *Le Protestantisme dans la société Haïtienne: Contribution à l'étude sociologique d'une religion* (Port-au-Prince: Deschamps, 1986).

[311] The relation between Christianity and Vodou is characterized by competition to control the "goods of salvation" among the Haitian people. For an analysis of this situation along Bourdieuian lines, see Terry Rey, *Our Lady of Class Struggle: The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Haiti* (Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, Inc., 1999), 21. For an analysis of Protestantism's most recent attempts to conquer the Haitian imagination and re-write the country's history, see Elizabeth McAlister, "From Slave Revolt to a Blood Pact with Satan: The Evangelical Rewriting of Haitian History" (2012). *Division II Faculty Publications.* Paper 113.
http://wesscholar.wesleyan.edu/div2facpubs/113. Also, Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 31-69.

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and soil their name. A community that gains from scam is but a sham. The children of Haiti deserve better from its leaders especially those who serve the Spirit. The political leaders have made their mark from the pen they comfortably take their stand. They too are afraid of the dark.

Redeeming Myth

Evidently, the predilection for the mythical oftentimes has a paralyzing effect on the Haitian mind. That self-serving and equally colonized/colonizing opportunists exploit the country's problems for political gain only exacerbates the situation.[312] The problem is not with myth itself but with a cultural disposition that resists critical thinking.[313] Since myth does not require empirical proof, hearsay carries more weight than argumentation and logic in many parts of Haitian society. Mythical thinking does not require the abdication of critical reason. Perhaps experience does supersede argumentation in matters of faith. Nevertheless, when the mythically inclined mind confuses the facts of the imagination such as *lougawou* with the facts of life, thereby imbuing the facts of the imagination with the character of experience, then the mind is no longer dealing with myth; rather it is engaged in delusion.

The person who believes that people can fly unaided by any engagement with aerodynamic technology, who associates all sorts of malignity with the supposed act, who infuses those beliefs into a life that is predisposed to suspicion and conducive of fear, who believes himself or herself to be privy of some universally valid and absolute truth, and who needs no evidence to see the facts with absolute clarity, is not insightful or

[312] Terry Rey, *Bourdieu on Religion: Imposing Faith and Legitimacy* (Durham, UK: Acumen, 2007), 5.
[313] Hoffman, *Haitian fiction Revisited*, 29.

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intuitive but blind. The one who, by virtue of some purported universal all-seeing eye, sees all things in fact sees nothing at all.[314]

The Need to Learn from the Others

In the West, this kind of uncritical religiosity led to a move toward secularism and the eventual abasement if not effacement of the religious from the public sphere in certain regions of the world. The privatization of religion has had a tremendous impact on the self-understanding of western societies. However, this secular-minded move conducted under the aegis of enlightenment ideals only changed the center of power from the cleric to the technocrat. Justice did not increase; rather, arguably injustice prevailed as pervasively as before.[315] Nonetheless, privatization initially ensued from a shift that began in the late Middle Ages, a time during which regional disunity compelled the state to divorce itself from religion as a matter of political necessity.[316] The Enlightenment built on this latent political predisposition and threw Europe into a series of religious crises that eventually defined religion's place in western society.[317]

Myth is a gift. The mythical imagination is the gift of possibility. The critical mind too is a gift. Together they can help shape the future Haitians desire. As Haiti

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[314] "Politics left to itself bears a tyranny within itself; it deforms the I and the other who have given rise to it, for it judges them according to universal rules, and thus *in absentia*. In welcoming the Other I welcome the On High to which my freedom is subordinated." Emmanuel Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2012), 300. "And all too often, rules and legislation and judgments are made in the absence of the one who stands outside – 'in absentia' – as though the law didn't really care about those left standing outside its gates, whereas all the time it is meant to be concerned for the welfare of all, even and especially for the least of all." Veling, *Practical Theology*, 189.

[315] To this day people are fighting on a yearly basis in the United States to remove religious paraphernalia from the public sphere by the threat of boycotting places of business that call Christmas "Christmas" or play religious music on their speakers.

[316] "The state had to emancipate itself from religion – for its own survival and in order to do justice to its task of creating unity and defending the peace. This was a sort of 'homegrown' privatization of Christianity that existed before privatization got under way as the 'all-embracing' process of the Enlightenment." Johann Baptist Metz, *Faith in History and Society: Toward A Practical Fundamental Theology* (New York: Herder and Herder, 2007), 46-59.

[317] Metz, *Faith in History and Society*, 46-59.

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changes and inevitably moves closer and closer to emulate the state of affairs among the colonial powers past and present, the religious risks sliding into the place it now occupies in western societies.[318] However, the mythical imagination can and should be deployed to shape Haitians' images of themselves as a nation of people. Mythical language can and should permeate the discourse of law and shape the tenor of governmental policy. Haitian lived experience can and must reflect the strivings of a nation to heal its sufferings through hopeful action and solidarity. The idea is that Haitians cannot live unless they interlace a religiously informed ethos of justice and hospitality into their self-understanding. That way they get to uphold and perhaps, direct, the ancestors' practical commitment toward justice, while walking proudly alongside them. Through a rigorous practice of a discipleship of justice, the religious may achieve its goal of facilitating the encounter that means salvation for all of Haiti's children. Being Haitian could be, to borrow from Metz, "a way of being a subject in solidarity that is for everyone, something that is possible only if religion does not come on the scene subsequent to the social constitution of the subject."[319]

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[318] The agendas and practices of the current political leaders regrettably lend themselves to this kind of interpretation. The possibility of the relegation of religion to the private sphere may seem unlikely to observers considering the way religion is inculcated into every aspect of Haitian society. Suffice it to remember that Christianity and concern for its worldwide dissemination and control once consumed Europe and was at the center of a number of fierce political conflicts and tragic wars. The fact is that religion and political power cannot be separated uncritically without grave setbacks in the ability to understand human action. Pierre Bourdieu opened our eyes to this insight. See Rey, *Bourdieu on Religion*, 8. The process of privatization may not relegate religion to the periphery at all. It may take the form it took famously under a number of dictatorial regimes such as those of Faustin Soulouque and François Duvalier. In Duvalier's case, for example, the hyper-publicization of religion was symptomatic of its cooption by the regime. Rey, *Our Lady of Class Struggle*, 64. The point is religion can become ostracized and denied any place of significance in shaping the future if its adherents succumb to the mesmerizing power of the figure in the proverbial mirror.

[319] This statement encapsulates Metz's formula for a political theology of the subject. Metz, *Faith in History and Society*, 58-59. Though the religious is presupposed in Haiti' current situation, its continued influence is contingent upon the willingness of the practitioners of various faiths to work together and help determine the existential constitution of a healed Haiti.

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The Mythical Dimension of Encounter as the Possibility of Salvation for the Ancestor and the Pilgrim

The Pilgrim's Vocation

The footsteps of the ancestors are marked with danger. To walk in them is to embrace fear. To journey by way of them is to contemplate death as a friend. Thus walking in the ancestors' footsteps suggests more than inquiring into the facts of ancestral beginnings. More pertinently, it implies walking in step with death while feeding on the carcasses of denied truth and fleeting hope, that is, while uttering the damning and ever paradoxical *Ayiti pap janm chanje!* in other words, while feeding on despair itself. The seeds of truth and hope are sown in despair. The footsteps of the ancestors mark the course of a journey from conception to parturition of an existential imperative that is synonymous with life itself. Liberty is its name, and justice is its aim.

Finding those footsteps is a great challenge for many of them have been covered up, their authenticity, disavowed, and their shapes, distorted. Some of the footsteps were laid in water. Those can be said to have vanished with the receding waves of the sea. Some of them are clear but terrifyingly so. They are of bloody feet – naked, bloody, decaying feet. Some of them are of running feet – tired, bleeding, absconding feet. Those footsteps find their home in the essays, plays, poems, and historiographies of Haiti's men and women of letters. Some of the footsteps create confusion. They seem to lead to a path of great contradiction, as if unsure of their true intention. Religion perhaps designates the location of those particular footsteps.

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The Pilgrim's Regress

For the twenty-first century pilgrim, finding and walking in and encountering the divine in the footsteps of the ancestors at first appears impossible. A trip to the *Musée du Panthéon National d'Haïti* (Mupanah) is informative. The presence of the purported anchor of the Santa María does create a sense of having traveled back more than five hundred years. The pre-colonial artifacts are useful hints that the people of whom historians and anthropologists write once treaded Haitian soil. The imperial crown of Faustin 1er is a glistering reminder that African-descended emperors and kings once ruled the nation.[320] The monuments that still stand are even more telling. They display the ancestors' genius for building magnificent edifices. Citadelle Laferrière stands as a prodigious exhibition of the power of the Haitian creative imagination and a telling display of Haitian military foresight.

Other artifacts are embedded in the earth itself or make their mark in Haitian culture. The grotto that sheltered Taïno queen Anacoana from the invading Spanish remains tucked inside one of Lewogàn's many mountains. *Rara*, the annual festival that is linked to Anacoana's visits to her husband in the Artibonite region fill the streets of Lewogàn and Gonayiv with a life that recalls the music, dances, and revelry of the ancestors. The *rara* emerge from the *lakou* with which they are associated. In this respect, they make clear the festival's undeniable link with Vodou, which is the religion in which Dessalines is deified.

Nevertheless, all of the above artifacts, places, and festivals fail to touch the Haitian people universally due to ignorance, lack of access, or simple disinterest. Relatively few Haitians have visited the Citadelle or walked the steep trail to Anacaona's

[320] Alyssa Goldstein Sepinwall, ed. *Haitian History: New Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 104.

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grotto. Some students of Port-au-Prince have the privilege to tour the Mupanah, but those who frequent rural schools enjoy no such privilege. Needless to say, most Haitian students have not seen the imperial crown of Faustin 1st or traveled to the past via the museum's prehistoric artifacts. Many Haitians show no interest in finding the ancestors' footsteps because their religious affiliation, which plays a significant role in designating the aspects of Haitian history and culture that are worth practicing or remembering, discourages or altogether forbids it. Whereas adherents of Catholicism and/or Vodou may participate fully in *Rara*, members of most Protestant denominations preach against the tradition, associating it with the practice of evil and debauchery, an antipathy, which, according to Vodou mythology, extends to the afterlife.[321] This antipathy towards certain cultural aspects of the country deeply affects the people's ability to interpret their history and participate in the shaping of their own destiny. Christian tradition enables this kind of antipathy, as it tends to supplant national history and culture in favor of the narratives of the bible.

The *Gifting* of Myth

Today's pilgrim shares a reality with the ancestors. Their beginnings coincide. Their destinies are entwined. The dreams of the one are the life of the other.[322] The sufferings of the one are the joy of the other. The death of the one is the hope of the other. Pilgrim and ancestor are bound together in joy and in suffering, in life and in death. They are most intricately bound in their quest for justice, for justice, as the motivation behind

[321] McAlister, *Rara!*, 109-110.
[322] Maya Angelou, "Still I Rise" in *The Complete Collected Poems of Maya Angelou* (New York: Random House, 1994), 163.

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the ancestors' bleeding footsteps, is also the fact that concerns the present most still.[323] In remembering and asking concerning the ancestors' journey unto justice, the pilgrim affirms the indispensability of the ancestors' pilgrimage toward justice, legitimating her or his own struggles against injustice, while simultaneously standing in judgment before the face of justice.[324]

The fight for justice remains the confluence of the most pressing concerns of all Haitians for it binds all of Haiti's people, dead and living, illiterate and literate, to a common purpose and, consequently, to a common destiny. Justice is the possibility of salvation for the Haitian people; it is their ultimate concern. The lack of basic necessities such as nutritious food, clean water, and education are clearly secondary. Those elements can be subsumed under the cover of justice's closed umbrella. However, injustice has brought and continues to bring the Haitian people to the mercy of the most destructive force that can strike a human being: dehumanization.[325] Henri Laurent captures this idea helpfully in the following verse:

Our enemy is

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[323] The presence of *rèstavèk* in contemporary Haiti suggests that the cry for justice has remained uninterrupted throughout Haitian history in spite of the official abolition of colonial slavery in 1804. See chapter V of this study.

[324] The practice of justice is the hallmark of authentic discipleship. "To know God is to respond to God in loving practice of discipleship or, as the liberation theologian Miranda constantly emphasizes, knowing God in the Old Testament is the doing of justice, which is, of course, closely integrated with love." Duncan B. Forrester, *Truthful Action: Explorations in Practical Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000), 14.

[325] "Nothing can be of ultimate concern for us which does not have the power of threatening and saving our being … [where] 'being' means the whole of human reality, the structure, the meaning, and the aim of existence. All this is threatened; it can be lost or saved." Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), 1:14. This notion figures at the center of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s understanding. For him, the work of justice must be a collective undertaking because injustice threatens the very core of what it means to be human and therefore threatens everyone – everywhere. He writes, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny." Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from A Birmingham Jail," in *I Have A Dream: Writings and Speeches that Changed the World*, ed. James M. Washington (New York: HarperOne, 1992), 85. The *goudougoudou* motif exposes this contradiction, namely, humanity alone has the power to dehumanize. Conversely, only the human can save human-ness. "

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That which crushes us down

Stripping us of our humanity

In a society that must change.

(Ki sa ki enmi nou

Se sa-k kap kraze-n

Pou-n ka viv san limanite

Nan yon sosyete ki dwe chanje.)[326]

Haiti's collective history thus links the contemporary pilgrim's existence to the ancestors' story forever, even as the cycle of death and life continues to add scores more of Haiti's children to this all-encompassing reality. However, time limits history and history is restricted to past events.[327] That which time conceals, myth reifies. History breaks open and time retreats in the shadows to make the face-to-face possible between two distinct realities separated by the ever-expanding and ever-vanishing distance between the beginning and the present end. The turn to myth stems from the pilgrim's search for the space in which the ancestors live, the space which hope and truth occupy both in the dreams of the ancestors and in the mind of the pilgrim who seeks meaning in myth.[328] The turn to myth is essential to the vocation of the pilgrim. It represents the

[326] Henri Laurent, ed., *Poètes sans écoles* (Paris: Anibwe, 2010), 27.
[327] "History can only say what she knows. Her sight is limited by the horizon of palpable reality and rarely perceives the truth shining beyond it." Émeric Bergeaud, *Stella* (Paris: Edmond Dentu, 1859), 146. Scholars recognize Bergeaud's work as the first novel by a Haitian. See Hoffman, *Haitian Fiction Revisited*, 213.
[328] "[Myth] is therefore a powerful device to create collectively underpinned meaning and collectively recognized truth (regardless of whether such truth would be recognized outside the community whose myth it is)." E.J. Michael Witzel, *The Origins of the World's Mythologies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 7. "In order to answer a question, one must have something in common with the person who asks it." Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 1:6. "Every myth contains a theological thought which can be, and often has been, made explicit." Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 1:16.

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point at which the pilgrim's story simultaneously ends and begins again in a space that holds the power of life and death. Maya Deren insists that:

> Myth is a voyage of exploration in this metaphysical space. The point of departure is the first meeting between the quick and the dead. To enter a new myth is a moment of initiation…It is to enter, in one's mind, the room which is both tomb and womb, to become innocent of everything except the motivation for myth, the natural passion of the mind for meaning.[329]

History gives birth to myth in the depths of the subjectivity of those who inhabit it, but the myth encompasses history, for encounter extends to mythical time and space. Therefore, history's limitations are the occasion for myth, but myth is limited to existential reality.[330] For Karl Jaspers, "what is in question is existential truth, which is spiritually efficacious only in mythical thinking, but which without the myth would remain beyond our horizon."[331] In other words, while myth encompasses history, myth is also susceptible to history's critical gaze.[332] Therefore, myth takes place within history, that is, in language, which supports the thesis that "myth exists because, through history, language is confronted with its origins."[333] History opens up the past to the pilgrim, and

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[329] Deren, *Divine Horsemen*, 24.

[330] Thus myth may relate to history paradoxically. It does not necessarily "go against" history, but by pointing beyond history, it also delimits history. "Paradoxical means 'against the opinion,' namely, the opinion of finite reason. Paradox points to the fact that in God's acting finite reason is superseded but not annihilated; it expresses this fact in terms which are not logically contradictory but which are supposed to point beyond the realm in which finite reason is applicable. This is indicated by the ecstatic state in which all biblical and classical theological *paradoxa* appear." Tillich, *Systematic Theology,* 1:57.

[331] Karl Jaspers and Rudolf Bultmann, *Myth and Christianity: An Inquiry into the Possibility of Religion Without Myth* (New York: The Noonday Press, 1969), 20.

[332] "Theology is necessarily existential, and no theology can escape the theological circle." Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 1:23.

[333] Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 47. "Whereas mythical language can lay no claim to the universal validity of knowledge, it is precisely by virtue of this quality that it can lend the historical *Existenz* something of the unconditional. The unconditional thus brought to light remains conditioned in expression, historically relative, and objectively uncertain." Jaspers, *Myth and Christianity*, 18.

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in the discourse of the myth, both the present and the past are open to revision, negotiation, and more importantly, the possibility of encounter.[334]

In effect, myth represents the memory of the ancestors activated by the desire of the pilgrim for meaning. It means to engage the ancestors and to listen to their voices as a way to create the language of the future.[335] The pilgrim's ultimate concern is the key to the myth, and myth is the key to the ancestors' ultimate concern.[336] It requires of the pilgrim deathlike vulnerability, for only the dead can survive in the world of myth. Only the dead can interact with its reality and experience meaning therein. Thus all have access to myth because all are mortal. However, only those who are willing to die may find meaning in myth.[337] Nonetheless, the call to die is absolute and universal because the practice of justice is the hallmark of what it means to be human.[338] The practice of justice is in effect identical with the practice of discipleship.[339]

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[334] "To prepare ourselves to welcome the Other requires not turning away from our histories. To open ourselves to that which is yet to come demands remembering the past – a movement that retains as it moves forward…Postcolonial theory tries not to forget the complex history of our relations to Others in order to respond to their call." Mayra Rivera, *The Touch of Transcendence*, 103. "Everything mythical is a language that grows faint before the transcendence of the one godhead." Jaspers, *Myth and Christianity*, 18. "For to speak of the dead means to deny death and almost to defy it. Therefore speech is said to 'resuscitate' them. Here the word is literally a lure: history does not resuscitate anything. But the word evokes the function allocated to a discipline that deals with death as an object of knowledge and, in doing so, causes the production of an exchange among living souls." De Certeau, *The Writing of History*, 47. In the encounter, memories "flare up," which challenge oppressive practices and dispositions. Those "dangerous memories…unleash new dangerous insights for the present." Metz, *Faith in History and Society*, 105.
[335] "This is the fiction of beginnings, couched in past tense. But the chants are not *in memoriam*. The beginning, which no man witnessed, is ever present, ever before us." Deren, *Divine Horsemen*, 22.
[336] "The fictions [myths] of the old men are their final fecundity. As their flesh once labored to bring forth flesh, so the minds of the elders labor, with a like passion, to bring forth a mind…By this they would insure that the race endure as a race of men." Deren, *Divine Horsemen*, 23.
[337] Michel de Certeau evaluates this deathly character of history in relation to discourse and the dead. He writes, "The dead are the objective figure of an exchange among the living. They are the *statement* of the discourse which carries them as an object, but in the guise of an interlocution thrown outside of discourse, in the unsaid. Through these combinations with an absent term, history becomes the myth of language. It manifests the very condition of discourse: *a death*." De Certeau, *The Writing of History*, 46.
[338] "The basis of justice is the intrinsic claim for justice of everything that has being." Paul Tillich, *Love, Power, and Justice: Ontological Analyses and Ethical Applications* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), 63. "The intrinsic claim in everything that is cannot be violated without violating the violator" (68).
[339] Encounter is undetermined and infinite, and as such its point of departure is rarely knowable. Nonetheless, what becomes clearer and clearer while investigating encounter is that it issues in the practice

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CHAPTER FIVE

Encountering God in the *Rèstavèk* Experience

"Oh! How hard it is for a child that doesn't have a mother!"

– Helia Lajeunesse[340]

"I felt crushed, but at the same time resigned myself to believe that only children with real mothers and fathers go to First Communion, receive presents from Santa Claus, and celebrate their birthdays."

– Jean-Robert Cadet[341]

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of justice. This theme comes up again and again in Johann Baptist Metz's eschatology. Metz urges a praxis that is couched in solidarity and hope, i.e., justice for the living and the dead. But justice cannot be "postponed." It is of the nature of authentic faith, and its practice is a practice of living in "imminent expectation." The undeterminedness of encounter is counterbalanced by the equally ambiguous imminent expectation for the encounter, which stems from the desire that all people enjoy the fruit of and practice justice. "The God of the living and of the dead is the God of a universal justice that shatters the standards of our exchange society and saves those who died suffering unjustly, and who, *therefore*, calls us to *become* subjects or unconditionally to support others becoming subjects in the face of hateful oppression, and calls us to *remain* subjects in the face of guilt and in opposition both to the dissolution of individual identity into 'the masses,' and also to apathy." Metz, *Faith in History and Society*, 80, 163. David Kelsey likens discipleship to the practice of worship. Discipleship as the practice of justice is strongly implied. He writes, "Discipleship in [the public realm] inescapably involves *some* sort of engagement of those arrangements of power, ranging from compliance with them to direct attack on them. Public worship of God inherently involves politically significant social action." David H. Kelsey, *To Understand God Truly: What's Theological About A Theological School* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 145. Kathleen A. Cahalan identifies worship as one of seven features of discipleship. Echoing Catherine Mowry LaCugna, she writes, "Disciples are to take up 'doxology as a way of life, …Living in doxology transforms us to live in 'right relationship' so that 'once we fathom that everything is created for the glory of God and not necessarily for our own consumption, this changes how we relate to the totality of the universe." Kathleen A. Cahalan, *Introducing the Practice of Ministry* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2010), 8. See also, Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God For Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1991), 342. Terry Veling offers a strong reminder of the complexity of justice. He writes, "'Justice itself is born of charity.' If it is inspired by goodness, if it is founded on charity, if it is chastened and softened by mercy, then it may be possible for justice to best approximate what it seeks. Otherwise, it will always be deformed and wounded – unable to rise to the heights of justice that always wells up from the concern and responsibility of one for another…Love disarms justice. It unsettles justice. It watches over justice." Veling, *Practical Theology*, 192. CMOS 14.35, 14.39, and 14.51

[340] T. Murphy, *Survivors of Slavery: Modern-Day Slave Narratives* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 64.

[341] Jean-Robert Cadet, *Restavec: From Haitian Slave Child to Middle-Class American* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998), 10.

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The Birth of a *Rèstavèk*

You were no older than twelve when your parents gave you away indefinitely. You do not remember your exact age, nor do your parents, nor do the members of your receiving family. For that matter, you could have been ten or fifteen years old. Head tilted to one side – the result of an injury as an infant, you walked with a slight limp in your right leg. For twelve years you had lived with your parents, younger sister, and older brother off of the southernmost coast of Haiti until the day your aunty came and took you away.

It all started a short while prior to your aunt's arrival. After a brief conversation with your aunt, my mother had filled her need for a *timoun* [a child] to help with household chores,[342] and your childhood had come to an abrupt end. You were to go from child in the home of your parents to housekeeper, cook, launderer, nanny, and performer of every other task required by the members of your new household, a family of seven.[343] The adults, you had to address as *matant* or *tonton* "aunt" or "uncle." You called the children of the household by their first names except for the one who demanded that you and the other girl who shared your plight, place an "M" in front of her name, that is, to call her *mademoiselle*, her way of drawing a clear line between her privileged self and your paltry existence as a servant. Your name did not matter much to anyone. In fact, it took over 30 years for some of the now grown children of the household to learn your full

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[342] Like Cadet, "As a boy, I would occasionally overhear a *granmoun*…say to a friend, 'I need a *timoun* [child] to help me in the house.' Such a request would be met within 'a few days' with a prepubescent child." Jean-Robert Cadet, *My Stone of Hope: From Haitian Slave Child to Abolitionist* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011), 30.

[343] Some households assign more tasks to their *rèstavèk*. Cadet recounts, "Like me, these children would be the first to rise and the last to sleep, often on the kitchen floor or under a table. We would sweep the yard, haul trash, light the charcoal, empty and wash chamber pots, fetch water, wash dishes, scrub laundry, clean the house, and make the beds. We would walk the family's children to and from school." Cadet, *My Stone of Hope*, 30.

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name. In the language of Haitian society, you were a *rèstavèk*. Unwanted by your parents, desired only for your free labor, you were a stranger even to yourself, a *pitit kay*[344] become *timoun kay moun*: no longer a *pitit* or a child, condemned to servitude in the *kay* of another.

The Beginning is the End!

You remember the day that your aunt came to your house. You remember with great detail the conversation that decided your fate. Your aunt described your receiving family as the best people she had ever known. She assured your mother that you would receive the best of care. You remember the long trip into Port-à-Piment, your own land of Moriah.[345] You carried your sacrificial rags and uttered not a word. You knew that yours were the sacrificial hands and feet, the offering required to alleviate the burden of your family's destitution.

So you cooked, and cleaned, and wept, and laundered. You got up first in the morning. You served coffee and bread to your *matant* and *tonton*, their children and their guests. You spent the best part of the day working, answering call after call to fulfill the needs of a group of people who saw your entire existence as dedicated to their service. You were the last person to go to sleep at night. You had to wait until the end of supper to collect the dishes, clean the kitchen, and begin preparations for the next day.

[344] *Pitit kay* comes from *pitit* meaning child and *kay* meaning house or household. The phrase means "child of the house." This title distinguishes insiders from outsiders, even among people who live under the same roof. It is a title of privilege. Even in the most modest household, a *pitit kay* wields much more power than those who do not have claim to the title, be it a guest or, least of all, a *rèstavèk*. Jean-Robert Cadet, *My Stone of Hope*, 65.

[345] The land of Moriah is the place of Isaac's near sacrifice at the hands of his father, Abraham. Genesis 22.

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Your new family had little concern for your needs.[346] No one cared that you were confused about your role in the household. Other children who were twelve years old lived or frequented the household on a regular basis. They did not have to work as you did. Instead, they woke up in the morning, ate the food you prepared and put on the clothes you washed and ironed. They spent the day at school learning and dreaming. In the afternoon, they returned home and ate the food that you spent the day preparing. Then, they sat at the dinner table and read, wrote essays, and worked out mathematical problems.

In the evening, they spent time with their friends. Having eaten the supper you prepared, they played cards, dominoes, *woslè*,[347] and *wari*,[348] if not soccer. While you washed the dishes for the third time for the day, they played, and laughed, and argued, as only *pitit kay* could do. You knew because you too were once a *pitit*; you once had a *kay* of your own. They called for you repeatedly and constantly added to your tasks. When an adult summoned you, you were compelled to answer, *Lètil matant!* or *Lètil tonton!* "If it

[346] In Cadet's experience, he had no meaningful contact with his receiving family. He writes, "As a restavec, I could not interact with Florence on a personal level; I could not talk to her about my needs. In fact, I could not speak until spoken to, except to give her messages third parties had left with me. I also did not dare smile or laugh in her presence, as this would have been considered disrespectful – I was not her son but her restavec." Cadet, *Restavec*, 4-5.

[347] *Woslè or Osselets* meaning "small bones" is an up to four-player game that involves the use of a small rock or a bouncing ball and four bones that come from the joints of a goat. Each bone has four sides. The goal of the game is to be the first one to go through all the phases and steps of the game perfectly. First, after throwing the bones like dice, a player throws the stone in the air or bounces the ball on the ground while turning the bones to the side that corresponds with the order of the game. All bones, turned by the active player to *do* (pronounced like the English 'dough') meaning "back" or "smooth" side, are picked up one a time during the first of the four steps of the *do* phase of the game. The player, having turned all the bones to *do* must pick up two bones at a time, then three and one, and then all four bones all at once. The player must go through all the phases, that is, turn each bone to the proper side and pick up the bones according to the order or phase of the game without dropping any of the bones or the stone or ball. If the player fails to turn any one bone to the correct side or the bone falls while the stone is in the air, he or she must pass the bones to the next player. On the next turn, the player continues where he or she left off.

[348] *Wari* is a two-player game played with stones either in a wooden structure or on the floor or in holes dug in the dirt. Four stones are placed in each of two parallel rows of six contiguous holes or compartments or six contiguous squares drawn on a concrete floor with chalk or charcoal. A variety of games can be played.

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pleases you, aunty!" or "If it pleases you, uncle!"[349] Most of the commands came from the *granmoun* [the adult(s) or elder(s)] who managed the affairs of the household. So you did not show much respect for the *pitit kay*, which you saw as your peers; and you often scoffed at their requests for favors. However, their parents usually supported them and you had to oblige. All day long and part of the evening, you heard, "Go and do this!" "Go and fetch that!" "Wash this and then cook that!" You did not always know how to do the things you were asked to do, but the woman of the house, your *matant*, made sure to teach you. She also scolded you when you got it wrong.

No one worried whether or not you had enough to eat or that you were eating the right kinds of food or that your physical growth was appropriate for your age. You had access to all the foods of the household and carried much of them yourself from the marketplace. However, you could not take too many liberties. Whereas any *pitit kay* could have any food item at any time, you had to wait until someone else offered it to you. You did not have to make your own inferior meals,[350] unlike others like you, but like them, you served the largest portions to everyone else. You served the *granmoun* and

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[349] *"Lètil!"* or the French equivalent *"Plait-il!"* is the way children show their politeness when they answer their *granmoun* . A child does not answer an elder with the rude and punishable *Kisa?* "What?" or *Kisa ou vle?* "What do you want?" which he or she might throw at his or her peers or, if *pitit kay*, at a *rèstavèk*. See Cadet, *Restavec*, 23. *Wi?* "Yes?" is permissible, but the tone must be soft and the monosyllabic "Yes?" elongated and unrushed as a sign of respect and complaisance. See Cadet, *Restavec*, 6. These rules of etiquette apply much more strictly to the *rèstavèk*. The adults of the households do not treat her infractions with the clemency a *pitit kay* is likely to enjoy and expect. The *rèstavèk*'s infractions are generally punishable. In some households, that means anything the imagination of the punisher can conjure, including the more physical type of punishment from the switch, which can be used on the *pitit kay* as well, but also slapping, kicking and verbal abuse of the most dehumanizing kind, insults which loving parents arguably never launch at their children. Writes Cadet, "Florence reached between my legs and held me by the testicles with her thumb and index finger, preventing me from puling away. As I was about to drop to my knees, she removed her shoe and struck me across the face. The spiked heel made a deep cut in the corner of my right eye, sending a very sharp pain through my head. I let out a scream. Florence stopped as she noticed blood oozing from the side of my face." Cadet, *Restavec*, 19. Cadet's story is an accurate description of the treatment many *rèstavèk* receive at the hands of their supposed caretakers. See also Helia Lajeunesse's account. "And she whipped me with a whip, and she opened my skin, so then I never learned again. I stayed there, and I went through a lot of misery." Murphy, *Survivors of Slavery*, 63.

[350] Cadet writes, "and, like the African slaves of the past, they often cook their own meals, which are comprised of inferior cornmeal and a few heads of dried herring." Cadet, *Restavec*, 4.

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their guests first, starting with the man of the house, who received the largest portion of meat. Then, you served the children, and finally yourself and your fellow *rèstavèk*. Your portion of meat was always the smallest, and your food was often mixed with the *graten*.[351] Haitian people love *graten*. So most of the time, when the *granmoun* and/or the *pitit kay* asked for *graten*, which they did very often, they were eating part of your meal.

No one cared that you needed parents of your own to love you and care for you as well. No one cared that you felt like a prisoner, a lonely child, whose hands and feet were condemned to servitude, and whose face, like your pain, was invisible to all. Depestre's verses flow as though written with you in mind:

> "My life is a horrible penitentiary
>
> A prison without bars."[352]

No one cared to know how much you wanted "to belong, to grow, to smile, to love, to feel, to learn, and to be a child."[353] No one knew that you were hoping for death continually.[354] No one knew that you were praying to be delivered from your supposed benefactors; that you were praying for them to die.[355]

No one cared that you had no bed in which to rest your tired hands, your sore back, and your aching feet. You made the beds in which everyone else slept. You washed the sheets, changed the pillowcases, and sunbathed the mattresses, which the *pitit kay* soiled. Sometimes your resting place doubled as the dining space. Making your bed required moving the table and chairs out of the way. If the table was ever in use at

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[351] *Graten* refers to the crust that forms at the bottom of a pot of rice or other foods while cooking. *Graten* is a delicacy for Haitians, who enjoy its crunchy texture and nutty flavor.
[352] See René Depestre, *Gerbe de Sang* (Port-au-Prince: Imprimerie de l'Etat, 1946). Cited in Leon-Francois Hoffman, *Haitian Fiction Revisited* (Pueblo, Colorado: Passeggiata Press, 1999), 79.
[353] Cadet, *Restavec*, afterword.
[354] "I wonder if he had ever gone to bed hoping never to awaken, to sleep forever." Cadet, *My Stone of Hope*, 29.
[355] Cadet, *Restavec*, 5. See also Helia Lajeunesse's account in Murphy, *Survivors of Slavery*, 65.

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bedtime, you had to wait until the space became available. Like the stranger that you were, you had no designated sleeping space. Your resting place was the cold concrete floor. You slept not far from the *pitit kay*'s beds. However, while their beds were often dressed with freshly stuffed cotton mattresses, yours was the pile of rags that you kept wrapped in a stained sheet mostly out of sight, lest you upset the sensibilities of the household.[356] In every way, you were unequal. In every way, they were your superiors.

Equal Access to God?

You were baptized in the same water as the *pitit kay*, your assurance of equal access to God and all. You professed the same faith and claimed the same promises. At church, those attending seemed obsessed with woman's attire, makeup, and hair, as if you had many options in the way you dressed as if your actual burdens did not matter. You were part of the Sunday night crowd, though the *pitit kay* and the *granmoun* attended services in the morning, during which they participated fully in communal activities. Some of them sang in the choir or some other singing group. Others served in leadership positions among the youth.

As for you, you had to stay behind to manage the household chores. Illiterate, you were automatically excluded from the church functions that required reading, including singing in the choir, reading the scriptures during services, preaching the word, which also excluded you from any visible positions within the community. Since you received no pay for your labor, you were excluded from giving as well. You learned some of the songs by ear, but with so many of them in French, you were often mispronouncing the words, most of which you did not understand. The scripture reading was mostly in French

[356] According to Cadet, "[restavecs] are made to sleep on cardboard, either under the kitchen table or outside on the front porch. Cadet, *Restavec*, 4.

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as well. You stood up during the day's reading, as asked, as a sign of respect for God's word, but you could not understand the words. For the church you were nameless. Your prayers seemed pointless, and altogether answerless. Oh! Daughter of Ham, crucified and condemned to shame, heaven itself seemed to despise you.[357]

A Broken Promise, A Stolen Hope

The agreement that sealed your fate stipulated that you would receive an education. The implication was that you would acquire the skills and training for a lifetime profession. In many ways, your family lived vicariously through you, hoping your new living conditions would surpass their meager existence. However, the terms of the arrangement specified neither the quality nor the quantity of attention your receiving family should dedicate to your intellectual formation. No one had your best interests in mind. As for you, you did not know what was best for you. That role belonged to mothers and fathers and caretakers. Alas, your parents lived much too far away. They could not see you weep, watch you work, or plan your life. You were a *rèstavèk*. You were motherless. Your father had given you away. You were on your own. Yours alone was the responsibility to find a way out or through the "misery."[358]

The *pitit kay* received the best the family could offer in terms of school, supplies, and parental commitment. They received gifts and praise when they performed with excellence, and corrective discipline when they slacked or refused to work assiduously. They also received tutorage when they were underperforming or simply to gain an edge in performance over their peers. You watched as your *matant* and *tonton* beamed with

[357] "That is the normal condition of the crucified people: hunger, sickness, slums, illiteracy, frustration through lack of education and employment, pain and suffering of all kinds." Jon Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological View* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1998), 256.
[358] Both Cadet and Lajeunesse describe their circumstances as *rèstavèk* as misery.

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pride as they discussed the caliber of their *pitit*'s intellect. You listened as they contemplated their *pitit*'s successful futures. "He always ranks first in his class!" "She received the highest score among her peers." "He wants to be a doctor."

You attended night school – if you finished your chores. Your peers were motherless like you. They were the neighborhood *rèstavèk* whom you had befriended, and who perhaps were the only people with whom you could commiserate. In their presence, you could speak honestly. With them you felt safe. You usually interacted with them in the marketplace or on the streets while running errands for your respective households. All of you were a community. You dressed alike. You kept each other's secrets.[359]

Your education was mostly mediocre.[360] As with your peers, you lagged behind the *pitit kay* who attended regular school, whose protective mother was herself a teacher. As for you, a girl of twelve, you could not spell your name. Therefore, your night school consisted mostly of lessons in reading and writing, while a *pitit kay*, whom you served, would be well into secondary school at your age. Your teachers lacked in competence. They were barely literate themselves. Therefore, your best efforts came up short because your teachers' instructions were inadequate, if not inaccurate. When you did not improve, your *matant* and *tonton* called you lazy and the *pitit kay* jeered at you. As your primary duty was to the household, you missed school whenever it conflicted with your chores.

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[359] Cadet writes, "on occasion, restavecs managed to form friendships with other restavecs and play together when their 'masters' were out for extended hours." Cadet, *Restavec*, 14.
[360] Helia Lajeunesse explains, "and then when I was eleven years old – no, ten – there was a school that they closed in with some coconut leaves. The man who was making that school were close to the house. The children of the house went to the good Catholic school. [The man would say] 'Regine, this child, we don't need any money for her to go to school because you say she's just an animal of the family. So all you have to do is buy a little milk. We'll help her as family.' And so she said, 'I should buy a notebook? What she's supposed to do with the notebook? When you have people like this that have no family, they're just like animals. We should just treat them like animals.' The teacher would say, 'That's not something that you should say because you have children.' But she didn't agree." Murphy, *Survivors of Slavery*, 62-63.

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Were You a Slave?

Your living conditions made clear that you were different from those you served. The structures of power were set up in such a way that you permanently figured at the underside, that menial cadre of society designed for carrying burdens and managing filth. You were worth no more than dust in the annals of history, your voice having been muted, and your wings having failed to develop.[361] Your own mother disowned you and your nation ignored you. Yours was the abode of the powerless and the motherless, the home of the anonymous and the invisible.[362]

When you were touched, you were being struck or molested. No gentle touches, no loving caresses, no holy kiss, you received less attention than the goats and asses. You walked in anonymity and suffered in silence. You dreamed of deliverance but your hero was nonexistent.[363] Your outbursts, your attempts to verbalize your deathly angst, the members of the household mistook for impertinence: nothing a few lashes or a strong reprimand could not cure. So you continued in your paltry existence as though all was well.

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[361] Milk, Coffee, and Sugar, "Restavec," in *Milk, Coffee, and Sugar*, 6d Production, 2010, MP3.
Je suis un restavec, poussière de vie au destin écrit…
Un restavec slave, esclave…
Ma chair, ma mère m'a vendu pour becqueter des insectes…
Je suis un restavec…Un sous-fifre rendu muet affamé…
À qui l'espoir n'est pas permis…
(I am a *rèstavèk*, mere dust, a life destined to be forgotten…
A rèstavèk…a slave…
My own flesh, my mother has sold me [so I can] eat insects [scraps]…
I am a *rèstavèk*…an underling muted and starved…
To whom hope is not allowed…)
Milk, Coffee, and Sugar sees the *rèstavèk*'s story as being entwined with Haiti's story. They see the *rèstavèk*'s situation as the continuation of colonial slavery, just as they see continuity between French colonization and the United States' ongoing "incarceration" of Haiti. *Haiti, la France t'as prise hier, aujourd'hui l'Amérique t'incarcère*. "Haiti, yesterday France took you, today the United States incarcerates you." This clear parallel links the *rèstavèk* situation to Haiti's continued state of colonization.

[362] For Cadet, *rèstavèk* is synonymous with "motherless and unwanted." Once people in society label a person as a *rèstavèk*, people simply do not inquire about that person's parentage. Cadet, *Restavec*, 5.

[363] "I always had the hope that someone would deliver me. I always had that hope." Murphy, *Survivors of Slavery*, 65.

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Your situation was perhaps the greatest reminder of the most oppressive and suppressive time in the history of the Haitian people. Its redress is consequently Haiti's most pressing need. When Spain and France colonized your people, they bought and sold human beings, auctioning them like cattle on the street corner. Like you, the enslaved were bound to the plantation. Like you, they performed every task the slave master required of them, from breastfeeding the slave master's children to cleaning the latrines in which the slave master defecated. The enslaved were subjected to the sexual abuses of the slave master and bore children produced through rape as mute objects within the overwhelming reality of bodily oppression.

The slave master used the enslaved the way they used chairs, tables, spoons, and forks. Like the dispensable tools that they were, the enslaved people's value was linked to their usefulness. Freedom was the prerogative of the slave master who could dispense it at will. However, the law that sanctioned enslavement did not require manumission. Generations of enslaved human beings *lived* and died filling the coffers of their European slave masters.

You shared your enslaved ancestors' lot in every way but for a few: they had monetary value and were considered investment. Supply and demand determined their availability. In addition, the enslaved were victims of war and betrayal, the sacrifice of a modern capitalist economy. Furthermore, little ambiguity characterized the relation between master and slave. The man or woman who was sold or conned and then quickly forced with overwhelming life-threatening physical violence and threats of such violence, who crossed the Atlantic in the infernal belly of a slave ship, and who was whipped and threatened into submission, had no romanticized idea of the conditions on the plantation.

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To dispel any ambiguity about their relation to their masters, the French codified their status of property with great care and sophistication. The salvation of the enslaved would come in the by-and-by.

In important ways, your situation was different from that of the enslaved "because," in the words of Robert Cadet, "[you] don't cost anything and [your kind's] supply seems inexhaustible."[364] You were the victim of no war. You were supposedly living your salvation. Worse yet, you received the promise of a better life by virtue of the kindness of the people you called aunt and uncle. In reality, you were initiated into the same system as that of the enslaved, but with a pretense to a real family life. Yet no one acknowledged your existence, no one saw your face. The *Code noir* was too good for you.

You were worse than a slave for you lived under the constant threat of being returned to your life of poverty, a clear indication that your benefactors used destitution to institute your prostitution. Indeed, you shared much in common with your nation. Everyone knew of your existence but few acknowledged your presence. You walked in the presence of every law but lived outside the reach of any law including the law of love. Of all creation, you were the most mundane of all.

Thirty Years a Slave?

You have been living with the same family for more than thirty years. Your head is still tilted to one side, and you drag the leg on which you once limped. You are a bit heavier now but barely taller than you were at twelve years of age when your family gave you away. Other ills are slowly manifesting. You experience pain in your lower back. You also have pain in the leg you drag. You struggle to make full use of your hands, an

[364] Cadet, *Restavec*, 4.

المنارة للاستشارات

www.manaraa.com

indication that you never left that sacrificial mount near Moriah. Heaven offered no substitute for you. To make matters more sinister, you recently received a stark diagnosis from a physician at the general hospital in Port-au-Prince. You have a mass in your uterus, and you may need a hysterectomy.

Such a diagnosis would not be so severe, if not for your desire to bear children. Now in your mid-forties, you desire meaningful relationships. You want to get married to a loving man with whom you can raise children. *Pitit la ta bon wi…li ta bon pou gen yon nèg tou*. "[To have] a child would indeed be nice…so would a man!" you say, though you are currently nursing pain in multiple parts of your body. "Do you have a man?" your physician inquired. The truth is that you never had a serious relationship. Your chores left no time for socialization outside the house, except for the quick run-ins with fellow *rèstavèk* between errands or during night school. As a *rèstavèk*, you bore the stigma of an uneducated hand servant who had nothing to offer a man. You did have a vagina, and several of the men who frequented the household took advantage of you but you told no one.[365] You did not know you were being violated, since your whole life is a violation. Put simply, rape was the extent of your sexual interactions. You have not verified the accounts of those men, but that is beside the point. The fact is that they could impugn your integrity with impunity for no one was protecting your body or your dignity.

You can barely read. Your stints with night school and incompetent instructors produced mediocre results. You are in your forties, but you have not completed primary school. Attending night school meant your schooling was contingent upon your ability to complete your chores in time for school. It also meant being 'diligent' enough to

[365] Cadet writes, "girls are usually worse off [as *rèstavèk*], because they are sometimes used as concubines for the teenage sons of their 'owners.' And if they become pregnant, they are thrown into the streets like garbage." Cadet, *Restavec*, 4.

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complete your homework assignments in your 'spare' time. Needless to say, you eventually dropped out of school, especially as the children of the household began to have children of their own, thereby increasing your responsibilities. At some level, you have served three generations of the same family.

You live in their house and see to its upkeep, though most of them are out of the country. You have a bed now, though you lie restless many nights due to your anxiety about the future. You are dealing with extremely weighty questions: "with whom will I spend the rest of my life?" "Will any man accept me and love me as I am?" "What do I have to offer?" "Can I still bear children at my age and in my physical condition?" You depend on their money transfers, which you use to feed the extended members of the family who have moved in over the past few years. You still feel confused about your role. You only know how to serve others: cook, clean, and launder. So although you are not required to do so anymore, you cook, clean, and launder.

With your ailing body, you can hardly leave the house without causing harm to yourself, without falling and bruising your hands and knees. Since your masters ignored the condition associated with the injuries from your infancy, your physical health has deteriorated over the years. Your very body is turning against you. Opportunities for an ailing, lifelong *rèstavèk* such as your self are nonexistent. You are a stranger to your dreams of old. To you, as the song goes, "hope is [still] not allowed."[366] You are bound to the household that exploited you for over thirty years, though you have come to think of yourself more as a manager than a *rèstavèk*. Nonetheless, you can lay claim to nothing in the house, nothing in this life. Your very story is a problem for it sounds like fiction in a

[366] Milk, Coffee, and Sugar, "Restavec," in *Milk, Coffee, and Sugar*, 6d Production, 2010, MP3.

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

land with the unique distinction of birthing liberty in the Americas.[367] You are a slave, and the daughter of slaves, the cursed sign of our times. You are not an anachronism. You are a problem, the incontrovertible evidence that the storied legacy of Louverture, Dessalines, and Christophe is slowly dying if it were ever living.

Our ancestors fought against chains, physical and psychological, to overthrow the philosopher's diagnosis that to our kind servitude was pathological. We built schools, delved into jurisprudence and, for good or for ill, adopted various forms of government. We bred philosophers of our own to counteract the logical complications of being imprisoned in a curse. When invaded, we stood our ground. When abandoned, we suffered through by dint of sheer mettle and ingenuity. We withstood the plagues of wind, water, and famine. Even when shaken to our core, we held on by the skin of our teeth to some shred of dignity, so great is our nobility. But we still have our *rèstavèk*.

Confession to a *Rèstavèk*

But you do not know that side of the story.[368] It is written in books you cannot read or told by intellectuals whose company lies beyond your reach by reason of your

[367] Jean-Bertrand Aristide, *HAÏTI – HAITII? Pwezi Filozofik pou Dekolonizasyon Mantal* (Port-au-Prince: Imprimerie Henry Deschamps, 2011), 31.
Moun ki save nan zafè listwa
Konnen Haïti se manman libète
Paske se premye kote esklav yo
Te fè you revolisyon san parèy
Pou kase chenn lesklavaj an 1804.
(Those who know history
Know that Haïti is the mother of liberty
For it is the first place where the slaves
Had an unparalleled revolution
To break the chains of slavery in 1804.)

[368] "Having exclusive access to the written word, [the Haitian ruling classes] have always reserved for themselves the totality of knowledge and power, been aware of their past and integrated it into their ideology. The children of the poor, on the other hand, have never received the education necessary to acquire even elementary notions of history. While the advent of radio and television has no doubt improved the situation, it is far from certain that still today all the citizens in the shanty towns or the countryside are aware of their African roots, of their country's colonial past or of the slavery from which their ancestors freed themselves." Hoffman, *Haitian Fiction Revisited*, 69.

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status as *rèstavèk*. Others of your cadre likely have known some intellectuals among the well-to-do families that owned them, but mostly as masters and mistresses, and not as mentors and teachers.[369] It is a story perhaps your mother could have told you. It is a song your local *oungan* might have taught you. However, you lost contact with that community when, at twelve, your aunt initiated you into the age-old institution of slavery, the abyss that swallowed your identity rendering you nameless and, worst of all, faceless.

Your version of the story stands in stark contrast to the official story. In your Haiti, Toussaint Louverture could not have stood against France's mightiest and produced a constitution that guaranteed equality to all regardless of race or status. Your story makes absolutely no sense if Toussaint ever bled. The same goes for Dessalines and Christophe. You are part of a system that has persisted from the beginning of Haiti's mired history. Your masters may speak French and, like you, are children of Haiti's soil. However, the system has not changed; only the hands that uphold it, only the faces that tell the story. The truth of your story is that we have duped you and used you! You

[369] Cadet writes, "since the emancipation and independence of 1804, affluent blacks and mulattoes have reintroduced slavery by using children of the very poor as house servants. They promise poor families in faraway villages who have too many mouths to feed a better life for their children. Once acquired, these children lose all contact with their families and, like the slaves of the past, are sometimes given new names for the sake of convenience. The affluent disguise their evil deeds with the label *restavec*, a French term that means 'staying with.'" Cadet, *Restavec*, 4. Most of the facts from this narrative come from the experience of a woman who came to my family as a child. My family was affluent only in comparison with the *rèstavèk*'s situation. My mom worked as a schoolteacher, and my dad worked for a public health service known as *Service National des Endémies Majeures* or SNEM (National Service of Major Endemic Diseases). SNEM was involved in a number of public health endeavors, but my dad's work was specific to the efforts to eradicate malaria. When SNEM stopped functioning with the collapse of the Duvalier regime in 1986, my dad drove a truck carrying people and merchandise between Port-à-Piment and Cayes. Like most people in Haiti, we lived one disaster away from indigence. We were in fact indigent in comparison with many Haitians, especially in comparison to Haiti's affluent minority. Well-to-do can be such a relative idea. Nevertheless, the fact remains that we were doing well enough that families gave their children over to my parents. Since my parents farmed rice, we had three boys/men who helped with the farm as well. At one point, we had as many as five people working as *rèstavèk* in our family. For information on SNEM, see Patrick Kelly's USAID sponsored report *Service National des Endémies Majeures: Evaluation du Réseau des Collaborateurs Volontaires en vue de son Renforcement, Extension et Diversification en Haiti*, 1985. http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNAAU768.pdf

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neither know nor share our story because we created you blind and invisible. We have failed you! We have killed you! For us, you are a tool: a fork, a knife, a scooper of shit!

You are proof that Haiti has not changed and that the revolution did not issue in freedom at all. From your perspective, the Haitian Revolution merely moved power from the hands of one group of oppressors to those of another.[370] «*Indépendante, non!*»"[371] A few privileged aristocrats still control the vast majority of the country's resources and dictate governmental policy. Perhaps these particular aristocrats are more cunning than their modern counterparts. They deal in euphemisms. Their system of exploitation is not slavery but capitalism, a system that rewards hard work. You are not a slave but a *restavec*, someone who stays with them. That makes you their guest! But you know that you are not their guest because you serve their guests as well. You know that hard work pays a fortune to some and nothing to others like you.

Your masters do not necessarily speak Spanish or salute *le tricolore* but like you, they bleed African blood. In many ways, your suffering comes from the greed of consanguineous compatriots, not from the ramblings of a hung-over, self-conscious, and self-righteous tyrant who would lock generation after generation of his own children in an unending cycle of enslavement.[372] Your jailers are your kin. As it stands, the children you so strongly desire would likely be slave to your masters' children.

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[370] Louis Mercier's lament from 1936 remains apropos. He writes, "we have overthrown the colonial system but not the colonial soul. It makes of us either overseers or slaves: overseers when we hold the least bit of power […] vile, crawling slaves with no spirit or dignity when we are not in power […] It makes us accept as something perfectly natural the fate of our brothers steeped in vice and destitution." Hoffman's remarks concerning this passage are worth quoting: "What is significant here is that the writers do not accuse their compatriots of having a 'slave mentality,' but rather denounce the upper classes for having a 'planter mentality,' for aping the erstwhile masters, in a word for having adopted an essentially un-Haitian ideology." Hoffman, *Haitian Fiction Revisited*, 74-75.
[371] Milk, Coffee, and Sugar, "Restavec," in *Milk, Coffee, and Sugar*, 6d Production, 2010, MP3.
[372] See Genesis 9:20-28 and Leviticus 25:44-46.

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This is my Body!

You are a body, a stained parchment: a text, a script – flipped, an object of hermeneutic manipulation, etc.[373] You are a name, a word: spoken, stolen, broken, a cursed appellation, etc. Body and name but name the unnamed and perhaps unnamable.[374] Name and body mark the time of space, the space of time, the infinite's trace, dying to live and living to die, the abode of encounter's sway. Your body bears witness to the unspoken. Your name reveals the unseen. Your body and name fill *l'espace étrange* of *différance*, the gap between mouth and ear, the back-and-forth of metaphor and materiality[375]: one read, one spoken: one unwritten, one un-written.[376] That which marks space with time and makes space within time in space and time, ever present, ever retreating, faces itself in the face without a face, the empty mirror of an emptied gaze, a bodiless name, a nameless body, a Trinity of time, space, and movement: *Rèstavèk* names an event, an encounter with life in the grips of death as movement.[377]

Your body has been trapped, "immobilized" and forced to "assent" to a subjectivity cast in the mold of a "pre-discursive" reality.[378] In this sense, assent amounts to a descent into the tomb that is a mere tomb, an emptied womb: deprived of possibility,

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[373] «*L'existence est d'abord corporelle.*» David Le Breton, *Que sais-je? La sociologie du corps* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2002), 3.

[374] "The name is a kind of provisional formulation of an event, a relatively stable if evolving structure…" John D. Caputo, "Spectral Hermeneutics: On the Weakness of God and the Theology of the Event," in John D. Caputo and Gianni Vattimo, *After the Death of God* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 47.

[375] "One might think of this tension between the discursive and the material body as the *me(an)ing* of embodiment. This tension highlights the connections between struggle for 'place' or identity consistent with the workings and arrangement of the material body and the manner in which discourse and power dynamics produce the meaning of the body both in thought and space." Anthony B. Pinn, *Embodiment and the New Shape of Black Theological Thought* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 11.

[376] This is the idea of *Différance in a nutshell.* See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's introduction to Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1997), xxix.

[377] "[An] event is ever restless, on the move, seeking new forms to assume, seeking to be expressed in still unexpressed ways." Caputo, "Spectral Hermeneutics," 47.

[378] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 6.

المنارة للاستشارات
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deprived of life, deprived of death. You are thrice created: female, woman, and *rèstavèk*. But before you became female, woman, or *rèstavèk*, you were already despised. Your kind of female, woman, and *rèstavèk* is shaped prediscursively by the power of race politics, which predisposed you not only to this restrictive existential triad but also to a specific embodiment of these characteristics. In other words, you are doomed to an inferior status and are imposed those servile roles because a self-hating society deems you unworthy of a dignified life.[379]

That explains the reason your parents so readily gave you away. You are by "nature" disposable. In clear daylight, you are traded and exploited, but that bothers no one. Perhaps Haitian society's acceptance of your enslavement is a reflection of a deep conviction that your African body is worthy of the crucifix. You deserve your enslavement as much as, in Haitian society, the citizens of Europe and North America deserve their wealth and privilege. That may explain the reason Haitians extend their cupped, if not servile, hands before U.S. and European faces and bodies as though they had something to give, while your face, your body, your life, slapped, fisted, burned, and scarred, shames your race.[380] Haitian society abhors your reflection in the proverbial

[379] The parallel with Butler is here again visible. The logic is that the power at work in creating the categories female, woman, and *rèstavèk* is also at work in the creation of the foundation upon which these categories are imposed, in this case, race. Writes Butler, "As a result, gender is not to culture as sex is to nature; gender is also the discursive/cultural means by which 'sexed nature' or 'a natural sex' is produced and established as 'prediscursive,' prior to culture, a politically neutral surface on which culture acts." Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 11.

[380] Any foreigner with European features is called a *blan* (literally, "white") in Haiti. In Port-au-Prince as well as in the rural areas, Haitians identify the European face with that of the savior or giver of money and things, which annoys many of Haiti's guests, though others take full advantage. Writes Timothy Schwartz, "Whenever I emerged from the hut where I was staying, these little people came running from every quarter of the Hamlet. Usually naked and covered with dirt, they would plead for *sinkant kob* (about 3 U.S. cents at the time) to buy a piece of bread or a small pouch of sugar. How do you say no to a hungry child? Giving made the begging worse. And then there were the adults. Scrawny underfed mothers, infants at breast, would pull me to the their houses, whispering desperately, pointing to sick children. Old men, young men, teenage girls, even officials, judges, policemen, and politicians came by the hamlet to beg from me." Schwartz attributes this behavior to the legacy of foreign aid in Haiti. Timothy T. Schwartz, *Travesty in*

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mirror. Your nose is much too flat. You skin is cursedly black. You hair of *paydefè*,[381] your crown of shame, is too untidy. Your eyes are dull. You handle waste. You reek of servility. You are repulsive. You are ugly. You embody colonialism's prize object and the worst nightmare of the colonized: You remind Haitians that they are not and will never be European. You betray Haitian self-hate at its core.[382]

Consequently, your body: its smells, its hue, its movements and shadows, haunts Haitians. You make them act strangely. They try literally to whiten you,[383] see through you, and deny you the power to reflect both what they are and have become in you.[384] Before you were the second sex, you were the despised race; at least, that is one presumption. Yet Haitian society ranks you lower than the males who share your race and the non-blacks who share your sex. You are a peculiar modality of both your race and sex. Your race and sex, your sex and race, rank equally in shame. Negritude neither saved nor eradicated you. In fact, negritude has come and gone, but you remain as strong as ever: offensive, transgressive, and regressive. By all accounts, you are a "monstrous"

Haiti: A True Account of Christian Missions, Orphanages, Food Aid, Fraud and Drug Trafficking (Charleston, South Carolina: BookSurge Publishing, 2010), 8. This special treatment transforms into preferential treatment in hotels and restaurants in Haiti. Foreigners receive superior treatment compared to Haitian guests. One result of this situation is a flipping of the categories. The foreigner's face is out of reach and untouchable. The *rèstavèk*'s is within reach and touchable. That which is untouchable is revered, while that which is within reach is reviled. Jean Cadet's testimony offers a glance at the contrast: "[She] removed her shoe and struck me across the face. The spiked heel made a deep cut in the corner of my right eye, sending a very sharp pain through my head." Cadet, *Restavec*, 19.

[381] *Paydefè* refers to the coarse steel wool scouring pads Haitians use to scrub their charcoal burned pots. Haitian women's hair is often pejoratively compared with this cleaning tool.

[382] "And it is not simply that monsters are always there in our conscious appraisal of the external world, but that they are the other within. The image that looks back at us from the mirror may be our own disturbing and half-recognized selves. It is as though in looking for a reflection of our own secure subjecthood in what we are not, we see instead the leaks and flows, the vulnerabilities in our own embodied being. The other others – the feminine, the monstrous, the unclean – both resist exclusion and contest the closure of self-identity." Margrit Shildrick, "Monstrous Reflections on the Mirror of the Self-Same," in *Belief, Bodies, and Being: Feminist Reflections on Embodiment*, ed., Deborah Orr, et al (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006), 41.

[383] Bleaching products in the form of soaps and creams are plentiful in the marketplace. People continue to invalidate the reflection in the mirror. The *rèstavèk* becomes the sacrificial scapegoat. In her body, she bears society's shame. She is the effigy that fuels the fire of Haitian self-hate.

[384] "Monsters haunt us…and stir recognition within…" Margrit Shildrick, "Monstrous Reflections," 41.

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challenge to Haitian self-understanding; you are the black sheep that unmasks Haitian self-hate.[385] In your destruction, Haitians vicariously live their dream of being *other* than Haitian.

Wherefrom Comes My Salvation?

My family has robbed you of your dignity, your childhood, your youth, and all opportunity. Your stagnant adulthood is but the product of the three decades we have spent exploiting and harassing you. Therefore, your ailments are of our doing. Your misfortune serves our purpose. Your misfortune is our creation. We aborted your dreams! We took you in and *changed* your life. We gave you the provisions we thought you deserved. However, we withheld from you the things you needed most, the things that filled your dreams, the things we shared among ourselves. We did not love you. We did not care. We did not hope for you. We treated you as a thing. We stole your life.

By your own admission, hate once filled your heart. You were angry, confused, and vindictive. Your experience of *domestik* incarceration still moves you to tears and deep consternation. You bear the scars of three generations. Your well of tears could drown a nation. Hate is indeed your prerogative. I stole your life; you own my death. I killed your dreams; I killed my kids. The face of justice is cold. Perhaps society's indictment would come, but too slowly to matter to you and me. In the meantime society commends my kind and me; at least, it abets; it connives, all the while condemning and shaming you.

[385] "Anyone who does not take after his parents is really in a way a monstrosity, since in these cases Nature has…strayed from the generic type." Aristotle, *De Generatione Animalium* (London: Heinemann, 1953), 401. Margrit Shildrick's work deploys this notion of "monstrous bodies" by which she means "those bodies that in their gross failure to approximate the corporeal norms are radically excluded." Margrit Shildrick, "Monstrous Reflections," 38.

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I am the fruit of iniquity. I have lived a life of sin. My birth condemned me to sin. My sin condemned me to death. My death does not my sin atone for I am neither *lwa*, prophet, nor messiah.[386] However, you seem to know better than I. I see your hands; I see my sin. My blindness to your pain, my disregard for your true desires, my humiliating and dehumanizing acts, numerous as the stars above: you could not have forgotten. Somehow, in the silence of your soul, my confession still outstanding, you forgave. I see your face. I hear your voice. Where hate should be, I see but love: unconditional, unadulterated love. That you should love in spite of all means that you look beyond my shame. I hear your voice. I sense your grace. Your love: my peace and my salvation. You made a choice; you saved my voice. Your forgiveness is my salvation. And as things stand, you may stay a virgin forever, though long ago you lost your innocence. Nevertheless, you are the bearer of God to me.

[386] Maya Deren highlights the remarkable parallel between the manifestation of Ogou Badagri, a lwa of the Ogou family, and the Christ figure. When he is manifest, a mortally wounded Ogou Badagri collapses into the arms of the faithful, "becoming the uncannily precise image of Christ being taken down from the cross." Deren then adds the following parenthetical note: "It is improbable that these people have anywhere seen that Christian image. Yet even if they had, and if this were an unconscious re-creation of it, it would be the ultimate testimonial to their profound perception of the meaning of Christ. And if the image is not derived, but original to [Vodou], that also testifies, in another way, to an equal profundity." Maya Deren, *Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti* (Kingston, New York: McPherson & Company, 2004), 132. Leslie G. Desmangles supports the "original to Vodou" thesis. He writes, "While it is true that the Catholic crosses in Haiti may well have been invested with Vodou meaning, the cross symbol in Vodou does not originate in Catholicism but in African mythology." Desmangles goes on to highlight the pervasiveness of the cross symbol in Vodou belief and practice including its reification in the very structure of the peristyle and its reenactment in the lwa's greetings during possessions. See Leslie G. Desmangles, "African Interpretations of Christian Vodou Cross," in *Invisible Powers: Vodou in Haitian Life and Culture*, ed. Claudine Michel and Patrick Bellegarde-Smith (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 43-48. The parallel between the *rèstavèk*, the wounded servant, and Ogou Badagri, the wounded warrior, is rather striking. From this perspective, Haitian theology finds an important analogy and a crucial point of intersection in Jon Sobrino's insistence both on the Christic character of the crucified people and on the imperative to remove the crucified people – the *rèstavèk* – from their crosses. See Jon Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological View* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1998), 254-271.

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Love is Not the End!

If slavery and the slave trade are indeed the "crucial test case for the Enlightenment,"[387] then you are the test case for Haitian post-colonialism. "How can the Enlightenment be interpreted? Only with the *Code noir* in hand,"[388] quips Sala-Molins. How can Haitian history and lived experience be interpreted? Only with your face plastered on every one of Haiti's many mountains. Your story is the crucial test case of our humanity, for you are the travesty that betrays our claims to sophistication and civility. By your testimony Haiti will rise or fall.

Your gift of love is not the means to some ill-laden bliss of ignorance. It is the gift of possibility, the hope-filled crucible for a future of care and unbridled Justice. Your story, like *Goudougoudou*, is filled with pain and horror. Like the casualties of the quake, your body has been broken, your blood, spilled, your limbs, maimed, and your future, upended. Also, like *Goudougoudou*, you cast a damning shadow on the people, traditions, and structures that have claimed for their kind unimpeachable integrity. You implicate the model citizens and expose the emptiness of their rhetoric, trapped, as they are, in a web of illusion and deceit.

You are *Goudougoudou*! Your withered hands shake the core of our foundation: theological, philosophical, political, architectural, and ideological. Before your face, all is vain! In your wake, none can stand! You reveal the colonial in our veins. You expose to the light of truth our complicity, our stain. You are our crossroads, the domain of Legba's

[387] Louis Sala-Molins, *Dark Side of the Light: Slavery and the French Enlightenment* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 8.
[388] Sala-Molins, *Dark Side of the Light*, 9.

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rein. The prayers and tears of *Boutilye*[389] and the falls of *Saut-d'Eau*[390] are powerless before our sin. All are guilty and all are lost: Blinded by coloniality, hypocrisy, and unreflective piety, blinded to your sacrifice on the altar of our vice. You are the greatest threat to our nation and, therefore, our best hope for salvation!

Our salvation will not come from the elite, whether national or international. It lies in the blood and tears you shed, in the burdens that crushed your back, and in the scars you carry on your dilapidated body.[391] The love you show in spite of all is the promise of life for our strangled hope. All are guilty and all are lost! You are the cure to the most heinous human disposition of all: self-righteousness, so pervasive is your suffering presence; so transcendent is the reach of your love.

You, whose face was once invisible to me, whose pain I treated with disdain, now walk with me as my guiding light. I follow your contorted body along the path of your suffering. I hear your dragging foot. I hear you crying. I see the feebleness of your arms against your burden. I feel your loneliness and sense your shame. You choose the pain of journeying with me into the depth of your invisibility and anonymity. You do so not to exact revenge from me by shaming me and inflicting pain on me. You are teaching me and opening my eyes to the face that looks to me for justice. I see the face of the other because you are showing me a way that is much fairer. Sin no longer shames me. Death

[389] Boutilye or Boutilier is a mountain near Port-au-Prince where Christians hold prayers on a regular basis. Someone facing a difficult challenge may be heard saying, *Mpral Boutilye!* That usually indicates that such a person is planning on climbing the mountain, joining one of the ongoing services, or finding some personal space for a mountaintop experience. Needless to say, the tears of the pilgrim water the trees of Boutilye. As children, my siblings and I accompanied our mother to *Boutilye* on several occasions.

[390] Terry Rey describes Saut-d'Eau as a "village [that] sits a couple of miles down the mountain from the fabulous waterfalls whose mystical powers had already been attracting Vodouisants prior to the mid-eighteenth century Marian apparitions that turned it into a national shrine." Terry Rey, *Our Lady of Class Struggle: The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Haiti* (Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, Inc., 1999), 156. The feast of Saut-d'Eau or *fèt sodo* is celebrated in July annually.

[391] "Here God chooses [the poor and the victims] and makes them the principal means of salvation…What is weak and little in this world has been chosen to save it." Jon Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*, 259.

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no longer owns me. Once I walked in ignorance, now I walk in the light of truth. Walking with you is opening my eyes to the injustice that lurks around me. My ears are becoming attuned to the cry of the oppressed. You have cured my hopelessness. You were once my *rèstavèk*, someone who stayed with me, my slave. Please, I pray you, in your gracious love, may your face *reste avec nous*, and our nation, save.

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CHAPTER SIX

Encountering God in the Midst of Evil

Detested death is like a new birth, and so it is blessed.

- Simone de Beauvoir[392]

Now the event is the stuff of which prayers and tears are made, that by which we are always already solicited, invited, called.

– John D. Caputo[393]

An Indispensable Portal

Portail Léogâne is an important passageway out of Port-au-Prince. Congested and intimidating, Pòtay, as most people call it, is the place to acquire transportation from the capital to various parts of the country.[394] It is the most assured way to catch a *taptap* to Kafou, for example, a task requiring great agility and exactitude. The drivers rely on the services of a number of young men to hustle potential commuters into their vehicles. As the empty *taptap* make their way around the loop that directs southward, the voices of those young men pierce through the cacophonous hum that envelops the station, screeching *Ray! Ray! Ray!* or *Deyò! Deyò! Deyò!* all the while nudging potential passengers in the direction of the vehicles in their service.[395]

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[392] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Vintage Books, 2011), 166.
[393] John D. Caputo, "Spectral Hermeneutics: On the Weakness of God and the Theology of the Event," in John D. Caputo and Gianni Vattimo, *After the Death of God* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 54-55.
[394] Reconfigured school buses and minibuses are also available for travel around and out of the city.
[395] Ray designates a road, which bypasses the most congested sections of the southward national road – route national #2 – offering commuters who live beyond Kafou a relatively faster way out of centreville. It also involves fewer stops along the way. *Deyò* follows the traditional path out of Port-au-Prince and traverses a number of suburban towns. That this road is much too narrow to accommodate the number of vehicles that frequent it each day and the constant stop-and-go of the commuter vehicles picking up or dropping off commuters along the way make *deyò* a much longer and more stressful experience. The young men who help fill these vehicles receive remuneration from the drivers who rely on their services. Most bus drivers, that is, those who drive the old school bus type buses, accept ten *gourdes* for the Pòtay to Kafou commute if a passenger has exact change. They take fifteen *gourdes* when they must provide change. They

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A potential passenger then must dance around other moving vehicles in order to get to the one of her or his choice, which is also moving, and then hop in while leveraging off of the side of the vehicle. Mothers sometimes shove their children into a *taptap* first and then push their way through the crowd, as many people are typically competing for the limited amount of square footage inside the *taptap*. During rush hour, particularly early in the morning or after students are released from school, families and friends easily get separated and at times injured in this commotion.

Man versus *Taptap*

In addition to being the doorway to various parts of Haiti, Pòtay is also a great place to see Haitian hustle on display. One water seller is carrying a bag of water about two feet tall on his head, when he makes eye contact with a prospective buyer, a man seated at the end of a crowded *taptap*. Raising two fingers in the air, the man in the *taptap* indicates his intent to purchase two bags of water, but the water seller will have to break a fifty-gourde bill. As the water seller reaches into his fanny pack to make change, the *taptap* slowly begins to move. The water seller jumps to the sidewalk to avoid running into a parked car and scurries after the *taptap* with one hand balancing the bag of water on his head and one hand feeling its way inside his fanny pack making change.

As he catches up with his mobile customer, whose *taptap* is still creeping in traffic at this point, the water seller extends his arm to make the exchange, two bags of water plus change for a fifty-gourde bill. However, the customer raises his hand anew and shows three fingers, indicating his intention to buy one additional bag of water. At this

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defend this practice by citing the government-sanctioned fare of twelve and half gourdes. Since most people do not carry or care much for the one-gourde coin, they claim that they are being fair. Since the *taptap* are smaller, *taptap* drivers insist that their passengers pay the full 15 gourdes. *Taptap* drivers tend to respond unsympathetically if not angrily when a passenger claims to be able to afford only ten gourdes for the trip. The cost of fuel plays a large part in determining the appropriate fare.

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point, the *taptap* picks up speed. The water seller is now running to keep up with his mobile customer and complete the sale. Making his way around a couple of people and other obstacles on the sidewalk, he subtracts five gourdes from the previous change by placing an *adoken*, that infamous heptagonal five-gourde coin, between his lips with one hand while the other hand, the one keeping the bag on his head, reaches into the bag and extracts a third bag of water to complete the order. Now he must halve the *adoken*, as the water bags sell two for five gourdes.[396] With one final charge, he reaches the *taptap* and makes the exchange just in time before the *taptap* gets out of reach. Scurrying back to the sidewalk, he puts away his labor's wage in the safety of his fanny pack. In all, the water seller receives seven and a half gourdes from this sale, the equivalent of seventeen U.S. cents at the 2015 exchange rate.

Mimicking Perversion

This episode replays a canticle all too common in Haitian history and lived experience. Mundane and familiar, it goes unnoticed by those who frequent Pòtay or ride the iconic *taptap*. A man, dressed in rags, sporting muddied outmoded, outdated, and formerly All-American, Haitian-new-imported-used shoes, pushing back against both *tòkèt* and *chay*[397] in the dead weight of still, chilled water in hot, humid, hostile weather, whose clothes reek of days-old sweat, with salt drenched, sorrow infused, deeply etched webs of skin strewn over brows permanently fixed in the broken musical key in which

[396] The cost of the water depends on the brand. Some sell up to five bags for five gourdes.
[397] A *tòkèt* is a cushioning device made by rolling into a spiral a piece of twisted cloth, which is placed on the head or shoulder to assist in carrying heavy weights. *Chay* means weight or burden and generally refers to baggage, and more indefinitely, to anything that may become a burden for a person, a truck, or a donkey. *Tòkèt* and *chay* go together as the *tòkèt* is required to carry the *chay,* in the case of a human carrier. In this sense, *tòkèt* implies *chay*. Thus, to refer to a situation as a *tòkèt* expresses the feeling that as bad as things may seem, they are likely to get worse. The idiom *Sa sè tòkèt la, chay la dèyè* "This is the *tòkèt*, the *chay* is forthcoming," expresses this sentiment. In western culture, the *tòkèt* compares with the tip of the proverbial iceberg or the proverbial calm before the storm.

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death simultaneously announces and delays itself in an eternal instant of infernality, embraces the glance that promises a sale, then runs, pirouettes, evading death by car, by fall, and by pale, and receiving a wage vexing at best, unworthy of a pounding chest, but welcome because hunger, that unwanted, un-departed guest, that perennial pest, threatens the nest.[398]

The powerful few of the Duvalier regime made a sport out of this form of humiliation.[399] During their adventures throughout rural Haiti, they rolled down the windows of their dictatorial cortège, and without conscience or shame, tossed hands full of gourdes onto the road. Many people, partly unaware, partly blindsided, but mostly needful, grinningly and ecstatically raced and shoved their way into the cortège's trail of dust and *kòb*,[400] sifting their way to fights, bruises, and maybe a few gourdes. The scene in the above story is all too eerily familiar. Those in power all too often use their position to dominate those who depend on them. Those who control the funds avail themselves of the services of others, whom they repay disproportionately, sometimes claiming the other's very humanity. At times, money is involved. So is education or any of the other factors typically associated with elite status. All too often, the office worker snubs her or his creole-speaking guests while waxing servile for those who are French-speaking or

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[398] That the water seller has no alternative to jeopardizing his body other than starvation shows the extent to which his condition encroaches upon his dignity and freedom. The very condition of this man is from the outset a threat to Haiti as a nation. For a discussion of the ways in which the bible condemns the constraints on this man's life, see José Porfirio Miranda, *Communism in the Bible* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1982), 26.

[399] Of the Duvalier regime, Elizabeth McAlister writes, "The Duvalier method of rule was so absolutely totalitarian that it is no exaggeration to suggest that it permeated every single human interaction in Port-au-Prince society…Any connection to Duvalier became a source of power, and the absurdities of this situation multiplied with the repression." Elizabeth McAlister, *Rara! Vodou, Power, and Performance in Haiti and Its Diaspora* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 163. For a thorough analysis of the Duvalier years and their legacy within Haitian society, see Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Haiti, State Against Nation: The Origins & Legacy of Duvalierism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1990). See especially pages 139 to 162.

[400] A Kreyòl word for money.

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foreign-looking. This practice applies to government ministries, hotels, banks, as well as ecclesial institutions.[401] Perhaps this is so because those well-bred guests require servility from their receptionists and administrative assistants. Sometimes, neither money nor education is involved. Driver's seats morph into thrones and the drivers themselves

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[401] Kreyòl is an official language in Haiti. It is my language of choice, when I travel throughout the country. At one government ministry, I received very poor treatment from the woman working at the front desk. She insisted on addressing me in French, even though I spoke to her in Kreyòl. It was a very curious experience, as if we inhabited two separate and different worlds demarcated by language and whatever class-specific factors she might have perceived in my appearance. Her superiors were likely responsible for her behavior. If that is the case, then, this incident suggests that, as in the days of the Duvalier regime, the entire system is predisposed to oppressive practices that perpetuate the alienation of the unprivileged, Kreolophone majority. I experienced the same coldness from attendants at several church-related institutions. At several of those places, my language skills seemed inconsequential, as the people with whom I interacted were Kreyòl-exclusive speakers. The antipathy seemed directed at my Haitian-ness. Haiti can be such a hostile place for Haitians. I think that is the reason I revere the taptap as I do. It is not always friendly, but for some reason that eludes my understanding, its passengers tend to be calmer and less prone to dis-empathy. A great number of my interpersonal interactions, particularly in Port-au-Prince, left me feeling worthless as a human being. The presence of foreigners magnifies that sentiment exponentially. This ancient problem has taken new life since the post-Goudougoudou invasion of Haiti by foreign powers through the proxy of non-governmental organizations, the United Nations, and missionary groups. When foreign-looking faces are present, Haitian-looking faces take on insignificance, if they do not altogether disappear. A Haitian-looking face juxtaposed with a foreign-looking face is assumed to be the latter's interpreter or driver. This fact is reminiscent of a story Judith Thurman tells in her introduction to Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second* Sex. She writes, "That October, my maiden aunt, Beauvoir's contemporary, came to visit me in the hospital nursery. I was a day old, and she found a little tag on my bassinet that announced, 'It's a Girl!' In the next bassinet was another newborn ('a lot punier,' she recalled), whose little tag announced, 'I'm a Boy!' There we lay, innocent of a distinction – between a female object and a male subject – that would shape our destinies." Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, ix. The state of affairs between the foreigner's face and the Haitian face is predetermined by a history that is as old as Spanish slavery, but which took a clear racial turn in 1766 when a French colonial notary branded the word *quarteron* on a document to indicate the African ancestry of one of the four grandparents of his client, a wealthy, slave-owning planter and precursor to Haiti's privileged mulâtre class named Julien Raimond. The events that follow, according to John D. Garrigus, set the course for the Haitian Revolution. John D. Garrigus, *Before Haiti: Race and Citizenship in French St.* Domingue (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), 1-5. Ironically enough, the mulâtre class comfortably has filled the role once reserved exclusively for their French forbears since the early days of the Haitian nation. See also the revised edition to David Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier: Race, Colour, and National Independence in Haiti* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1996), 67-107. Color prejudice took a turn for the worse during the U.S. occupation of Haiti as well. Writes Trouillot, "The occupation also aggravated some of Haiti's social problems, notably color prejudice…But whether or not the Marines who invaded Haiti were predominantly from the southern United States – which is a subject of debate – it is certain that their behavior, both as individuals and as a group, reinforced color prejudice. The marines helped install three light-skinned presidents closely associated with the *mulâtre* faction of the elites. U.S. administrators clearly showed their preference for light-skinned Haitian officials." Trouillot, *Haiti, State Against Nation*, 107. Brenda Gayle Plummer adds, "Newly arrived U.S. personnel insisted on racial segregation and introduced it into hotels, restaurants, and clubs." Brenda Gayle Plummer, "Under the Gun," in *Haitian History: New Perspectives*, ed., Alyssa Goldstein Sepinwall (New York: Routledge, 2013), 242. My experiences include great encounters as well such as my visits to several Catholic churches and institutions and other trips to the rural areas.

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assume the alter ego of a despot once their private vehicles hit the pavement or dirt road, shamelessly running pedestrians off the road. All too often, the slightest taste of power makes a tyrant even out of the least of Haiti's children.

The man in the story above, that is, the fifty-gourde-toting-customer-on-wheels, is not the typical tyrant. He is not interested in crowning himself emperor or king, in the manner of the ancestors, Dessalines, Christophe, and Soulouque. He will never command an army, build a world-renowned fortress, or sport the crown that bejewels the *Musée du Panthéon National*. In fact, he does not even fit in the late-model-sports-utility-vehicle-wielding-and-pedestrian-harrasing bunch that spread their girth on Port-au-Prince's narrow streets. No. That this man hangs behind a *taptap* and drinks water from a bag indicates his status as a man from among the people. That he opts for the rear rather than the more comfortable and slightly more dignified front seats indicates that he is not ashamed of his proletarian status. Should he turn out to be an incognito member of the elite enjoying a *taptap* ride on a dusty Port-au-Prince afternoon, some alternate interpretations of this scene are in order. Until such unmasking, this man appears as no different than any other Haitian that relies on the rugged *taptap* to commute around the city.

However, like all Haitian people, this man is the inheritor of a brutal legacy that places a premium on power. Haitian history and society have groomed this man to be envious of those in power. This man, if he is the age he looks, maybe around fifty years old, just missed the 1957 father-to-child handover of power. He lived through the tumultuous years of part two of the Duvalier regime.[402] Without a doubt this man had

[402] "With the perspective gained from the passage of time, the two Duvalier regimes appear as two sides of the same coin. There are, of course, dissimilarities, but most of them are superficial. The greatest difference

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ample opportunities to sharpen his teeth, so to speak, in the might-makes-right philosophy of the duvalierist machine. Perhaps he figured among those who welcomed the dictator's sudden return to the homeland, having once donned the feared blues of death of the *tonton makout* of old.[403]

Staring Haiti in the Faces of Women

Perhaps this man also abuses the woman with whom he shares a home, whether the two are legally married or involved in *plasay* or cohabitation. His abuse may extend exclusively to the practice of keeping *madanm deyò*, that is, concubines. Those concubines or *madanm deyò* – literally, outside woman or wife – as Haitians dub them, more often than not, receive scant attention from these philandering men, who father children they do not intend to raise.[404] Haitian society is replete with stories of women who exchange their bodies for the basic necessities. At times pressured into abusive

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between the two regimes lay in the deepening of relations between the state and holders of capital at home and abroad, and in the increased support of the U.S. government. It was not, however, a difference in principle." Trouillot, *Haiti, State Against Nation*, 200.

[403] The *tonton makout*, known officially as Volontaires de la Sécurité Nationale (VSN), were François Duvalier's, and later Jean-Claude Duvalier's, private paramilitary force. Elizabeth McAlister refers to them as the dictatorship's "enforcement branch." Elizabeth McAlister, *Rara!*, 163-164. According to Trouillot, the creation of the civil militia known as VSN, was the dictatorship's way of officializing the secret police, the *tonton makout* – originally the *cagoulars* after "the European fascist organizations of the 1930s" – that had been in operation since the campaign that led to Papa Doc's rise to power in 1957. Trouillot, *Haiti, State Against Nation*, 189. Though all *tonton makout* were officially members of the militia or *milisyen*, not all *milisyen* were *tonton makout*, as the mostly unarmed *milisyen* (until the late 1970's), which included rural peasants as members, were but the visible expression of the nationwide reach of Papa Doc's power. The *tonton makout*, which included teachers, members of clergy, and doctors in their ranks, were "the goons and thugs that had served [Francois Duvalier] so well during the campaign" (189-190). "The first term [*tonton makout*] suggests verbal acceptance of the regime and active participation in the repressive apparatus; the second [*milisyen*] suggests only membership in the militia" (190). The *milisyen* included women members, or *milisyèn*. In fact, the head of the *milisyen* was a woman, a former nurse (191). Jean-Claude Duvalier, also known as Baby Doc, returned to Haiti in January 2011 after 25 years in exile. He died on October 4, 2014. See URL below. http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the_americas/jean-claude-duvalier-ex-haitian-leader-known-as-baby-doc-dies-at-63/2014/10/04/ecdaa2bc-4be3-11e4-b72e-d60a9229cc10_story.html

[404] On my most recent trip to Haiti, I overheard a group of four young girls aged between ten and fifteen years discussing their family structures. One of them said, "My dad has six children with six different women. Another responded, "My dad has three children with two different women." Then they started naming the names of the half siblings of which they were aware. Of the four girls, one had a dad who stayed faithful to the mother of his children. Not all Haitian men share this attitude toward women or keep multiple sex partners, but a large number of men do.

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relationships or shamed into motherhood, theirs is a position of desperation. To many of these women, to survive means doing whatever it takes. However, that is only part of a complicated story. These women are hardly stay-at-home moms who attend to the need of the household while their borrowed husbands bring home the *mayi moulen ak aran sò* "dried herring and grits." On the contrary, many, if not most, of these women are responsible for keeping the Haitian economy afloat. They farm, teach, and stock the marketplace with their mangoes, sweet potatoes, and goat meat. Ultimately, they are single parents battling the shame of concubinage and the scourge of poverty in the same act of courage.

These women are hardly the victims of the men who exploit them. However, they are definite victims of a society in which masculinity holds sway. From this perspective, then, they are indeed victims of the men who exploit them. They inhabit a system that disregards their cries. Though they bear the brunt of Haiti's harsh conditions – bearing children for uncooperative men, sometimes at a very early age, neglected to ignorance and illiteracy, and vilipended in acts of mockery so much that even the proverbs vilify them – these women are citizens of a lesser class within Haitian society. The irony! The ones who labor tirelessly go hungry. The ones who create life face the threat of death ceaselessly. The ones who are bred to wipe away tears go un-consoled.[405] In their faces of salt and grime, of tears and pain, the flint on which the sun beats smiles into grimaces, Haiti's groanings make their indelible mark. Albert Memmi's characterization of the colonized body accurately applies to Haiti's women: "the body and face of the colonized

[405] "One is not born, but rather becomes, woman." Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 283.

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are not a pretty sight. It is not without damage that one carries the weight of such historical misfortune."[406]

There goes one. There goes another. Barefoot. Filthy. Hungry. Smiling! Laughing? Proudly bearing the weight of her generation? Quietly bearing the shame of a patriarchal nation? A mother. A *komèsan*. A farmer. A prostitute. A wife. A manbo. A physician. A teacher. A nun. A politician: She too knows how to play the game of death. She too knows how to exploit and kill. But for the most part, she cooks though hungry, she gives though deprived, she educates though illiterate, she prays though dispirited, and she gives life though living on the precipice of death. Worst of all, even if these women were to resign themselves completely to the role of motherhood and were justified to spend themselves completely for the sake of their children, they must also resign to watching their children wilt away under the weight of a burden only slightly lighter than the one that made things out of the ancestors. Some do see their children prosper, but for the most part, they must watch them wither, and most shameful of all, they must watch their children's character fester.

After all, women do bear the sons whose entire vocation is encapsulated by the term 'hustle.' Shackled to a baneful existence and having their intellectual potential frozen in disuse, these sons spend their days parroting two words spoken in triplets as in the story that begins this chapter: *Ray! Ray! Ray! Deyò! Deyò! Deyò!* Women do bear in their bodies the nobodies known as little whores (*ti bouzen*), little filth (*ti salòp*), and paradoxically, motherless (*san manman*), also known as *rèstavèk*. Most ironical is the

[406] Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991), 119.

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reality that women bear the men who prey on the vulnerabilities of other women. The same applies to the dictators and demagogues whose machinations are Haiti's shame.[407]

Yet some of those roles are not necessarily of a woman's choosing. They are thrust upon her as a matter of the preconceived notions of a patriarchal society. They are the mark of her victimization. The attributions of those roles to women and girls are Haitian society's way of meeting its quota of martyrs, a sure way to maintain perversity's continued sway in power relations. A mother is often a euphemism for a societally incarcerated victim of rape. A *komèsan*, though an admirable profession in Haiti's economy, is sometimes but the public humiliation that issues from a permanent state of lack. A prostitute, as evidenced by the shameful incidents in tent cities after *Goudougoudou* struck, is sometimes what happens when men force a woman to choose between assuaging the pangs of hunger, including her children's hunger, and living a dignified life.[408] Casting upon her shoulders the weight of her children's failures is society's way of imposing upon her already prostrated body the cost of continued male domination and pleasure. She is forced to carry alone both the cost of success and the

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[407] Simone de Beauvoir identifies the fear with which women face contingency. They imagine their child as a gift of the gods, but they also fear that the child could turn out to be a monster. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 540.

[408] "Desperate to survive, [women and girls] have sold sex for food and shelter, for some money, and to assure male protection in the dangerous camps. Some reports have documented the sexual demands made by male camp managers and men overseeing food aid distribution in camps who demanded sex in exchange for giving out food, water, or tents. Many of those interviewed claimed they had never sold sex before, but the earthquake had left them no options." Anne-Christine d'Adesky and Potofanm+Fi, *Beyond Shock: Charting the Landscape of Sexual Violence in Post-quake Haiti: Progress, Challenges, and Emerging Trends* (Santa Barbara: Center for Black Studies, 2013), 24. This testimony exposes in a painfully clear way the second-class treatment many women experience in Haitian society. It is not enough that men impose upon women roles that relegate women to an inferior position within society. Men require women to perform for tarps, blankets, water bottles, and other necessities that were given free of charge for people just like these women, things which were indispensable to survive in the harsh conditions in those tent cities. This speaks to the level of care and solidarity women receive from the men on whom they are forced to depend.

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burdens of failure. As one proverb observes, "*Bourik travay pou chwal galonen* "The donkey works but the horse gets the honors."[409]

***Pawòl Granmoun* for Women**

A few other proverbs might give a sense of Haitian culture's view of women. *Kote k gen fanm, fòk gen anpil pale* "where there are women, there is much talk," one proverb asserts.[410] Another proverb concurs, adding, *Twa fanm sifi pou fè you mache* "three women make a market," presumably attributing to the presence of women the clamoring that is characteristic of open-air markets.[411] Another proverb further concludes, *Fanm pa janm gen sekrè*, meaning, "women never have secrets."[412] The implication is that men ought not to trust women, for they are gossips who speak without restraint or prudence. In fact, *Bonjou fanm pa laverite: Ou pa ka kwè fanm*. Even when they say 'Good Morning' women prevaricate. They are not to be trusted.[413]

Other proverbs seem flattering but they are fundamentally sexist. *Fanm se kajou; li pa janm pèdi bonè l* "women are like mahogany: they don't lose their value."[414] Another proverb echoes this attitude, *Fanm se kajou: plis li vye, plis li bon* "women are like mahogany: they get better with age."[415] Another proverb likens women to a coconut, having three eyes but only seeing through one of them, a reference to the phenomenon that of the three eye-like formations at the narrow end of a de-husked coconut, only one

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[409] Patrick Bellegarde-Smith and Claudine Michel, ed., *Haitian Vodou: Myth, Spirit, and Reality* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 75. "Just as the evil women endure is hidden, so too their sacrifices are ignored and regarded as worthless." Ivone Gebara, *Out of the Depths: Women's Experience of Evil and Salvation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 7.

[410] Edner A. Jeanty and O. Carl Brown, ed., *Paròl Granmoun: Haitian Popular Wisdom* (Port-au-Prince: La Press Evangélique, 1996), 65. Text modified for clarity.

[411] Text modified for clarity. Jeanty and Brown, *Paròl Granmoun*, 66. Do these changes fit within CMOS 13.7

[412] Text modified for clarity. Jeanty and Brown, *Paròl Granmoun*, 65.

[413] Text modified for clarity. Jeanty and Brown, *Paròl Granmoun*, 142.

[414] Text modified for clarity. Jeanty and Brown, *Paròl Granmoun*, 66.

[415] Text modified for clarity. Jeanty and Brown, *Paròl Granmoun*, 66.

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can be pierced to release the water inside the shell. This proverb usually applies to some women's poor choice of men, which speaks to their sightlessness and impressionability.[416] In these proverbs, Haitian men – and Haitian culture – show their predilection for the myth that elevates women only so that men may live vicariously through women, for "man hopes to realize himself by finding himself through her."[417] To postulate that nature has imbued women with the quality of the choicest wood is not a compliment for women but grace for man, which supports the thesis that men turn to women only because nature (timber) is too impersonal and other men require too much work. Simone de Beauvoir observes, "thus she appears a privileged prey. She is nature raised to the transparency of consciousness; she is a naturally submissive consciousness."[418] Women are thus objects in relation to men. Their divinization by men only furthers the subjugation of women though wrapped in seemingly complimentary and complementary garb.[419]

In some proverbs, women are paradoxes, or perhaps more accurately, they are one potentially nefarious pole of a syzygial pair. *Fanm se zanj; fanm se demon*, which typically plays off of the colloquialism "angels and demons," suggests an either/or relationship between the pair of terms. However, because the culture is inclined to interpret the saying in terms of ambivalence, society tends to treat women as ambivalent

[416] "The representation of the world as the world itself is the work of men; they describe it from a point of view that is their own and that they confound with the absolute truth." Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 162.
[417] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 161.
[418] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 161.
[419] "Man seeks the Other in woman as Nature and as his peer." Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 163. "This embodied dream is, precisely, woman; she is the perfect intermediary between nature that is foreign to man and the peer who is too identical to him. She pits neither the hostile silence of nature nor the hard demand of a reciprocal recognition against him; by a unique privilege she is a consciousness, and yet it seems possible to possess her in the flesh" (160). "Woman who condemns man to finitude also enables him to surpass his own limits: that is where the equivocal magic surrounding her comes from" (167).

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creatures who are angels and demons simultaneously. Worse still is the text *Paròl Granmoun*'s interpretation of the proverb along paternalistic lines: *Yon fanm ka sa mari l fè l ye* "A woman can be what her husband makes her."[420] *Bèl fanm; bèl malè* "beautiful woman; beautiful misfortune" is yet again another expression of men's cynical perspective concerning women.[421] One other proverb casts women against women, the *matlòt* "the concubine" against the wife. *Matlòt pa bon, men li itil* "The concubine of a married woman's husband is unfortunate but she has her uses."[422]

The Water Seller's Plight

The foregoing reflections have ensued from a simple questioning of the man hanging on the tail end of the *taptap*, who watches unsympathetically as his compatriot travails to earn seventeen cents. He dangles his fifty-gourde bill before the face of the water seller and makes the latter run through literal hoops for pennies.[423] Carefree, he has all the power in this interaction. He knows full well that the water seller may be unable to fulfill his order. This eventuality is the reason that he insists on having water and change in hand prior to surrendering his fifty-gourde bill. For his part, he will have other opportunities further down the road where other water sellers wait to compete for his business. Altogether, the man on the *taptap* has nothing to lose.

The water seller, on the contrary, has everything to lose. His competitors are legion. He must compete with his fellow sellers: that is a given. The more competing water sellers translate into a lower probability that the prospective buyers' eyes or call

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[420] Text modified for clarity. Jeanty and Brown, *Paròl Granmoun*, 142. This interpretation is but a repetition of the musings of Honoré de Balzac. See Honoré de Balzac, *The Physiology of Marriage* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), xix. "Woman is her husband's prey, his property." Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 171.

[421] Text modified for clarity. Jeanty and Brown, *Paròl Granmoun*, 142.

[422] Text modified for clarity. Jeanty and Brown, *Paròl Granmoun*, 142.

[423] "The colonized laborer is interchangeable, so why pay him what he is really worth?" Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, 116.

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will meet with his eyes or fall on his ears. Water sellers respond to the name of their product, not by their given names. They wear no name badges. Hence, when the man on the *taptap* calls out *Dlo!* “water!” he is specifying not the seller but the product he wishes to buy. Thus, the seller closest to or most attentive to the prospective buyer’s glance and/or call is likely to receive an offer to buy.

More sellers also mean more variety of products. Unlike the seller in this story, many water sellers offer other products than bagged water, including malt beverages and a variety of both imported and domestic carbonated beverages. The presence of the sugary carbonated drinks may steal away the appeal for water. The water seller seems to understand the gravity of the situation. Perhaps that is the reason for the fearlessness with which he approaches his trade.

The water seller’s competition also includes the driver of the *taptap*. The driver may appear neutral in this interchange. However, his power supersedes those of the other two men combined. The driver is under no obligation to facilitate transactions between his passengers and any potential sellers. He generally responds to three stimuli: the gestures of prospective passengers, the *mèsi* “thank you” or knock of his actual passengers requesting a stop, and traffic. Traffic itself is a problem for the water seller. When traffic is moving and commuter vehicles such as the *taptap* have no reason to stop, the seller loses access to many potential buyers. When traffic does slow the movement of the *taptap* as in the story above, the seller must act quickly. The driver could accelerate at any given time and completely nullify the seller’s prodigious efforts.

Moreover, the water seller must compete against the *taptap* as well, for the healthier the vehicle, the less likely that he is able to keep up with it. In addition, in the

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person of his smug customer, he must compete with the god of elite entitlement who thirsts for the blood of the proletariat. In other words, he will have to meet the demands of his customer, and prove his determination to live though it threatens his very existence producing his bloody, filthy, and running feet. After all, the feet are a key criterion of socio-economic status within Haitian society. Alas, the water seller will meet other prospective buyers. Most of them will be aboard moving vehicles such as this *taptap*, where he will likely face other customers such as the fifty-gourde-bill-toting man in this story.

Perhaps too many ifs surround this man on the *taptap* to decipher his true nature. And perhaps the current analysis is treating him unfairly. However, much has been said about the external forces that oppress the Haitian people, yet the internal factors surreptitiously make their mark. The internal factors are in effect more dangerous, because, mundane, Haitians are inclined to take them for granted. This study has intentionally taken a different approach: to look to the mundane itself for manifestations of the divine and return to the mundane its authentically encounter-mediating character. The mundane has thus provided the space in which to imagine an encounter with the divine that is authentically Haitian. The interaction of this man with the water seller offers an opportunity for an encounter which holy places are by nature unable to mediate. Holy places in fact exist as an attempt to expurgate the mundane and reify that which effectively antagonizes the matter currently under consideration.

Evil describes the phenomenon this chapter seeks to address. However, the phenomenological basis for the term has yet to be determined. Hopefully, the reflections on the man's supposed relations with women has set the stage for that which is to follow.

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The man on the *taptap* mediates the manifestation of a possibility whose revelatory character is often in question. The man does not intend to mediate the event yet he is an active participant within it. The undetermined nature of encounter grasps him and transforms him into a potentially transformative agent. He may not be transformed in-himself in the end, as he may be indifferent to the reality in which he participates. Nonetheless, since the event is open for all to enter and experience and be transformed, his image takes a powerfully symbolic form for those who experience the encounter as such, that is, as death, as the possibility of a new way of being and knowing.

The Water Seller's Secret

As for the water seller, he too mediates the encounter. In spite of his inferior station relative to the man on the *taptap*, he is no passive victim of his customer's actions. He too gets a turn wielding power. He sees in his customer's privilege the future of his hope. In fact, he may be like his customer in many ways already. He may lack fifty-gourde bills of his own, but he may have twenty-five or perhaps ten. At that level, he may not be able to afford a seat on the *taptap*, but somewhere down the road lives a woman selling food and who relies on this peddling man for business. She is the one who must perform to his pleasure. She must get the flavor, the temperature, and the portion size to his satisfaction. Though filthy and reeking of his profession, he requires of her a standard of cleanliness commensurate with the perceived standard of his customer. That is important to him. That is his way of living his dreams.

The food seller is not the end of the water seller's influence. With all likeliness, he lives with a woman and has children of his own. He has a home in which he rules with unmatched authority. In spite of his low status, he may possess a concubine or two as

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well. If the latter be true, he likely possesses a *rèstavèk* as well, a little boy or girl whose parents deal not in fifties or twenties or tens, but in *adoken*, like the women who daily sit against the fence of the president's office in Champs-de-Mars begging for *adoken*, or the man who was once seen circling the same fence complaining of hunger and pelting the president's office with expletives decrying the mismanagement of funds and failure to curtail unemployment. In other words, the water seller is an active participant in the system that oppresses him.

Perhaps that is the reason this water seller tolerates his customer's smug indifference. Petty capitalist that he is, he wishes to end neither the working class to which he belongs nor the bourgeoisie which he aspires to join. Though invalidating, he tolerates his customer's smugness because smugness designates power and possessions, both of which he utterly desires. He is willing to adopt smugness as an attitude in his own relationships, his way of emulating the objects of his envy, an idea that inspires him to run and travail, to tolerate and wait. As goes the old Haitian adage, for now, he is willing to *bouche nen l, bwè dlo santi* "plug up his nostrils and drink sewage water." In this, the Haitian situation affirms Memmi's observation that "the first ambition of the colonized is to become equal to that splendid model [of the colonizer] and to resemble him to the point of disappearing in him."[424]

The water seller's condition also makes him callous. His life among the dregs and his ambition to take a seat on the proverbial *taptap* fill him with anxiety and anger.

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[424] Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, 120. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's proposition, already cited in part in the introduction, describes the colonizer/colonized situation well, perhaps with some double entendre in this context. She writes, "the colonizer constructs himself as he constructs the colony. The relationship is intimate, an open secret that cannot be part of official knowledge." Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 203.

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Already he treats his peers and his less dignified customers with an attitude commensurate with his hoped-for station. Though dreggy himself, he is compelled to despise the dregs for the sake of his imagined future, which ironically relies on the continued existence of the dregs themselves. He must learn to hate himself. He must change "his skin."[425] Paradoxically, the dregs are important to him. Should he find a way out of his situation, his new position will carry no meaning if no one lags behind to feed on the crumbs he leaves behind. His life of privilege will mean absolutely nothing unless others desire the same. His ability to command a seat on the *taptap* will bring him grief unless others are forced to walk. In some twisted way, the happiness he seeks requires his current destitution because the future he desires is improbable in the absence of his meager situation.[426]

Ironically, poverty is his ticket out of poverty, the guarantor of his privileged status. Hence, he must happily resign himself to poverty for the sake of poverty, lest he imperils the object of his dreams. However, his place among the privileged is not secure. The lines are clearly drawn. He is not wanted. He must keep his post for the sake of his current superiors. His dreams of privilege only deepen his imprisonment, for he is now conscious of his limitations. Twisted or not, these two men participate in a reality of a very strange nature: the power the man on the *taptap* wields is ineluctably linked with the

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[425] Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, 120-121.

[426] José Miranda describes this situation as "differentiating wealth." He argues Jesus condemns this situation in the Gospels. He writes, "When Christ says, 'Happy the poor' and 'Woe to you the rich,' what he is attacking is that some are poor and others rich." Miranda, *Communism in the Bible*, 21. In the same text, Miranda asserts further, "it ought to be obvious that the alleged legitimacy of differentiating wealth is a mere historical prolongation of the slave mentality that says some are born to live better than others. This is indubitably how the authors of the Bible, and Jesus with them, perceived the affair. Hence their implacable condemnation of differentiating wealth" (30). James Cone puts it in the following words, "The gospel will always be an offense to the rich and the powerful, because it is the death of their riches and power." James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2010), 71.

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lack the water seller feels. The wealth of one is synonymous with the dearth of the other. The death of the system, which defines them both, means death to them both.[427]

Juxtaposing Dialectics

The relation between the privileged man and the water seller effectively mimics the relation between the colonizer and the colonized. They are participants in the age-old tug of war involving power. Of course, the idea of a tug of war scantly applies to the state of affairs as they stand. The privileged won that war long ago and made of the rope, a noose. That which appears as a tug from the direction of the unprivileged is likely the motion of tiptoeing feet and quivering, oxygen deprived bodies. The water seller is but the *taptap* occupant's slave boy. The former's impressive hustle on and off the street, around and above various obstacles, is but a reflection of how tightly the rope squeezes his neck. His survival requires obedience at every tug. In this, the privileged man demonstrates his indifference to the plight of the unprivileged; the value of the latter's dispensable life being tied to his utility to the bourgeoisie.[428]

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[427] The binary of privileged and unprivileged or colonizer and colonized is itself problematic. That which produces this binary and passes it off as natural is perhaps the most pervasive effect of the perversity of evil. Judith Butler's insights in the area of gender relations apply also to the above binaries. Writes Butler, "Power [seems] to be more than an exchange between subjects or a relation of constant inversion between subject and an Other; indeed, power [appears] to operate in the production of that very binary frame for thinking about gender." Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2014), xxviii.

[428] Michel-Rolph Trouillot finds a reification of this idea in the treatment Haiti's oppressed majority receives at the hands of the privileged minority. He writes, "Simply put, the Haitian elites made a choice early on that the maintenance of their lifestyle was more important than the survival of the majority. That choice, in turn, meant using the state both to exploit the economic output of the majority and to stop the majority from crying out too loudly." Michel-Rolph Trouillot, "Haiti's Nightmare and the Lessons of History," in *Haiti: Dangerous Crossroads*, ed. Deidre McFadyen and Pierre LaRamée (Boston: South End Press, 1995), 126. In the international context, this idea applies to Haiti as a nation as well. "From the European 'discovery' of Haiti in 1492 to the *coup d'état* of 1991, a pattern clearly emerges: Haiti and Haitians exist to serve the powerful." Paul Farmer, *The Uses of Haiti* (Monroe, Maine: Common Courage Press, 1994), 51. José Miranda strikes at this point when he likens the working man's situation as one controlled by those who control the power of wealth and, along with that, set the prices, draft the contracts, and determine the working conditions. "The price of the labor in the labor market is *imposed* on the worker, just as both of the other prices are imposed on the weaker party." Miranda, *Communism in the Bible*, 27.

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The belief of the colonized in a brighter future in the company of the colonizer is a lie at best. The *taptap* sits very few people comfortably. Though his position at the end of the *taptap* may expose him to rain, sun, and dust – others wield more power than he[429] – the fifty-gourde-bill-wielding man is not interested in giving up his seat, even if over the course of their interaction, he were to sympathize with the water seller's situation. Even if he were the staunchest defender of the rights of the common man, holding onto his privilege means more to him than the lack of access on the part of the water seller. In fact, he might even convince himself that his life as an activist requires such privilege. The cause of the unprivileged is ironically the vocation of the privileged.

In this sense, the privileged man resembles his unprivileged counter-part.[430] He too requires his position even when he intends to fight against it. He claims to desire the poor in his station, but from within his station. Therefore, he requires privilege in order to combat its nefarious effects. For this reason, he cannot imagine the end of his privilege. Nor is he able to envision the end of his counter-part's indigence. By delaying the end of his privilege, he indefinitely postpones the end of the other's meager circumstances.

Therefore, his approach is fundamentally unjust regardless of the seeming financial cost to him. Because he does not break with the way of life that depends on and, thereby, creates, the other's impecuniosity, his cash-wielding hands are purveyors of a sham, which his overt declarations of solidarity and gestures of magnanimity intend to conceal. Though he or others from his rank may use the funds of privilege to fight the oppression caused by privilege, he too believes a lie as long as he fails to or chooses not

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[429] "However, privilege is something relative. To different degrees every colonizer is privileged, at least comparatively so, ultimately to the detriment of the colonized." Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, 11.

[430] "Just as the colonizer is tempted to accept his part, the colonized is forced to accept being colonized." Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized, 89.*

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to discern the inseparability of the privilege he enjoys and the poverty his counter-part endures.

Ironically, the funds, which he distributes, in one form or another, find their way back to his coffers, because philanthropy is the child of exploitation.[431] It is tainted with injustice because it is the fruit of delayed and, consequently, denied justice. He might be the origin of the lie concerning the possibility of upward mobility for the unprivileged. As long as he can perpetuate the lie, he can enjoy his privilege unreflectively. He can try to bury his scheme in rhetoric and grandiloquence, promising to end hunger and injustice. He might proclaim himself defender of the common man and the prophet of equality. In poetry, film, song, and other public declarations, he may bring to the brink of revolution unsuspecting sympathizers who truly embrace his ideology.[432] But the logic is all too clear: unless he ceases to be, hunger and suffering prevail.[433] The system is of his making and protects him alone. Justice benefits only from his death.[434]

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[431] Concerning the history of aid in Haiti, Timothy T. Schwartz remarks, “Donor governments gave money in the form of food; the charities sold the food on the Haitian market and then used the money to meet corporate overhead costs and to carry out programs that were supposed to alleviate suffering. But in the end, in the institutional struggle to survive and in an environment in which accountability did not exist, the world’s largest multinational charities – CARE, CRS, World Vision, and ADRA – executed the political will of institutions, governments, and lobbyists that had identified Haiti’s comparative advantage as low wages, that is, poverty, and in doing so these charitable organizations dedicated to helping the poorest of the poor wound up working to make the people of Haiti even poorer.” Timothy T. Schwartz, *Travesty in Haiti: A True Account of Christian Missions, Orphanages, Food Aid, Fraud and Drug Trafficking* (Charleston, South Carolina: BookSurge Publishing, 2010), 122. He continues, “To think, or perhaps I should say, to admit that the food is part of a plan to encourage poverty would be to recognize yourself as part of that plan. It would require guts and a good conscience to forsake the comfortable salaries, hotels, fine meals, insurance, and pension plans that came with being a professional in the service of the international charitable institutions like CARE, CRS, ADRA, and World Vision” (123).

[432] “Ideologies corrupt minds [and] justif[y] alienation.” Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 5

[433] “All evil committed by one person…is evil undergone by another person. To do evil is to make another person suffer. Violence, in this sense, constantly re-creates the unity of moral evil and suffering. Hence, any action, whether ethical or political, that diminishes the quantity of violence exercised by some human beings over against other human beings diminishes the amount of suffering in the world.” Paul Ricoeur, *Figured the Sacred: Religion, Narrative, and Imagination* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 259.

[434] “To say that the colonizer could or should accept assimilation, and hence, the colonized’s emancipation, means to topple the colonial relationship…the colonizer would be asked to put an end to himself.” Memmi,

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The Phenomenology of Evil

Pervasive perduring perversity: that is the existential condition in which these two men live. That might be a helpful way to conceive of evil. The world this system envisages is irremediably unjust. It is steeped in oppressive practices, which issue in further oppressive practices. Such a predilection for oppression is the epitome of perversion. The practice of emulating oppression is itself the expression of the pervasive nature of systemic perversity. Poverty is thus not Haiti's scourge, for poverty in itself is not evil. The system that produces the poverty that promotes the oppression that feeds the system is the epitome of evil.[435] The water seller, who oppresses his less privileged customers because he has learned from the privileged that such is the way of status and prestige, is the agent of evil. The bourgeoisie, which defines all relations in terms of its best interests, exploits all things and all people to its benefits, and promotes the lie that traps the poor in a cycle of perverting perversity, is Haiti's infernal bane.[436]

The Colonizer and the Colonized, 127. Johann Baptist Metz sees in the suffering of the oppressed the challenge to the legitimacy of the wealthy and powerful. "The social and political power of the rich and of the rulers must always allow the question to be posed to it concerning the extent to which it itself is causing suffering. It cannot dispense itself from giving an account of this by appealing to the suffering that the rich and the powerful themselves experience. This critical questioning of power and wealth belongs precisely to that consolation which the Gospel offers to the rich and the powerful." Metz, *Faith in History and Society: Toward a Practical Fundamental Theology* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2007), 110.

[435] In this sense, evil is synonymous with sin. The following lengthy quote from Rebecca S. Chopp captures the gist of this identity. She writes, "Sin results in suffering, the suffering of creation groaning in travail, the suffering of children without any hope. Sin manifests and embraces suffering, the suffering of lost identity, the suffering of freedom without a future, and the suffering of a future without freedom. Sin extracts its price as the victimization of the poor, the suffering of the tortured, the dispossession of the homeless. These are victims of sin not because of moral inferiority or human depravity, but because they bear the brunt and carry the special burden of the world's sin. In the retrieval of this symbol, sin's arena is human praxis and its primary realization is massive global injustice." Rebecca S. Chopp, *The Praxis of Suffering: An Interpretation of Liberation and Political Theologies* (Eugene, Oregon: Wifp and Stock Publishers, 2007), 128.

[436] In the end, no one is looking out for the other. No sense of duty (Kant, Kierkegaard), no transcendence for the sake of alterity (Lévinas), and absolutely no notion of a social contract (Rousseau). Plotinus likens this state of existence as one of forgetfulness vis à vis God. He offers the following diagnosis of the situation: "The evil that has overtaken them has its source in self-will, in the entry into the sphere of process and in the primal differentiation in the desire for self-ownership." Plotinus, *The Enneads: Abridged Edition* (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), 347.

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If evil as pervasive perduring perversity lies at the root of Haitian poverty, then Haitian salvation lies neither in the oppression that victimizes the nation nor in the nation's attempts at emulation, which make Haitians into agents of oppression. Good works such as monetary donations and non-governmental organizations are qualitatively inadequate. The opposite of evil is not the good but justice.[437] An abundance of good

[437] The Hebrew writers do well to distinguish among love, the good, and justice: "Hate evil and love good, and establish justice…" (Amos 5:15). As stated in the Amos passage, justice stands beyond the mere counterbalancing of evil with good, which precludes interpreting the passage as a parallel of two identical expressions of the same idea. The good clearly does not eradicate evil. In Haitians' interactions with their purported benefactors, the good, which Haitians receive, does nothing to counter the evil that pervades in their relations. It is like a sorcerer who works with both hands, except, in this case, both hands work together toward the common goal of bolstering the standing of the giver and thereby securing the objectification of the receiver. The politics of self-interest are not held in abeyance during donor conferences. Here is a strong contrasting point between purely logical assertions and phenomenological ones.

The problem with outbalancing evil with an abundance of good misses the categorical unity of the terms. This situation is analogous to the one between the oppressor and the oppressed or the privileged and the unprivileged. Justice does not lend itself to such easy polarization. According to Saint Augustine, evil requires the good to exist. He writes, "however, though no one contends that good and evil are not contraries, not only can they be present at the same time, but evil simply cannot exist without the good or in anything except good…" St. Augustine, *Faith, Hope, and Charity*, ed., Louis A. Arand (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Bookshop, 1947), 21. Augustine continues, "And these two contraries are so closely brought together, that if there were no good in what is evil, evil could have absolutely no existence, because corruption cannot have a place in which to exist or a source from which to spring, unless there be something that can be corrupted; and unless this something be good, it cannot be corrupted, for corruption is nothing but the destruction of good. Evil things therefore had their origin in good things, and unless they reside in good things, they do not exist at all. There was no other source whence an evil being could have originated. If there were, then to the extent that it were a being it would unquestionably be good. And if it were an incorruptible being, it would be a great good; and again even if it were a corruptible being, it could not possibly exist unless it were somehow good, for only by corrupting that good can corruption do it harm" (21-22). However, the Bishop of Hippo insists, the good can exist on its own, without evil. "[…] Good can exist without evil. A man or an angel, for instance, can exist without being unjust, but only a man or an angel can be unjust. So far as he is a man or an angel he is good; he is evil so far as he is unjust" (21). Some translators, notably those responsible for the *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers Series*, ed., Phillip Schaff (Grand Rapids: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1885), take some liberties to the point of overlooking this extremely important insight on the part of the Bishop of Hippo. Their rendition of the just quoted passage goes as follows: "Good, however, can exist without evil. For a man or an angel can exist without being wicked; but nothing can be wicked except a man or an angel: and so far as he is a man or an angel, he is good; so far as he is wicked, he is an evil" (494). These choices arguably reflect certain theological commitments. Unfortunately, they also require a departure both from the word choices the translators make in other sections of the text as in the change from evil to wicked to translate *malus*, and from the word choices Augustine himself makes in opting for *iustus* to counter the all pervading *malus*. The following is the original Latin text: *Potest enim homo vel angelus non esse iniustus, iniustus autem non potest esse nisi homo vel angelus: et bonum quod homo, bonum quod angelus, malum quod iniustus*. http://www.augustinus.it/latino/enchiridion/index.htm. In other words, goodness already belongs to the creation. A man or an angel is evil only in so far he is unjust, *malum quod injustus*. In this, Augustine affirms the creation's simultaneously good and contingent character. The goodness of the good stems from its association with the supreme goodness of the creator. while its contingency is due to its mutability and

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corruptibility, in other words, its finiteness. Evil, in turn, takes on the character of an accident. "Every being is therefore good, since He who is the Creator of all being whatever is supremely good. But because unlike their Creator they are not perfectly and unalterably good, the good which is in them can be both lessened and increased." Evil is then synonymous with the good in its diminished form. "But to lessen the good is to give rise to evil." St. Augustine, *Faith, Hope, and Charity*, 19.

Thus, implied and, perhaps, overlooked, in Augustine's insight into the relation between evil and injustice is a crucial point in the relation between good and evil. If evil requires good to exist, and the good remains good though corrupted by evil, then the question remains as to the criteria that determine the good as such and whether those criteria are intelligible. In Augustine's case, the good is not only corruptible. It is also capable of being rendered impotent in the face of evil. The good then becomes an ambiguous concept. In addition, the persistence of good within evil has no practical value in defeating evil. The goodness of the good as good-within-evil does not preclude evil. The good cannot escape evil because it is corruptible and therefore capable of being diminished to a lesser good, which, in the grand scheme of things, may not be good at all. Good in fact makes evil possible: The more good, the more potential for evil. Perhaps that explains the persistence of evil in Haiti's relations with the outside world and among themselves, regardless of the efforts of non-governmental organizations, the amount of money allocated by foreign donors, or missionary endeavors.

In Amos, as in Saint Augustine, justice stands out as the sole option against evil. Unlike the good or privilege, which categorically presupposes its opposite, justice abrogates its opposite. Justice is intolerant of ambiguity. Corruptible justice, unlike corruptible good, is an oxymoron. The slightest affront to justice constitutes in-justice, for injustice indicates the total absence of justice. Justice is incorruptible! Perhaps this incorruptibility is the reason that the Hebrews equate the practice of justice with divine worship. In the world of the myth, justice grounds the very throne of God, which suggests that the very character of the divine as divine is vested in the possibility of justice. "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne," the psalmist writes (Psalm 89:14; 97:2). By implication, the fullest expression of right relations between God and humanity is the practice of justice. Whereas the good is relative and may be reduced to one's preference – "[Though you are evil,] is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for bread, will give a stone? Or if the child asks for a fish, will give a snake?" (Matthew 7:9-10) – justice turns the people's way of life on its head. Justice requires a new way of relating to the neighbor, which in turn entails a new way of imagining the encounter with God beyond the logical categories of polar opposites. Justice calls for conversion – "conversion to God" (Bonino) – and designates a new practice and a new language coded with new knowledge issued from encounter, which suggest life from the dead, that is, resurrection, rather than a mere tweaking of existing practices. Gutiérrez sums up this idea succinctly in the section aptly titled "Conversion to the Neighbor" in his *Theology of Liberation*. Here Gutiérrez expands the horizon of justice and ties it to a particular mode of knowing, one which issues in encounter with God. The divine reality itself guarantees justice. Gutiérrez writes, "the God of Biblical revelation is known through interhuman justice. When justice does not exist, God is not known; God is absent." Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2010), 111. José Míguez Bonino concurs and draws the same conclusion from Jeremiah as well as Hosea and Isaiah. He writes, "here the basis for the identification between 'knowing God' and 'practising justice' becomes clear: it is Yahweh's own character; he who does not practice justice misunderstands – 'does not know' – God himself. To know the Lord is to pattern one's life after God's own action…The Lord makes himself known by establishing justice." José Míguez Bonino, *Christians and Marxists: The Mutual Challenge to Revolution* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976), 33-34. José Miranda insists on maintaining "strict" identity between knowledge of God and the practice of justice based on the same prophets: Jeremiah, Hosea, and Isaiah. He writes, "Nothing authorizes us to introduce a cause-effect relationship between 'to know Yahweh' and 'to practice justice." José Porfirio Miranda, *Marx and the Bible: A Critique of the Philosophy of Oppression* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1974), 44-45. Miranda insists that this justice ought to take an interhuman form, and not be reduced to some individualistic form of religion.

Nonetheless, the good remains a useful concept. Justice itself may be deemed good. Since human agents are inclined to actualize themselves in terms of what they deem good for themselves, the good may be interpreted as a form of power, as that which overcomes the forces that have the potential to antagonize the coming into being of any existent. To that effect, the good is identical with power and proceeds in close relation with this new knowledge, at which point it simultaneously enjoys an ontological relation with love

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does not eradicate evil but intensifies the potential for evil: just as the presence of money-hemorrhaging NGOs in Haiti intensifies the potential for further oppression against the Haitian people. The sharp contrast between the lifestyles of the richly endowed NGO agents and the Haitian people, whom they purportedly serve, itself magnifies the line between the rich and the poor.[438] To say that poverty implies more than the lack of access to money is a grave understatement. But to seek to address poverty via monetary means without addressing the well-entrenched colonialist predilections underlying western economic practices in regard to Haiti betrays a grave misunderstanding and constitutes a graver insult to the Haitian people.

The Offending Haitian Body

Remarkably, the privileged man's attitude toward the water seller in requiring that the latter perform heroically prior to adding a few cents to his fanny pack raises questions about the value of the Haitian body. The water seller puts his body to a literal test, a strenuous, life-threatening test to make a sale. He could easily succumb to any one of the many obstacles that stand against him, and those include not only the moving and parked vehicles but also the nutrition-poor meal he likely consumed earlier that day, the

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and justice. This complex structure of the good as constructive power makes it an essential feature of life. From this perspective, both the good and power are redeemable, but in their relation to justice and not in their susceptibility to evil. This is what Paul Tillich effectively accomplishes in his *Love, Power, and Justice*, which is discussed below. Foucault affirms this identification of power with the good in relation to knowledge when he suggests, "what makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression." Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed., Colin Gordon (New York: Vintage Books, 1980), 119.

[438] In a passage already quoted, Timothy Schwartz describes the benefits enjoyed by NGO agents as consisting of "comfortable salaries, hotels, fine meals, insurance, and pension plans." Noteworthy is that most of those hotels cost one hundred U.S. dollars or more per night – an expense most Haitians could not absorb even if their lives depended on it – and many of the meals served at those hotels are rather lavish and are not included in the cost of the rooms. Schwartz, *Travesty in Haiti*, 123. To say the least, the lifestyles of the NGO agents belong to a strikingly different reality than that of a population the majority of which survives on less than two dollars a day!

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insanitary conditions in which he more than likely sleeps, bathes, and defecates, and the general conditions of working on the streets of Port-au-Prince.[439]

Closer examination of this man's skin, feet, teeth, nails, hair, breath, blood, urine, etc., would likely reveal in starkly depressing numbers the degree to which this man's body has been reduced to a commodity of lesser value than the product he peddles on the streets. That is an inevitable conclusion given the effort he must exert in order to sell three bags of water. The seventeen cents from the sale require both the water and a dangerous performance. Conversely, he must purchase the seventeen cents with his body and three bags of water. Taking into consideration that he only keeps a pitiful fraction of the profits, he is trading his body for naught indeed. An arm and a leg would have been a bargain.

The body of this man offers perhaps the most concrete point to consider practical theology in its relation to political and economic policy in Haiti.[440] This man's body puts into question the intentions of Haitian governmental policy and the supposed generosity of Haiti's self-proclaimed friends and allies. If this man's survival requires the destruction of his very body, then the price of survival in Haiti is absurd! The Haitian body is simply too costly to bear, and Haiti's survival is in peril.

Perhaps that is one way those in power absorb this man's life and energies by denying him any power in Haiti's political economy. His body is his originary source of

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[439] This man's condition shines light on the kind of body the current system needs to function. Evidently, the current system depends on the black body's denigration. Foucault's words offer direction for further practical theological research when he writes, "One needs to study what kind of body the current society needs…" Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 58. Pressing this idea further, Haitian practical theologians and philosophers need to construct in discourse the kind of body a just Haiti entails.

[440] "In a real sense the body mediates biological and social processes. The conception of the body which operates at any given time in any particular society will therefore be characteristic of its circumstances." Margot L. Lyon and Jack M. Barbelet, "Society's Body: Emotion and the 'Somatization' of Social Theory," in *Embodiment and Experience: The Existential Ground of Culture and Self*, ed., Thomas J. Csordas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 51.

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power.[441] To denigrate this source has the concomitant effect of neutralizing his presence. He becomes *the* symbol of despair in a nation that consumes its citizens. Of note is the almost complete absence of non-black bodies on the streets of Haiti, that is, non-black bodies that must perform for pennies. Somehow the Haitian political economy protects non-blacks from the dehumanizing effects of the streets, whether or not they are Haitian. Black bodies, on the other hand, enjoy no such protection and must pay a premium in order to survive. The stereotypes of the European colonizers hold still: black bodies are more suited for the harsh conditions of the Caribbean. The world's first Black Republic is intolerant of blackness.[442]

A number of crucial questions emerge from this inquiry: Are Haitian (black) bodies still condemned to bear the brunt of the Haitian people's suffering more than two centuries after the Haitian Revolution? Or does today's world see Haitians as they did throughout the modern period, and especially at the beginning of the nineteenth century? More specifically, do racial prejudice and exploitation characterize the policies of France – and the rest of Europe – and the United States in regard to Haiti? Furthermore, are the religious ideas, which North America continues to export to Haiti, as suspect as their

[441] Pierre Minn hints at this idea when he writes concerning life conditions in the town of Bèlans. He writes, "In a town where few have electricity and even fewer have cars, human bodies are the main source of power, whether it be used to cut down trees, wash clothes, or simply walk from one place to another." Pierre Minn, "Water in Their Eyes, Dust on their Land: Heat and Illness in a Haitian Town," in *Invisible Powers: Vodou in Haitian Life and Culture*, ed., Claudine Michel and Patrick Bellegarde-Smith (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 146.
[442] Maurice A. Lubin's plaintive prayer from 1956 finds an appropriate place in this discussion, *«La prière du nègre a-t-elle moins de charme? Ou n'est-ce pas à toi que s'adressent ses larmes.»* Maurice A. Lubin, «*Complaintes d'esclave*», in *Poesies Haitiennes*, ed., Maurice A. Lubin (São Paulo: Composto e impress na Emprêsa Gràfica Carioca S. A., 1956), 22-24.

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historical predecessors? Finally, is the poet's lament an accurate representation of today's state of affairs when he writes, *Je suis nègre/et parce que nègre/ma vie est misère*?[443]

Sadly, the question must be asked: is human dignity bound to wealth? Asked differently: are dignity and poverty mutually exclusive? Those are important practical theological questions for today's Haitians. They require a reversal of the practice of turning to the people only for votes and protesting-tire-burning bodies, while denying them of basic dignity. Those questions implicate the political and economic practices in the creation of this man's disvalued body. If this is the kind of body Haitian society requires, then what kind of people are currently benefitting from such an evil state of affairs? The future this man's body adumbrates is horrid at best!

That also raises questions about the attitude of Haiti's donors toward Haitians. The so-called 'community of nations' responds to the Haitian face the way people respond to other people's problems. They ignore the voice that is crying out for justice, while implementing their own agendas upon the Haitian people. Again, the question must be asked: Do racial prejudice and exploitation characterize the policies of France – and the rest of meddling Europe – and the United States in regard to Haiti?

Death as Ultimate Witness: "Is there Life before Death?"[444]

As in the years of the Haitian Revolution, the future of Haiti requires corpses: people who are dead to the ways of colonialism and who are able to speak an unambiguous 'No!' to the mirages of its promulgators.[445] Haiti requires people of good

[443] Carlos Saint-Louis, «*Je suis Nègre»,* in *Poesies Haitiennes*, ed., Maurice A. Lubin (São Paulo: Composto e impress na Emprêsa Gràfica Carioca S. A., 1956), 123.
[444] José Míguez Bonino reflects on this question in light of a commitment to love and justice in José Míguez Bonino, *Room to be People: An Interpretation of the Message of the Bible for Today's World* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 47-63.
[445] This insight makes indispensable partners of religious thinkers such as practical theologians, as they know how to speak to the dead. They are adept at drawing life from the grip of death.

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will, who are also wise enough to know that tired, dusty, bleeding, holy, and justice-bound feet, whether they belong to prostitutes, *rèstavèk*, coffee planters, shoe shiners, *taptap* drivers, or Vodouisants, are far more admirable than cheating, shiny, greedy, corrupt, and cannibalizing feet, whether they belong to senators, nurses, clerics, heads of state, missionaries, or foreign donors.

Encountering God in the midst of evil ushers in the possibility of new ways of relating to money and power. It issues in the deconstruction of age-old structures that make gods out of nations and peoples on the basis of their status, wealth, proficiency in French, and/or killing power.[446] The justice, which is Haiti's ultimate concern, will come more realistically and more authentically when Haitians turn their eyes, ears, and extended hands away from the self-promoting politicians, would-be aristocrats, and opportunistic foreign powers and courageously commit their eyes, ears, and caring hands, that is, the fullness of their humanity, to the face of the *rèstavèk* who cries out "Don't ignore me!" "Don't rape me!" "Don't throw me away!"[447]

Goudougoudou sets the course for such a new disposition. It is the motif to which Haitian thinkers must return again and again to construct the building blocks of a Haiti

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[446] Gebara shines light on what that means for women. She writes, "The phenomenology of evil as women see it, whether in literature, song, art, or other forms of expression, is a work of memory past and present revealing the continuous existence of suffering. Through memory speech is freed; the dead are permitted to speak, and anguish can be relived in order to denounce whatever it is that keeps us from living with dignity." Ivone Gebara, *Out of the Depths*, 17.

[447] "This, then, is the great humanistic and historical task of the oppressed: to liberate themselves and their oppressors as well. The oppressors, who oppress, exploit, and rape by virtue of their power, cannot find in this power the strength to liberate either the oppressed or themselves. Only power that springs from the weakness of the oppressed will be sufficiently strong to free both. Any attempt to 'soften' the power of the oppressor in deference to the weakness of the oppressed almost always manifests itself in the form of false generosity; indeed, the attempt never goes beyond this." Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1984), 28. If the idea of authenticity begins in the late 18th century, as Brian Braman asserts, then no greater sign of this movement exists than the revolution for Haitian independence that began in 1791 and culminates with Dessalines' declaration of independence on January 1, 1804, though the originators of the idea did not have Haitians in mind. Brian J. Braman, *Meaning and Authenticity: Bernard Lonergan and Charles Taylor on the Drama of Authentic Human Existence* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2008), 3.

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that is simultaneously free, authentic, and just. Difficult as it may be, the foundation of a just Haiti begins in the mass graves of Titanyen. That includes not only the deaths committed by *Goudougoudou* but also the victims of Duvalierism's most horrifying hours. Add to those the victims of malnutrition and other preventable diseases such as tuberculosis, AIDS, and cholera, and the myriad of other deaths attributed to supernatural causes.[448] Fort Dimanche, that house of torture, too has a role to play. Its name figures prominently in many stories of persecution and murder.[449]

Other places belong alongside Fort Dimanche. *Goudougoudou* leaves none untouched. Guantánamo belongs.[450] Perhaps some churches belong. Perhaps some *lakou* and peristyles belong. Perhaps the homes and offices of some politicians belong. Every

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[448] Vodouisants decry the practice of sorcery in Haiti. Though they believe that God has pre-ordained the time of each person's death, sorcerers are able to hasten a person's physical death, a first death, in order to manipulate his or her spirit. The following Vodou song, quoted by McAlister, expresses the anxiety among Vodouisants concerning sorcery:

The Cemetery is full of people, Oh *Simityè plen moun O*
Baron Samdi asks all the people *Bawon mande tout moun sa yo*
If it's God who put them there *Si se Bon Dieu ki mete yo.*

See Elizabeth McAlister, *Rara!*, 106.

[449] Fort Dimanche and Casernes Dessalines are notorious for their use as torture chambers and the repository for political enemies, perceived or real, of the Duvalier regime. For a first hand account of life inside Fort Dimanche, see Patrick Lemoine, *Fort Dimanche, Fort-La-Mort* (Uniondale, New York: Fordi9, 2011).

[450] After the 1991 coup that ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide from power, scores of desperate Haitian people took to the seas in hope of reaching the shores of Miami. They were mostly intercepted by the U.S. Coast Guard and initially repatriated without the dignity of an interview concerning their situation. Under pressure from human rights advocates, the U.S. government agreed to camp the so-called "boat people" at the U.S. military base of Guantánamo, Cuba. Paul Farmer offers the following description of refugee life in Guantánamo: "Conditions in the camp were grim: the inmates lived in tents and other makeshift shelters on a landing strip, surrounded by barbed wire. These shelters, according to the Haitians, were infested with rats, scorpions and snakes. The lodgings let in the rain, and there were no adequate sanitary facilities. Yet, grim though these conditions assuredly were, the detainees' chief complaint concerned mistreatment by their American hosts." Farmer, *The Uses of Haiti*, 269. The U.S. government subjected the asylum seekers to obligatory HIV/AIDS testing. The more than two hundred people, who tested positive, were placed in a separate "HIV detention camp" known as Camp Bulkeley. Reports Farmer, "Yolande Jean insists that, 'they were even harsher with us than with the others,' and a group of American lawyers concurred: '[starting] in February 1992 those testing positive were interviewed and required to meet a higher standard to establish that they had a 'well-founded fear' of persecution. The Immigration and Naturalization Service denied requests by the refugees' attorneys to be present at these interviews." Farmer, *The Uses of Haiti*, 277. The treatment of the Haitian refugees was part of the political platform of the Clinton-Gore campaign against then President George H. W. Bush, the latter's administration being responsible for the "inhumane" treatment Haitians received in Guantánamo. Farmer, *The Uses of Haiti*, 281.

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home that exploits a *rèstavèk* belongs. All are guilty and all are lost. The sacred places have collapsed. The righteous people are unclothed. The colors of truth are on public display. No need rebuilding those dilapidated structures. No need covering things back up. *Goudougoudou* brings in a new day, a day of reckoning and a day of grace, a day of mourning and a day of jubilation. No point hiding behind doctrines or tall ceilings or arguments or miters or *ason*[451] or money or education or familial names or genetic pedigree or guns. *Goudougoudou* has cleared the way for new insights and new ways of being Haitian. No point shouting. No point hating. No point pretending. *Goudougoudou* cannot be tamed, shamed, nor bribed. *Goudougoudou* needs no prophets, priests, nor bride.[452]

One broken arm at a time, one empty skull at a time, one eviscerated life at a time, one muted voice at a time, one *rèstavèk* at a time: The victims of Haitian history and lived experience are crying out. They are decrying the approaches to power that turn human beings into monsters, if not things.[453] They are revolting against a world that

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[451] Maya Deren describes the *ason* or sacred rattle as "a gourd with a handle-like formation on it and it rattles either by virtue of snake-bones or other such objects inside, or because of a loose webbed beading woven around the outside." Possession of the rattle indicates that its handler has satisfied all the requirements for the priesthood. Maya Deren, *Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti* (Kingston, New York: McPherson & Company, 2004), 48. Deren identifies the *ason* of Vodou practitioners as evidence of native (Arawak and Carib) influence on Vodou. Deren, *Divine Horsemen*, 274.

[452] In the preface to Frantz Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth*, Jean-Paul Sartre makes the following observation while addressing his fellow Europeans: "Our victims know us by their wounds and shackles: that is what makes their testimony irrefutable. They only need to know what we have done to them for us to realize what we have done to ourselves." Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 2004), xlviii.

[453] This notion of "thingification," which is synonymous with objectification, is constitutive of a Marxist interpretation of capitalism's effects on its victims. Aimé Césaire uses the term in a "revised" form in his *Discourse*. "Colonization = 'thingification.'" *Discourse on Colonialism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000), 42. Noteworthy is the use of the concept to indict both capitalism (Marx) and colonialism (Césaire) on the grounds that they effectively destroy the subjecthood of the human person, which suggests a practical link between those two forms of political economy. Miranda in fact identifies thingification as a prime target of Karl Marx's assault on capitalism. Writes Miranda, *La base y fundamento del humanismo de Marx es el ilimitado respeto por la persona como fin en si misma.* "The basis and foundation of Marx's humanism is the limitless respect for the person as an end in itself." And this position stands against *la reducción que el capitalismo hace de la persona del obrero a simple cosa, del sujeto a simple objeto.*

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places wealth above friendship. They are demanding a place at the drafting table where Haitian myths are being formed, where the Haitian story is being made official, and where the laws of the land are being written. Their voices fulfill the demands of justice for the oppressed.

Concomitantly, they embody the hope of Haitian salvation for they are an invitation to practice justice for the sake of all. The cries of the oppressed are the way of salvation.[454] Line up the corpses! Careful: They are not all intact! Reconstitute the blood: Start by adding the tears of the living, who, victims themselves, join the dead in tracing justice's untraveled path. Collect the tears, one sorrowful drop at a time. Work diligently. Work carefully because, as one *Goudougoudou* survivor pleads, "we don't have enough water to make tears anymore."[455] This nectar of tears and blood is worthy of the lwa. This nectar of sorrows is tapped from the ducts of Golgotha. It pours from the overflowing cup of promise and gushes out of the truly generous fount of salvation.

Sift! Carefully sift the soil and extract the teeth, the loose teeth that so many years ago abandoned their post in the jaws of Fort Dimanche's un-departed guests, all reminders, each one of them, of the satanic thrust that propelled the *makout*'s deathly

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"…capitalism's reduction of the worker to a mere thing, of the subject to a mere object." José Porfirio Miranda, *El Cristianismo de Marx* (Mexico: J.P. Miranda, 1978), 127. Miranda equates Marx's humanism to that expressed by Jesus when he asks, "Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? (Matthew 6:25). Writes Miranda, *[Jesús] está sosteniendo el mismo juicio de valor que constituye la esencia del humanismo de Marx…* [Jesus] is upholding the same value judgment that constitutes the essence of Marx's humanism…" Miranda, *El Cristianismo de Marx*, 195. Then again, he writes, "The criterion for attacking capitalism is the fact that the workers are subjects and cannot be treated as objects…Marx takes the affirmation of the subject as his explicit norm." Jose Porfirio Miranda, *Marx Against the Marxists: The Christian Humanism of Karl Marx* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1980), 39.

[454] "The otherness constituted by the oppressed neighbor, who calls on our aid seeking justice, bursts our solipsism asunder. This is the only way we transcend ourselves." Miranda, *Communism in the Bible*, 5-6.

[455] This is from the testimony of a survivor of the quake. See Beverly Bell, *Fault Lines: Views across Haiti's Divide* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2013), 18.

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fist.[456] Recruit the assistance of Defilée! Call upon Mary Magdalene! She is mad about the conditions of the dead.[457] She knows well the mystery of life's intimate affair with

[456] Michel-Rolph Trouillot offers a glance of the violence of the Duvalier years in Trouillot, *Haiti, State Against Nation*, 163-181. François Duvalier is often remembered for his political ambitions and for the brutality with which he implemented his will on the Haitian people. Less known and perhaps more pertinent to practical theology, however, is the extent to which the dictator influenced the Haitian religious field, and by extension, the Haitian theological imagination. Son of the *indigéniste* movement that emerged in response to the U.S. occupation of the nation, François Papa Doc Duvalier exploited Haiti's religions in a way that remains unparalleled in Haitian history. Notes Terry Rey, "Papa Doc managed to use the nation's popular religion to legitimate his absolutism…through the manipulation of Vodou and milking it for whatever political capital it had to offer. And when that proved insufficient, brute force did the rest." Terry Rey, *Our Lady of Class Struggle: The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Haiti* (Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, Inc., 1999), 61. In spite of flagrant acts of sacrilege in which the dictator painted himself into a messiah figure – as in his rewriting the Lord's prayer in his image – Papa Doc managed to squeeze a concordat from Pope Paul VI, ushering in a new era of government control over the Catholic Church in Haiti. Continues Rey, "Thus, the Haitian religious field fell under the stern will of a despot, who managed to manipulate the religious specialists of both Catholicism and Vodou and mold them into servants of his dictatorial regime." Rey, *Our Lady of Class Struggle*, 64. Part of the task of Haitian practical theologians is to contend with this mired past. They must find ways to uncover the places, ideas, traditions, and symbols, which remain captive to the Duvalierist doctrines and Duvalierist-like religious tendencies. They must strive and dare to construct a new theology that stands on truth and justice for all of Haiti's children.

[457] The death of Emperor Jean-Jacques Dessalines, revolutionary hero and independent Haiti's first leader, casts a morbid shadow on the future of the world's first Black republic. Having been bayonetted and riddled with bullets at the hands of his own generals, Dessalines' death is symbolic of the death Haiti would relive again and again at the hands of a treacherous world of nations. Robert and Nancy Heinl offer the following report. "Off came the gold-lace green coat. Soldiers ripped at the epaulets. Other hands tore away the breeches. Machetes hacked off ring fingers and then other members as well. Willing hands dragged the faceless cadaver into the city to be stoned and spat upon and defiled. And at last all that remained of Haiti's first emperor lay still in the midday sun. When night finally descended and the sun dropped into the sea behind La Gonâve, a madwoman called Defilée hauled away the body, cleansed and anointed it, and, with the help of a soldier burying-party, gave it sepulture in a nearby cemetery at Morne-à-Tuf. Charlotin Marcadieux, the *mulâtre* who died for his noir emperor, was buried beside him." Robert Debs Heinl and Nancy Gordon Heinl, *Written in Blood: The Story of the Haitian People 1492*-1995 (New York: University Press of America, 2005), 128. Haitian feminist thinkers recognize Defilée as a heroine of Haitian history. See Régine Michelle Jean-Charles, "Shaken Ground, Strong Foundations: Honoring the Legacy of Haitian Feminism after the Earthquake," in *Haiti Rising: Haitian History, Culture, and the Earthquake of 2010*, ed., Martin Munro (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), 79. Defilée's parallels to the Mary Magdalene of the New Testament are striking. Traditionally described as a madwoman, she seems to regain her lucidity in the presence of the defiled body of the emperor. The authors' choice of language in narrating Defilée's attitude toward Dessalines' corpse is also very telling. Defilée "cleanse[s] and anoint[s]" the body, which is reminiscent of the passage in which Mary Magdalene and other women bring spices and ointments to the tomb effectively to *anoint* the body, the same language used in Mark 16:1, "And when the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him" (See also Luke 23:56-24:1). Defilée in her madness takes pity on the man who gives Haitians their freedom, saving them from further enslavement by France. Luke introduces Mary Magdalene as one who was once possessed by seven spirits (Luke 8:2). The Gospels do not record Jesus or anyone else casting out these seven demons. One thing is clear about this particular Mary: she has a special kinship with the deceased. She pierces the shadow of the cross with her presence at the crucifixion and witnesses the last words of the crucified (Mark 15:40). She is among the women who report to the sequestered disciples of the disappearance of the body (Luke 24:10). She is the first one to see the face of the resurrection (Mark 16:9). In John's version of the story, Mary Magdalene stays behind at the tomb, weeping, and finds herself enraptured in an encounter of a very special kind (John 20:11-18). Matthew

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death. She understands that this is a sacrificial soil, the Haitian people's anointing oil. It is laced with the lives of Haitian martyrs. It is steeped in the tears of woeful survivors. It is infused with the burning hopes of the ancestors. Take this healing soil and trace *the vèvè* that calls forth from the abyssal depths of the Haitian people's potentiality, a different Haiti, which, like the Haitian morning sun, rises in glory: free, authentic, and just!

Be vigilant and discriminate because some of the fists turn into cash-wielding hands. Be resolute and courageous because some of the fists are attached to powerful arms: arms Spanish, French, U.S., Roman, Vodouisant, Protestant, etc. Be gentle. Be very gentle. Some of the victims are young women and adolescent youths. They wait still for their purposed end. They wait still their rags of sorrow to rend. The warm Caribbean air their voices woefully rend.

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reports about a "great earthquake" (Matthew 28:2) along with other heavenly apparitions. Luke offers a crucial opportunity for insight by having the heavenly men or angels ask this question: "Why do you look for the living among the dead?" (Luke 24:5). The text treats the question as rhetorical, and the ones who ask it offer what purports to be an answer. The Haitian context offers some further insights by opening up to the question's deconstructing power. This requires juxtaposing Matthew's Goudougoudou with Luke's poignant question. The shaking of the earth prefaces a declaration of life, but only by pointing to the fact of the death itself. A deathless resurrection is meaningless. Resurrection affirms both life and death. In fact, rather than announcing the future of a glorious humanity, as traditionally imagined, its gaze is fixed constantly on death. That is its conversation partner. Maya Deren's insights suggest an alternate answer to the question, "Why do you look for the living among the dead?" She writes, "Death is life's first and final definition. The fanfare of cosmic origins is followed by this major fugue: the initial figure is a lament of the living for the dead…The hero of man's metaphysical adventure – his healer, his redeemer, his guide and guardian – is always a corpse. He is Osiris, or Adonis, or Christ." One might add, Gede. Deren, *Divine Horsemen*, 23-24. Johann Baptist Metz offers another crucial answer to the question, "Why do you look for the living among the dead?" For Metz, it is a matter of redeeming power through the dangerous memory of suffering: it is a matter of constructing the symbols (language) that simultaneously affirm and liberate. It is to enter the mythical space in which the resurrection effects its power to negotiate the relation between death and life. Writes Metz, "In my view this kind of resurrection faith express itself in freeing one ('contra-factually') to pay attention to the sufferings and hopes of the past, and to pose to oneself the challenge of the dead. For this kind of faith there is not only a revolution that changes tomorrow's world for coming generations, but also a revolution that decides anew about the meaning of the dead and their hopes (W. Benjamin!). Resurrection mediated by the memory of suffering means that there is a meaning for the dead, for those already defeated and forgotten, that has not yet been made good on. History's potential for meaning does not depend only on those who have survived, the successful, the ones who made it. 'Meaning' simply cannot be a category reserved to the victors." Metz, *Faith in History and Society*, 109. CMOS 14.35, 14.39, and 14.51

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Be attentive. Be extremely attentive.[458] Some of them are mute. Some of them speak and understand only Kreyòl. Some of them are running and laughing: kids play on in death. They are incognizant of their ill-fated abortion. Be vigilant. Be excessively vigilant. The ancestors are watching, as is *Gede Nimbo* and *Manman* Brijit.[459] They are looking for the actualization of their dreams, gifts, and gaffes into a melody of love that ends the alienation that has afflicted every Haitian generation.[460]

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[458] Bernard Lonergan identifies attention or "Be attentive" as a one of four "transcendental precepts" upon which communal progress hinges. The other three precepts are, "Be intelligent," "Be reasonable," and "Be responsible." These precepts are transcendental because progress is a function of self-transcendence, which is the measure of subjects "being their true selves." Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 53. Disregard for these precepts produces "alienation" and "decline," while obeying them produces human authenticity. "As self-transcendence promotes progress, so the refusal of self-transcendence turns progress into cumulative decline." Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 55. The authentic human being is thus existentially aware and sensitive with respect to communal functions through time. "Attention, intelligence, reasonableness, and responsibility are to be exercised not only with respect to the existing situation but also with respect to the subsequent, changed situation. It spots the inadequacies and repercussions of the previous venture to improve what is good and remedy what is defective…So change begets further change and the sustained observance of the transcendental precepts makes these cumulative changes an instance of progress." Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 53. In the above text, "Be attentive" occurs as a disposition toward the dynamics of the mythical space, which is concerned less with progress and more with newness of life. Perhaps the difference is only a matter of language, but, as shown in chapter III, language tends to create what it speaks.

[459] Gede Nimbo belongs to the Gede *nanchon* or nation. He is also known as Bawon Samdi and his female counterpart is Grann Brijit or Manman Brijit, the one who watches over the graves. Gede is the guardian of the cemetery. He controls access to the underworld whereby he functions as a chthonic principle. While Legba, the God of the crossroads, is synonymous with the sun rising from the abyss, "Gede is the master of the abyss into which the sun descends." Gede is the "night sun, the light which is eternally present, even in darkness. The cosmic abyss is both tomb and womb." Gede is hence the "Lord of the Resurrection," for the sun rises again from its deathly womb. In this sense, Gede is simultaneously the guardian of history and the guarantor of the future. Deren, *Divine Horsemen*, 102-103. Gede also controls the energy of the cosmos. He is death, and as such, "has the power to animate the dead as zombies, and change a man into a beast." This peculiar characteristic of Gede, which constitutes a widely misunderstood aspect of Vodou, is crucial for his decolonizing potential. The one, who wields power over death and may deprive a man of his humanity, presumably has the power to restore life and restore humanity to the victims of colonialism's dehumanizing effects, a feature, which is consistent with Gede's sway in fertility-related matters and his guardianship over children. Gede is then a healer par excellence, who administers justly. He is "the last recourse, the final judge of a man's life and of the worth of his soul in death." Deren, *Divine Horsemen*, 113. See also, Peressini Mauro and Rachel Beauvoir-Dominique, *Vodou* (Québec: La Société du Musée canadien des civilisations, 2012), 54.

[460] This actualization of the end means the beginning of life for all Haitian people though it issues from death. It is constitutive of a resurrection from among the dead for the sake of the life that issues from death. It is effectively a gift of death unto death. That is the nature of a phenomenological approach to power, which originates from Haitian history and lived experience. In *Love, Power, and Justice,* Paul Tillich proposes, "Power is real only in its actualization." Paul Tillich, *Love, Power, and Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), 41. However, power is by necessity predetermined by context, that is, it requires a form which is commensurate with the nature of that which it actualizes, namely, being.

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The Way of Mourning as the Contradictions' Possible Resolution

Today is the day of Haitian salvation. It naturally begins in mourning.[461] Mourning is a significant corollary of the encounter with God in the midst of evil. It protests. It transforms. It purifies. It confronts the perversity that inhibits the power of the 'I' to see itself in the light of the other's suffering.[462] It sets the 'I' free from the captivity of its own blindness. It forces the 'I' to dig into itself for the sake of the encounter in spite of the urge to run or "fly away."[463] Mourning saves the privileged and the unprivileged from the power of privilege by setting them both on the course to a justice that roots out evil. Justice alone is pervasive enough to extirpate perversity. Justice alone is able to

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Otherwise, the risk of power becoming its own context, that is, that power takes on the form of an absolute that is pursued for its own sake, becomes dangerously palpable to the point of jeopardizing being itself. Justice, then, is that form which power assumes. As Tillich puts it, "justice is the form in which the power of being actualizes itself." If that is so, Tillich continues, then "justice must be adequate to the dynamics of power. It must be able to give form to the encounters of being with being" (56). On that basis, justice involves risk and "daring" to the being that actualizes itself. (56). To be just requires great risk to the self's ability to be a self, but "man becomes man in personal encounters. Only by meeting a 'thou' does man realize that he is an 'ego.'" Thus to be human is to become human through human-to-human encounter. The human, in itself and of itself, is an absolute limit. The human alone is human, but the human is also the greatest threat to becoming human, as it involves losing oneself and claiming oneself in a dynamic move that involves both intra- and interpersonal relations. "There is a limit for man which is definite and which he always encounters, the other man. The other one, the 'thou,' is like a wall which cannot be removed or penetrated or used. He who tries to do so, destroys himself" (56). However, Tillich recognizes, moving from the ontological to the existential, "Man can refuse to listen to the intrinsic claim of the other one. He can disregard his demand for justice…[and] use him" (78). Or in Lonergan's terms, "precepts may be violated." Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 53. This offense amounts to dehumanization for "The basis of justice is the intrinsic claim for justice of everything that has being" (63). If justice as the form in which the power of being actualizes itself involves the practice of encountering the other as a 'thou,' then the dynamics of justice are determined by desire. Love without desire is impracticable.

[461] "Salvation is not outside but mixed in with suffering; it is where one would not think to find it. Salvation is at hand, but we often look for it elsewhere, as if it would be some extraordinary event that might break the inexorable hold of certain sufferings. Salvation is also death, when pain becomes unbearable or when the desire to live is lost for various reasons. Salvation is not a 'once and for all' solution but a solution for one time, then another time, and then a thousand times. Salvation is like the breath of the Spirit – it blows where it will and as it can." Ivone Gebara, *Out of the Depths: Women's Experience of Evil and Salvation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 126.

[462] "When I confront a human being as my You and speak the basic word I-You to him, then…everything else lies in *his* light." Martin Buber, *I and Thou* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 59. "'Suffering is first of all a modification of the face, one of the faces the face can assume, one of the ways it can be and come to presence, as commands respect, if it is the seat of power which emanates from the other, then what strike us above all about suffering is that it is a violation, that it has no regard for human life…" John D. Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics: Repetition, Deconstruction, and the Hermeneutic Project* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 277.

[463] See Chapter II of this study.

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redeem history and abrogate the lasting power of evil. Justice alone is capable to resolve the existential contradictions that beset Haitian lived experience. Mourning sets the course toward justice by cleansing and "destabilizing" the imagination's proverbial lenses and, through sorrowful tears, draws the pilgrim to new ways of seeing and actualizing its being.[464]

Mourning thus institutes solidarity. It issues in the practice of authentic empathy. Because it compels the 'I' to enter into death for the sake of the other, it institutes what Paulo Freire calls "true generosity."[465] In mourning, the 'I' comes to terms with its ontological significance for the possibility of the 'thou.' In it, the 'I' uncovers its state of estrangement and, through the pain, angst, and deathly remorse, discovers the inseparability of desire for the other from the 'I's' own actualizing power.[466] The mourning tears are especially plentiful, when the 'thou' is the grieving face that looks to the 'I' for justice. As a corollary of encounter, mourning draws each Haitian person into the depth of estrangement. It breaks open the floodgates of the soul's deepest affections.

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[464] Evoking Freud, Ricoeur finds in mourning a way forward through what he sees as an intellectual aporia in evil. "Mourning, Freud tells us, is a step-by-step letting go of all the attachments, cathexses, and investments that make us feel the loss of a loved object as a loss of our very own self. This detachment that Freud calls the work of mourning makes us free again for the new affective attachments or investments." Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred*, 259-260. "The irreducible event is what reduces us to tears, for its coming. The event is what destabilizes all such relatively stable structures as attempt to house it, making them restless with the future, teeming with hope and promise, even as it is in virtue of the event that things are haunted by the past, made an occasion of dangerous memories, which are no less unnerving and destabilizing…not only to welcome its coming but to pray and weep over its arrival." Caputo, "Spectral Hermeneutics," 55

[465] False generosity attempts to save the oppressed by the power of the oppressor. It is the attempt by the privileged to save from within privilege, that is, to change the world without changing themselves. "In order to have the continued opportunity to express their 'generosity,' the oppressors must perpetuate injustice as well. An unjust social order is the permanent fount of this 'generosity,' which is nourished by death, despair, and poverty. That is why the dispensers of false generosity become desperate at the slightest threat to its source. True generosity consists precisely in fighting to destroy the causes which nourish false charity. False charity constrains the fearful and subdued, the 'rejects of life,' to extend their trembling hands. True generosity lies in striving so that these hands – whether of individuals or entire peoples – need be extended less and less in supplication, so that more and more they become human hands which work and, working, transform the world." Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 29.

[466] "Without the desire of man to be reunited with his origin, the love towards God becomes a meaningless word." Tillich, *Love, Power, and Justice*, 31.

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Sorrow conquers the soul and sinks it into a deathly stupor. Mourning is the practice of entering the space of grief and inhabiting it as a matter of ultimate concern. It is the practice of entering with utter resignation the mythical tomb in which the martyrs live. In this sense, it is a purifying practice for it involves accepting one's part in the other's oppression whether as a water seller or as a customer on wheels, and surrendering one's life for the sake of justice, for the sake of the ultimate concern.

The Pilgrim Returns to the Abyss

Punishment or retribution is not the aim of mourning.[467] The aim is rather to learn truly to let go and, thereby, reify within praxis the commitment to justice.[468] Justice has

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[467] Mourning engages the pilgrim in the practice of redemption. It effectively institutes postcoloniality as a matter of practice by dint of its sheer potential for decolonizing epistemologies. The resulting reality is one in which power relations are reimagined and restructured to the service of a just Haitian lived existence. Thereby, it creates access to a reality rendered imaginable through a praxis of suffering. As writes Bonhoeffer, "Suffering, then, is the badge of true discipleship." Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1959), 80,

[468] For the writers of the Hebrew Scriptures, human dominion extends to the contents of the sea, but not to the sea itself. "You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas" (Psalm 8:6-8). However, God retains sovereignty over the sea. "He gathered the waters of the sea as in a bottle; he put the deeps in storehouses" (Psalm 33:7). The sea remains the place where God walks and acts mightily. Yet the sea, as well as all things that constitute the mundane world, is also a place to meet God. "When the waters saw you, O God, when the waters saw you, they were afraid; the very deep trembled," and referring to the Exodus, Your way was through the sea, your path, through the mighty waters; yet your footprints were unseen" (Psalm 77:16 &19). Remarkably, these reflections by the text's author occur in the event of mourning, which is also a practice of remembering. "I cry aloud to God, aloud to God, that he may hear me. In the day of my trouble I seek the Lord; in the night my hand is stretched out without wearying; my soul refuses to be comforted. I think of God, and I moan; I meditate, and my spirit faints. You keep my eyelids from closing; I am so troubled that I cannot speak. I consider the days of old, and remember the years of long ago. I commune with my heart in the night; I meditate and search my spirit: 'Will the Lord spurn forever, and never again be favorable? Has his steadfast love ceased forever? Are his promises at an end for all time? Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has he in anger shut up his compassion?'" (Psalm 77:1-9). These questions express in part the condition of mourning: a sleepless, comfortless, painful tarrying. The author rightly identifies crying, moaning, and meditating as comprising the first step. "My soul refuses to be comforted" expresses the author's determination for something new, something other than the ready-made answers and traditions that all too hurriedly offer comfort. Perhaps the author is engaged in what John Caputo calls radical hermeneutics, that is, "radical thinking which is suspicious of the easy way out…" Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics*, 3. These concerns properly implicate God, as mourning turns into prayer. The questions concerning God occur in the third person, but they constitute direct address to the one who inspires them. In fact, the underlying affection that inspires the questions is a refusal to accept injustice as the only possibility. The questioning involves the act of overcoming doubt and resisting the threat of nonbeing. Doubt about divine impotence in the midst of evil leads to doubt about the indomitability of evil. This doubt, this existential angst, translates

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many advocates but few martyrs. Yet justice is the exclusive work of martyrs. The task of the pilgrim, that is, the way unto justice is martyrdom, and it entails mourning as a first step. It is also the way of justice unto death because it looks to death for the key to the ultimate concern, that is, justice. It is the mythical space that is both tomb and womb. Its requirements are one: the tears of those who thirst for justice. In this, no grounds for exemption exist. Either all die or no one lives. That which evades all requires the surrender of all. In this, the dead, and only the dead, shall live.

In the tears of the pilgrim, the dead can imagine their redemption and Haiti's eventual salvation. Since tears mark the untraveled path of justice, that is, the path of the martyrs, tears are the mark of the pilgrim. They are the key to death's dominion. The key to death's dominion is death. Therefore, tears as death, are the possible possibility of death for the pilgrim, for life from the dead is possible only from among the dead.[469] It

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into a new vision of life. It suggests that neither impotence nor omnipotence defines the divine, but salvation, as the possibility of justice. The questioning itself constitutes an event of divine negative disclosure, for justice requires the divine presence to obtain as the affirmation that negates the answers implied in the questions. God remains present but the divine "footprints are unseen." God is involved in injustice but as the possibility of its demise. That is the reason the pilgrim ought not shun the abyss in spite of the threat of death. To paraphrase Cheryl Bridges Johns from a sermon she delivered at New Covenant Church of God in Cleveland, Tennessee, the pilgrim who desires justice truly has but one choice to make: Embrace the abyss of the Spirit with total abandon and forgo the comfort of the shallow end, that is, the comfort of being ankle-deep or knee-deep, or at any depth that suggests safety either by its proximity to the shore or by the skill of the pilgrim, that is, based on familiar spirituality or by the pilgrim's intellectual prowess. Justice is a function neither of skill nor of might but of total surrender. Embrace the threat of the abyss, the threat of death, and dare to be swallowed up, acknowledging that salvation is not possible "without the experience of being threatened and being undone." Metz, *Faith in History and Society*, 151. Discipleship is fundamentally an invitation into the abyss: to be penetrated, destabilized, and made utterly anew. In a statement, which he attributes to Martin Luther, Bonhoeffer writes, "Discipleship is not limited to what you can comprehend – it must transcend all comprehension. Plunge into the deep waters beyond your comprehension, and I will help you to comprehend even as I do. Bewilderment is the true comprehension. Not to know where you are going is the true knowledge…I myself…instruct you by my word and Spirit in the way you should go." Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 82-83. CMOS 14.35, 14.39, and 14.51

[469] "But death is possibility par excellence." Jacques Derrida, *Aporias* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 63. This resurgence of the theme of death is appropriate at this concluding chapter of the present study. In chapter II, death constitutes an indispensable characteristic of encounter. As in chapter II, Heidegger and Derrida are equally appropriate as conversation partners. Heidegger urges that death be interpreted in its "this-worldly" sense, prior to any 'other-worldly' sense. "The this-worldly ontological

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means, as with Mary Magdalene, "sitting opposite the tomb" and awaiting the birth of the light of life.[470] Tears anoint the living and prepare them to encounter that which stands at the crossroads between life and death.[471] Such a choice might as well be the end of all things, but to the one who desires justice as a matter of ultimate concern, such is the absolute cost of discipleship.

Mourning then entails a commitment to transform lived experience itself, particularly those existential features such as money, power, and material possessions, which are complicit in the dehumanization of the other. Mourning is ultimately the practice of surrendering one's claim to language itself and through sighs and groans, goo-goos and ga-gas, learning to speak anew.[472] Mourning is thus the originary form of authentic discipleship.

Love, Power, Justice, and Love

"Justice is the form in which the power of being actualizes itself," according to Paul Tillich.[473] As an immanent feature within love, it is integral to the movement of life

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interpretation of death takes precedence over any ontical other-worldly speculation." Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1962), 292.

[470] Matthew 27:61. Derrida observes that the one waiting at death's border is the one who arrives second, not the one who arrives first, which makes mourning an anachronism, a waiting at the limits of the self, at the limits of truth. "In order to wait for the other at this meeting place, one must, on the contrary, arrive there late, not early." Jacques Derrida, *Aporias* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 66.

[471] The turn to the mundane does not deny the sacred, but highlights the character of their relation as movement rather than as static points that can be doctrinally and ritually delimited. This notion of a crossroads between life and death finds an interesting parallel in the cult of *La Santa Muerte* among Mexicans. It is an expression of shared belief (*creencia compartida*) or cult that makes of death an experience of life. It is a practical way of relating to death *que oscila entre lo sagrado y lo profano, entre actitudes religiosas y realidades sociales,…*"which oscillates between the sacred and the profane, between religious attitudes and social realities,…" Claudia Reyes Ruiz, *La Santa Muerte: Historia, Realidad y Mito de la Niña Blanca* (Mexico, DF: Editorial Porrúa, 2010), 30. In this sense, the ministry of *La Santa Muerte* may be termed miraculous movement, for the Skeleton Saint's miracles are the motivation behind the cult devoted to her. R. Andrew Chestnut, *Devoted to Death: Sante Muerte, the Skeleton Saint* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 27.

[472] In the world of this new relation, a more adequate language ensues. In human-to-human interactions, "the relation is manifest and enters language." Buber, *I and Thou*, 57. This new language is also the sign that the Haitian people have become subjects of history. Metz, *Faith in History and Society*, 141.

[473] Tillich, *Love, Power, and Justice,* 56.

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as reunion of the estranged, as love.[474] Justice is also immanent in power, as its essential form.[475] Love is simultaneously the foundation of power[476] and "the principle of justice."[477] Hence the tomb that houses the victims of injustice, for Haitians, is also the house of redemption. It is consequently the womb from which new life springs as movement, as in the sounds and bodily undulations that simultaneously invoke and announce Danmbala Wèdo. As Maya Deren describes it from her experiences of Vodou ceremonies, which include instances of possession, "At such moments, one does not move *to* the sound, one *is* the movement of the sound, created and borne by it; hence nothing is difficult."[478]

The possibility of a new language offers hope for both oppressed and oppressor. Initiated by *Goudougoudou*, this new language promises to awaken Haitian theologians to Haiti's situation of chaos and death: the bones of the dead, piles and piles of them, arms, legs, skulls, fingers, and toes, are everywhere. Some belong to women, young girls, and infants; some belong to students, priests, and *rèstavèk*. Many of them, crushed and maimed by fallen walls and collapsed ceilings, were gruesomely hacked from the bodies of young boys, elderly women and men, and adolescent girls with blunt instruments and without anesthetic. Some, like the body of Emperor Dessalines and the bodies of Duvalierism's reign of terror, are riddled with bullets. Some of the bones belong to *oungan*, *manbo*, and other Vodouisants, who have had to bear the violent brunt of the Haitian people's religious bigotry and self-hatred.

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[474] Tillich, *Love, Power, and Justice*, 25.
[475] Tillich, *Love, Power, and Justice*, 67.
[476] Tillich, *Love, Power, and Justice,* 49.
[477] Tillich, *Love, Power, and Justice,* 57.
[478] Deren, Divine Horsemen, 253.

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The situation to which Haitian theologians are called to speak is aptly expressed in the question addressed to the prophet of old: "Mortal, can these bones live?"[479] The key theological criterion here is that Haitian theology must begin with the bones of Haiti's victims! Beginning anywhere else constitutes an affront to generations of children, women, and men, whose redemption remains outstanding. The language of this theology is authentic only to the extent that it faithfully represents the cries of Haitian history's victims. Holy places, holy scriptures, doctrines, dogmas, proclamations, and other traditions must assume a secondary role. The Christian bible is a classic of Haitian theology and will likely remain so indefinitely. However, Haitian theology ought to concern itself primarily with engaging the voices of Haitian history and lived experience, paying close attention to the victims of injustice – including Christian injustice – whoever they may be and wherever they may live, both dead and living, and allowing those voices to shape the tenor and structure of this theological language. The borrowed (biblical) narratives may be conversation partners as long as their witnessing power edifies and inspires more constructive ways to theologize in Haiti.

This new language promises to speak life into Haiti's dilapidated structures, to speak life into Haiti's dry bones, as it were. It is a life-giving language that is infused with the power of death, so it has the power to bring death to the systems that hold captive Haiti's youth and restore fullness of life to those that roam the earth as mere *zonbi* of their potential selves.[480] Those who speak this new language are for the undead the literal salt of the earth: new ways to think, love, and be authentically human in Haiti.

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[479] Ezekiel 37:3 (NRSV).
[480] In Vodou mythology, the zombi or *zonbi* is the strongest reminder of slavery – though in Haitian society, as I argue in chapter V, that role belongs to the *rèstavèk*. Elizabeth McAlister writes, "A powerful and frightening concept, the *zonbi* is a potent metaphor for the slave and the lasting effects of slavery in

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Epilogue[481]

"Haiti will never change!" is the dictum with which this study begins. Here, at the conclusion, this dictum has not lost its strength. The aim of the study has not been to dismantle or undermine the saying but to put it in its proper context and to tarry with it in critical reflection, taking great care to treat seriously the reality it intends to describe. The second chapter proceeds from the insight that the pervasiveness of the saying in the most casual conversations is commensurate with the validity of the truth it embodies for Haitians. On this basis alone, it ensues as a saying/question to which Haitian theologians must return again and again until it ceases to bear meaning for the Haitian people. Because it points to the things that matter most to Haitians, it will continue to offer critical insight into various aspects of Haitian self-understanding to those who care enough to hear the passion and determination that inspire it.

In the third chapter, the notion of encountering God in language leads to a consideration not only of the ontological foundations of language but more importantly of the significance of the face that speaks and asks "am I your neighbor?" The speaking face ensues as that which facilitates the encounter with God in language. This insight leads to

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Haiti. The 'living-dead' *zonbi* figure in particular…recalls the tragic and heartbreaking experience of the Haitian ancestors…who were transported to the colonies as slaves." Elizabeth McAlister, *Rara!*, 107. Alfred Métraux adds, "A *zombi* remains in that misty zone which divides life from death. He moves, eats, hears what is said to him, even speaks, but he has no memory and no knowledge of his condition. The *zombi* is a beast of burden which his master exploits without mercy, making him work in the fields, weighing him down with labour, whipping him freely and feeding him on meager, tasteless food. A *zombi*'s life is seen in terms which echo the harsh existence of a slave in the old colony of Santo Domingo." Salt has the mythical power to restore consciousness to a *zonbi*. "If imprudently they are given a plate containing even a grain of salt the fog which cloaks their minds instantly clears away and they become conscious of their terrible servitude." Alfred Métraux, *Voodoo in Haiti* (New York: Schocken Books, 1972), 282-283.

[481] The end is then a beginning – a beginning to talk, think, and live differently. Future work will need to delve into greater depth into some of the areas described only briefly here.

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the consideration of the Haitian face as an indispensable criterion for understanding the nature of the encounter with God in Haiti.

The next three chapters are closely related as they deal with the bodily-mediated mythical space in which Haitian history shows its interconnection with Haitian lived experience, thereby highlighting the degree to which the dead and the living share a common destiny in Haiti's future. The footsteps of the ancestors as a metaphor for accessing this mythical space also serves to frame the dialectic between the oppressor and the oppressed in the persons of the ancestors, the *rèstavèk*, and other members of Haitian lived experience whose lives give substance to this dialectic. Evil ensues as that which ultimately animates the deathly character of the dialectic, which resolves itself in death through the practice of justice that is reified in mourning as a first step. The end result is the construction of a new justice-based, decolonial language, which speaks life into and changes Haiti's dilapidated structures.

The phenomenology of encounter serves as the methodological foundation for this study. In spite of and through death, it expands the boundaries of time and space – perhaps it more precisely blurs the line between the two – and offers hope to those who are burdened by the prisonlike character of an existence that is in every way determined by suffering. It achieves this task by reframing the place of suffering as the horizon of God's activity in the world.

Encounter is possible possibility. As such it has tremendous methodological potential for any work that deals with humanity's strivings with God. Encounter casts all religious phenomena as potential event-encounters and anticipates in every moment the potential for a burning bush experience. It represents an openness to new possibilities, to

المنارة للاستشارات
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radically new ways of seeing and being in the world. It has an affinity for that which resists definition and makes the infinite intelligible.

Encounter ensues then as the movement of God's activity in the world. It designates the Spirit's permeating and enchanting presence in all that exists. Encounter is thus a helpful way to deepen religious experience and transform religious traditions into life-giving movements. This pneumatological perspective stems from an understanding of the Spirit as a life-and-death-giving force, as that which institutes the movement of text-to-life and life-to-text and enriches every movement within the encounter. Encounter is thus an initiation into the very life of God in the Spirit. In and through it, the Spirit nudges, wrestles with, and ultimately overwhelms the pilgrim with *enthous*-iasm, that is, with a life force that simultaneously heals and confronts, uncovering injustice from within and without and, through sorrowful tears and a renewed vision for the future, attuning the pilgrim to the groaning of a suffering world.

In this, the Spirit is the voice of the phenomenon, the very ground that sustains the theological validity of phenomenological investigations. As such, the Spirit is the place and time of encounter. It is that which renders intelligible the seemingly unintelligible and stultifies the overly suggestive and manipulable. It posits life as possibility and fills the religious imagination with possible possibility. This characteristic makes encounter as methodology a strong component in phenomenological research. As an approach to the study of religions, it is particularly promising in a religious field that is becoming increasingly "pneumacentric" in various regions of the world.[482] The same promise holds

[482] According to R. Andrew Chestnut, religious movements that are principally concerned with the Spirit or spirits are vastly expanding in Latin America particularly in Brazil where Pentecostalism, the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, and African diasporan religions such as Candomblé and Haitian Vodou "have

المنارة للاستشارات
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for those traditions that remain captive to ineffectual practices and defunct doctrines, or for those people who are imprisoned within the walls of colonized histories and a lived experience that is pervaded by evil.

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emerged as the most profitable religious producers." R. Andrew Chestnut, *Competitive Spirits: Latin America's New Religious Economy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 5.

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