

 STUDIES OF THE AMERICAS

POLITICS AND POWER IN HAITI

Edited by Kate Quinn and Paul Sutton



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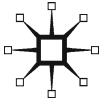
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To the memory of Gill Nicholls

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Preface

Those who had the pleasure of meeting the Venerable William Paley, Archdeacon Emeritus, will never forget the first occasion. In my case it was in Trinidad on Christmas Day 1972 when, as a lonely British research student, I had been invited by Dr. David Nicholls, then working as a lecturer in government at the University of the West Indies, to have Christmas dinner with him, his wife Gill, and several others. It was a long and hot walk in the afternoon sun up the Santa Margarita Circular to the top of the hill where David then lived, and as I turned the corner into the yard, there was the Venerable William Paley, splendidly bedecked in blue and yellow with black and white facial markings, shrieking his greeting to me in *kréyol* and shuffling under the veranda in a most agitated manner. It was his normal mode of dress and address and entirely suited to a macaw but perhaps a trifle disconcerting for someone who expected to meet a “reverend” as David had earlier explained to me would be one of the other guests at dinner. David, his owner, was a genuine reverend (ordained in 1963) and meeting with him could be equally disconcerting for those who had fixed ideas as to how such a person should look and behave. David, astride his motorbike, with his ponytail and poncho flaring behind him as he sped to conduct church services in rural areas in Trinidad, was not your usual Anglican priest and what his congregations made of him was a matter of much comment in and around the university. In and around the countryside, as I found out, he was a welcome visitor and the churches always filled when it was known that he was to be taking the service. He took his parishioners seriously but not the established order, hence the name of the macaw.

At the university also, David did not fit the mold. He chose to research Haiti, then practically “unknown” in the academic community of the English-speaking Caribbean, and he chose to present his findings as drafts of “work in progress” to the senior seminar program, which was a regular feature of the Social Science Faculty. These drafts were invariably written and presented by him in a robust and critical manner that was deliberately designed to discomfit those who had fixed opinions on Caribbean issues. They were challenging times for a non-Caribbean origin person to be researching the region (it was the aftermath of the Black Power events of 1970, which had nearly toppled the government of Dr. Eric Williams in Trinidad and Tobago), and David’s arguments met with much resistance but little rebuttal, since his audience were nowhere near as well informed as him and had certainly not visited, let alone undertaken fieldwork in Haiti, as he had done. The arrival on the Trinidad campus of a distinguished Haitian academic who agreed to comment on David’s “work in progress” was therefore awaited with much anticipation. I remember the event well. David gave his presentation and the distinguished academic, later to become, briefly, the president of Haiti, gave his response. “Yes” he said, “there are some interpretations of people and their ideas about which I disagree with David, but in all the essentials he has it right and his insights into Haiti for a non-Haitian are outstanding.” The “showdown” his critical colleagues had been expecting had turned into the opposite and David’s work had been vindicated by what they saw as an authentic authority they could not deny. Thereafter David’s work on Haiti was seen in a new light and when it was published in *From Dessalines to Duvalier: Race, Colour and National Independence in Haiti* (1979), his reputation as a leading scholar on Haiti was assured well beyond Trinidad.

These vignettes suggest an extraordinary person—amusing and studious, irreverent and committed, tongue-in-cheek and serious, and more. The celebration of his character and of his commitment to the Caribbean and critical thought is commemorated in The David Nicholls Memorial Trust founded shortly after his death. This has provided research bursaries and

travel grants for postgraduate students to visit the Caribbean for fieldwork and for Caribbean postgraduate students to visit the UK. It has also sponsored an annual lecture at Oxford University that has examined various aspects of David's work, including his contributions to Caribbean Studies and to Haiti. In those lectures David has received not only praise but also criticism, and in recent years the question has been raised as to whether his work on the Caribbean needs to be revised in the face of more recent scholarship. The conference "From Duvalier to Préval: Haiti Today, Yesterday and Tomorrow," held at the Institute for the Study of the Americas in London in June 2010, was designed to accomplish this end, with a particular focus on his work on Haiti. The chapters included in this book were originally papers delivered at the conference, with an additional one by Charles Forsdick later commissioned by the editors. The conference was supported by The David Nicholls Memorial Trust. It was opened by his wife Gill who played a major role as chair in the work of the trust since its inception. Sadly Gill died later that year and it is to her memory that this book is dedicated.

PAUL SUTTON
Kirk Ella
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Acknowledgments

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Chapter 1

Introduction: Duvalier and After

Paul Sutton and Kate Quinn

In the First David Nicholls Memorial Lecture David was described as “a polymath: the political scientist; the theologian; the humble and caring parish priest in Littlemore; the polemical pamphleteer; the historian of the Caribbean; and so much else” (Leech, 1999). He was indeed all these things, but above all, he was for many the most well-informed academic in the United Kingdom on the political history of Haiti. Franklin Knight described his monograph *From Dessalines to Duvalier: Race Colour and National Independence in Haiti* (1979) as “probably the best book written about Haitian history after its independence, a thorough, thoughtful and extremely well-researched work” (1982, p. 220) while 25 years after its publication, and to celebrate its achievement, a young academic at the University of the West Indies affirmed that “the work remains a sterling achievement in Haitian intellectual history, masterfully researched and eloquently written... The book continues to spark interest among scholars and students, both for its keen insight into the intellectual and political trajectory of Haiti, and its controversial explanations of Haitian political struggles” (Smith, 2007, p. 27). A selection of Nicholls’s writings on Haiti and on the wider Caribbean collected in *Haiti in Caribbean Context: Ethnicity, Economy and Revolt* (1985) further enhanced his reputation as an incisive scholar of the region.

These tributes acknowledge Nicholls’s scholarship, but it is noteworthy that they also acknowledge the controversies that

his work on Haiti and the Caribbean occasioned. Some of these issues were discussed in the Fourth David Nicholls Memorial Lecture given by Anthony Maingot (2002) and in the Sixth given by Leslie Griffiths (2006). They inevitably include questions of color and class—which was ascendant, when and how; foreign intervention from Europe and North America—for what reason and with what effect; and authoritarian government and revolt—led by whom and for whose benefit. They are the staples of Caribbean history and Caribbean social science and are therefore the subject of continual revision and comment as history and theory are reinterrogated and new research in the archives and in the field add to our factual understanding and insight. Haiti, in particular, has been very much at the center of such academic endeavor in recent years, and compared to when Nicholls was conducting his research, there has been an explosion of interest and publication on the country. A select bibliography presented at a Haiti Workshop at London Metropolitan University in 2008 listed some 50 books, articles, and special issues of journals devoted to the literature and history of Haiti that appeared from 2003 to 2008 (Forsdick and Douglas, 2008), more than would be available for most other countries in the Caribbean. The question this inevitably raises is whether such work confirms or refutes Nicholls's scholarship on Haiti and what further needs to be done.

The chapters collected in this volume speak to some aspects of this challenge. They include presentations by established scholars who knew Nicholls as a person and new scholars who know of his work. They cover themes with which Nicholls would be familiar as well as some with which he would not and provide an insight into what has changed and what has stayed the same. The final chapter is an address by Reginald Dumas, a former special representative of the United Nations Secretary-General, on the situation in Haiti following the devastating earthquake of January 12, 2010. To set these chapters in context, we provide a brief reprise of some of Nicholls's work on Haiti and the Caribbean, outline what the various contributors individually and collectively discuss in respect of contemporary interpretations of Haiti, and conclude with a few thoughts on how Nicholls might be read today.

Nicholls on Haiti and the Caribbean

Although Nicholls began publishing on theology and politics in 1960, his first works on Haiti and the Caribbean did not appear until 1970. When they did, they marked a departure from his earlier concerns, which were formed from an investigation of governance primarily in the British tradition, with its focus on liberty, authority, and the state, to a very different tradition in the Caribbean in which politics was sometimes violent and often fluid and unpredictable. The differences fascinated him and were well caught in his book *Three Varieties of Pluralism* (1974) where the discussions of English and American political pluralism, with their focus on conflicting group interests within a common social framework, contrast with an altogether different form of social and cultural pluralism in the Caribbean, in which ideas and values are not shared in a country but in which “there are distinct segments in the state, separated from each other by many social and cultural factors. The members of these groups live almost the whole of their lives within a single group, and meet other members of the group only in the market place; the whole state is kept together by force” (ibid., p. 3). This implied a very different type of politics, and it was Nicholls’s intention to make this clear to those who sought to understand the Caribbean, whether from within the region, where differences and similarities between countries needed to be teased out, or from outside, where preconceptions and understandings of politics formed in a very different milieu were transposed without due sensitivity to the history, culture, and society of the Caribbean.

The main way Nicholls sought to highlight differences and achieve a deeper understanding was to set the argument within the historical context. Most of his work on Haiti demonstrates this conclusively. In regard to that country, he was not alone in asserting the historical dimension as crucial to its contemporary understanding. Two of the most acclaimed scholars with extensive fieldwork experience in the country, Mats Lundahl (1989) and Sidney Mintz (1995), also made this point forcefully in articles seeking to explain the current political problems of Haiti to audiences of fellow academics and policy influentials,

but it was Nicholls who was the most insistent on this point to the primarily English-speaking audience to which his academic output was mainly directed. In particular, he also wished to demonstrate to them “that Haiti is part of the Caribbean and, indeed, that much of her early post-colonial experience is of relevance to the more recently independent countries of the region” (1985, p. 5). In other words, a study of Haiti’s past not only provided explanations for Haiti today but also generated insights into the contemporary problems of other Caribbean countries.

Nicholls was also insistent, given his sensitivity to culture, that politics in Haiti could also only be appreciated through a knowledge of the principal books and texts on the country written in French by Haitians, who were themselves often participants in the events they described. The bibliography and references within *From Dessalines to Duvalier* are a testament to the numerous sources in French he consulted, some dating back to the early nineteenth century, as well as to a wider depth of reading on the history of ideas and on the social sciences, in several languages.¹ The lengths to which he would go to track down the sources are wittily expressed in the Preface to the first edition of *From Dessalines to Duvalier* where he acknowledges his appreciation to Henock Trouillot, the director of the Archives Nationales in Port-au-Prince, “for his unintended kindness in refusing to allow me access to the archives. If he had, I would probably have been faced with such daunting practical problems that this book might never have been finished.” (1996, p. xliii). If so, we are indeed obligated to M. Trouillot for his obduracy.

Given both the breadth and depth of Nicholls’s knowledge on Haiti, and more generally his work on Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean, it is clearly almost impossible to summarize his key findings. We have chosen three findings, which we have already identified as “the staples of Caribbean history and Caribbean social science” and which appear most often to be discussed by others in commenting on Nicholls’s work and on which Nicholls reached some controversial conclusions.

The first and one of the most cited and most criticized is his interpretation of color and class in Haitian politics. Nicholls claimed that “much of Haiti’s political history in the nineteenth

century is to be seen as a struggle between a mulatto, city-based commercial elite and a black, rural, and military elite” (1996, p. 8) and “that these colour divisions developed out of the ‘caste’ distinctions of colonial Saint Domingue” (ibid.). He did not see mulattoes and blacks as “distinct social classes” but as “two factions of a single class” (ibid., p. 9). Nicholls’s history of the nineteenth century is interpreted within this framework, notably his conception that color led to two distinct ideological statements of Haiti’s past: the mulatto legend and the black legend, which were deployed by their adherents to define and, where necessary, justify, their political actions. Mulattoes in the nineteenth century wanted representative government and liberal values to prevail, portraying black leaders “as either wicked or ignorant,” while black leaders “portrayed themselves as the champions of the poor black rural workers and small peasants” and argued “in favour of an authoritarian, populist government which would realise the hopes of the masses in the face of intrigue by mulatto politicians” (ibid., p. 11).

These two contrasting viewpoints provide valuable traction in coming to grips with the twists and turns of Haitian politics in that period, but as Nicholls recognized, some blacks ascribed to the mulatto legend and some mulattoes, to the black. There was also the development and practice of “*la politique de doublure*” where a black president was controlled by mulatto politicians (ibid., p. 79), confusing the picture further. “Colour prejudice,” he writes, “having come into being for whatever cause, develops a dynamic of its own and often leads men to act in ways which are in conflict with their own material interests” (1985, p. 183). In short, life is never that easy to comprehend, and someone like Nicholls, who relished the contradictions and confusions of life, would have been appalled if it had been. His two books at numerous points therefore seek to qualify or otherwise comment on the color distinction he makes as it is applied to different and later circumstances, demonstrating that while he thought the importance of color a useful point to make, it was not a sole explanation for any circumstance.

The same emphasis on qualification can be said of his discussion of class: “I have called colour the badge of class: but it is not the constitutive element of class” (ibid., p. 5), he wrote,

and it is clear that he thought class played a more important role in twentieth-century than in nineteenth-century Haiti. There were several reasons for this. One was the US occupation, which saw the US attempt to encourage the growth and participation of “a new middle class” to anchor its interests in the country (Nicholls, 1996, p. 147). Similarly Nicholls’s lengthy discussions of Duvalierism and the *noiriste* legend (a development of the black legend) provides at numerous points a discussion of the role of the emergent black middle class and its role in politics. This could take a number of forms including political critiques by noiristes and socialists, which eroded the hegemony of mulatto liberalism, and the project by François Duvalier, once in power, to achieve what he called “a ‘new equilibrium’ in the country, by which he meant a major shift in power from the established, predominantly mulatto, elite to a new black middle class, which was said to act in the interests of the mass of peasants and workers from which its members had emerged” (ibid., p. 212). In such situations color and class could play not only independent roles but also subordinate and variable roles. Nicholls could thus assert that in the Haiti of the 1970s “colour, which has never been the sole factor in determining allegiance, is less significant today than in the period from 1946 to 1966” (ibid., p. 240) or, more generally, “that colour normally becomes significant in Caribbean politics only when it is reinforced by other factors, real or imagined” (1985, p. 183). It is therefore important to note that “there are clearly situations when colour must be recognised as a significant and independent variable in explaining the course of events” (ibid.) and situations where it is not. “In most conflicts” in Haiti, he argues, “colour is one issue among many and frequently takes second place to economic class, regional loyalty and political allegiance in determining the lines of battle” (ibid., p. 219). In short, a simplistic explanation in terms of color or class is no explanation at all.

A second theme is Nicholls’s discussion of Duvalierism. In this he was keen to assert that Duvalierism could not be labeled as fascist or totalitarian but rather, along with the political experiences of other postcolonial and economically dependent countries, should be understood as *sui generis*:

Duvalierism is to be seen as a further development of that post-colonial pattern which emerged in nineteenth century Haiti and from which the country has not entirely freed itself. The Duvalierist phenomenon is allied to certain movements in Latin American politics, and perhaps constitutes a sort of model toward which many of the former British colonies in the Caribbean are tending... In all these countries [he cites Guyana, Grenada, Dominica, St Kitts and marginally Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago], as in Haiti itself, ethnic or colour factors are readily available for exploitation by the political leaders, so the attention of the masses can be diverted from economic issues. (1996, p. 214)

The subsequent institutionalization of liberal democracy in the Commonwealth Caribbean demonstrated that he was mistaken in his political prognosis but was right on economic issues since economic problems remain an intractable and a continuing source of simmering discontent, in Haiti and in the rest of the Caribbean.

Nicholls was also keen to show that accounts of Haiti under Duvalier “as a country in which five million ignorant discontented and rebellious peasants were forcibly held down by a handful of ‘cut-throats’ are the product of wishful thinking and bed-time reading rather than the conclusion of careful academic research” (ibid., p. 215). His intent here was to show that Duvalier did enjoy some support and he states, “At Duvalier’s funeral, which I attended, there were numerous scenes of sadness and distress” (1985, p. 224). These mourners may have been misguided (and Duvalier’s tomb was quickly trashed) but they could nevertheless be genuine, especially if they were from the predominantly black middle sectors of the Haitian population who were the bedrock of the regime and the beneficiaries of Duvalier’s limited political patronage: “medium-sized landowners and *speculateurs* in the countryside and lawyers, doctors, small-business people, civil servants with other professionals and skilled working people in the towns” (1996, p. xii). Nicholls also claimed that “the principal *tonton macoute* organisation served not merely as an instrument of terror but also as a means of recruiting support for the regime” (ibid., pp. 211–12) and that the advantage to Duvalier of the black

middle classes was that they “were not accustomed to receiving many benefits from the state and their loyalty could therefore be purchased at a modest price” (*ibid.*, pp. 222–23). The fact that “fourteen years of Francois Duvalier’s iron rule saw few fundamental changes in the economic and social structure of Haiti” (*ibid.*, p. 236) was thus of no great importance to them and certainly of none to the masses, who had no expectation of any government, present or in the past, doing anything to benefit them.

It also explains why the mantle of power passed seamlessly from Duvalier father (Papa Doc) to Duvalier son (Baby Doc). The expectations abroad were that Haiti would quickly collapse into chaos. Nicholls, through the medium of his macaw, poured scorn on this viewpoint, especially when held by a distinguished fellow academic at Oxford.² Such a person simply did not understand Haiti. The regime not only had its supporters, as we have seen, but Duvalier had also previously astutely removed, silenced, or later reached an accommodation with his many enemies. These included army officers, the Roman Catholic hierarchy, the US embassy, the business elite, intellectuals, and the trade union leadership. “One by one their wings were clipped” such that by 1971, when Duvalier died, “the opposition had effectively been eliminated through murder, imprisonment or exile and there remained no major group capable of constituting a centre of political resistance or revolution” (1985, p. 223). More to the point, Duvalier had begun as early as 1966 to seek an accommodation with some of these groups such that they had concluded “they could live with Duvalierism and that attempts to improve their position within the parameters of the system were preferable to the confusion which might result from revolution” (*ibid.*, pp. 223–24). They therefore supported “a smooth transfer of power to his son” (*ibid.*, p. 224) allowing the regime of Baby Doc to remain relatively stable for the next ten years. “Authoritarianism,” Nicholls argues, “has been a constant feature of Haitian politics. . . . Only when conditions have become intolerable, or when rival claimants to governmental power have appeared, did the mass of the people intervene and then merely to secure the transfer of power to a new dictator” (1996, p. 247). These are sobering,

but also realistic, conclusions that those who seek to change Haiti should constantly bear in mind given the experiences of the two Aristide administrations, now the subject of much discussion and controversy, and the political problems that remain acute in the aftermath of the earthquake.

The third theme is foreign intervention. Haiti, of course, famously fought and won a revolution against France (and British intervention) declaring independence in 1804. Thereafter the position of France waned although it remained influential throughout the nineteenth century in finance and trade by way of levying a substantial indemnity on Haiti in return for recognition in 1825 and supporting the founding of the Banque Nationale, largely with French capital, in 1880. French influence also carried on into the twentieth century, particularly through support for the French language, which was habitually spoken by the Haitian elite. Nicholls notes that in a country where only 5 percent spoke or wrote it fluently, “Duvalier almost invariably addressed mass rallies in French rather than in *Kréyol*” (1985, p. 209), deploying it along with the rest of the elite as an instrument of domination over the masses.

However, it is the United States that exerted dominant influence in the twentieth century, with Nicholls identifying the years 1909–11 as “marking a crucial stage in Haiti’s move from the European to the United States sphere of influence” (ibid., p. 111). This predominance was consolidated and enlarged with the US occupation from 1915 to 1934, a period that brought significant change including policies allowing foreign ownership of land (prohibited since the revolution), policies to encourage the emergence of a middle class, and some limited infrastructural and social development. The immediate principal beneficiaries of such policies were the mulatto elite who formed the government, but as Nicholls notes, “a gradual disenchantment with the Americans” set in as a result of their racist attitudes to all Haitians of whatever color leading to “a growing solidarity among Haitians” whereby both mulatto and black Haitians joined in common cause against them (1996, p. 142). The development of nationalist sentiment crystallized with the election of Sténio Vincent in 1930. It was then “only a matter of time for the Americans to decide that the military

occupation must come to an end” (ibid., p. 165) and in 1935 they withdrew. As Nicholls wryly commented, “The Americans unintentionally succeeded where Dessalines had failed in uniting all Haitians under the name ‘black’” (ibid., p. 142).

While Nicholls was keen to show that when faced with a common enemy all Haitians unite, he also narrated that on other occasions a very different calculation could prevail. In the opening paragraph of *From Dessalines to Duvalier* he states: “No one who is at all familiar with the history of Haiti can fail to see how hostility between blacks and mulattoes has frequently opened the way to foreign intervention in the affairs of the country” (ibid., p. 1). Returning to this theme in the closing paragraph of the book, he argues: “It would thus appear to be the case in Haiti that, while ethnic conflicts based on colour have led to the possibility of foreign intervention, foreign intervention has in turn resulted in the abatement of such colour conflicts and in the development of ethnic solidarity based upon race” (ibid., p. 254). The pages in between do indeed show this to be the case with Haitians on occasion preferring foreign intervention to allowing their opponents to take power. But it also points to a complex process of change, a seemingly double dialectical development in which there are twin forces at work in Haitian political history: the internal dialectic of mulatto and black and the external dialectic of foreign intervention and foreign withdrawal, which are at the same time independent of each other and also very closely interlinked. Disentangling this is indeed a complex problem for a historian but perhaps even more so for any external force seeking to impose their will on Haiti, whether France and the United States in the past or both these countries and the United Nations in the present, post-earthquake Haiti. In all, it requires a particular sensitivity to policy formation and policy context, which few have so far mastered and perhaps none who is not Haitian, explaining the many failures of policy in the country (a parallel example is contemporary Afghanistan). Additionally such a dialectic points to the need to be particularly sensitive to the external element when seeking to understand not only Haiti but also the rest of the Caribbean, given that the “external” routinely

conditions (but does not determine) the internal development of most Caribbean countries.

The three instances of Nicholls's analysis given above show in many ways a very British approach to political science typical of his training and his times. It is one that privileges empirical research from which cautious generalizations can be made, not the other way round. "Economists," he wrote, "unlike other social scientists, are in the fortunate position of being able to deduce human behaviour from certain motives which they confidently assume to be paramount, without having to waste time in the tedious business of empirical investigation" (1985, p. 198). That comment says it all. Additionally, he demonstrated that there is a need to be sensitive to the historical and cultural context, which in Haiti is very challenging to understand. In this regard we can cite another of his quotes, adapted from Charles Peguy and made when Nicholls was discussing controversies among several of the leading noiristes. Peguy, he states, says "*tout commence en mystique et finit en politique*," but in Haiti the movement is frequently in reverse" (1996, p. 231). Haiti, he is suggesting here, does not fit easily into any mold. It has to be understood on its own terms. That is what Nicholls succeeded in doing so well, providing a guide and an inspiration to others, and setting out markers for its future study and that of the Caribbean as a whole.

The Contributors on Nicholls, Haiti, and the Caribbean

Michael Dash knew David Nicholls well when they were both at the University of the West Indies. It is therefore not surprising to find in his opening remarks references to Nicholls's "impish" character and to his dismissive asides about some of his more earnest and pretentious colleagues at the University. However, on reading further it soon becomes clear that the analysis Nicholls offered of Haiti raised important questions for a scholar of French literature like Dash and none more so than on the vexed questions of identity: Who is a Haitian and what is a Haitian? The answer Dash gives rests partly on Nicholls's distinction between differing mulatto and black views on Haiti

and partly on changes in recent years that have inserted a new “wider” dynamic into questions of Haitian identity.

The noiriste ideology developed and promoted by François Duvalier appropriated the work of Jean Price-Mars, Haiti’s most celebrated intellectual in the first half of the twentieth century and the author of an influential book *Ainsi parla l’oncle* (1928). In this work Price-Mars celebrates African identity in Haiti and rejects the views of the elite who aspired to be passively imitative of foreign culture, particularly French. Price-Mars defined this tendency as *bovarysme* and Duvalier exploited it with good effect in containing and reducing the power of Haiti’s primarily mulatto elite. But as Dash notes, identity is not “fixed” but can change with the time, and in Haiti the fall of Duvalier’s son, Jean-Claude, and the uprooting of the symbols and substance of the Duvalier’s power (*dechoukaj*) provided an opportunity for identity to be recast. One intellectual expression of this *dechoukaj* was the work of the noted Haitian novelist Dany Lafferriere, who representing a new Haitian generation and living for much of his time in recent years in Montreal, introduced a new dynamic into Haitian identity, which embraced the outside world and in particular Haiti as part of the Americas. The result of his view and those of other contemporaries who echo it is, in Dash’s words: “Haitian identity has become less and less the product of a unique Haitian space and increasingly . . . more global, diasporic and cosmopolitan in nature.” As such, the essentially historically derived “model of color conflict” given by Nicholls, “which presented Haitian identity as a simple confrontation between France and Africa,” needed revision. Nicholls’s answer to this can only be conjectured, but he would no doubt insist, as Dash notes in his concluding observations, that if this were done it would need to include the “local” that Nicholls valued so highly in Haiti and that drew on “conservative models of identity and belonging” that had their roots in the Haitian countryside.

Alex Dupuy, in his contribution, also objects to Nicholls’s designation of color conflict as central. “Contrary to Nicholls,” he argues, “color cannot be understood independently of the system of class relations,” which is the real division in Haiti and which is characterized by “two factions or blocs of a dominant

class” (mulatto and black) in conflict with “subordinate classes whose exploitation they relied upon for their wellbeing.” In this conflict color divisions serve as ideological expressions of claims to power by one or the other of the factions and not as independent variables explaining Haitian politics, however much the discourse between the factions made it appear to be otherwise. Dupuy also takes exception to “the difference Nicholls makes between race and color” claiming that racial descent based on presumed common lineage does not survive “modern DNA testing.” He also notes that the traditionally deployed “phenotypical characteristics of color, hair and bone structure” as “the only criteria for ascribing membership in a race” is also an ideological construct without scientific foundation. We are sure Nicholls would have agreed, but he would also have said that human action can be motivated by “consciousness,” false or otherwise, and that in Haiti color was precisely such a consciousness. The argument in this case ultimately depends on where one stands in terms of class conflict and for Dupuy it has a core explanatory power, which it does not have for Nicholls.

The analysis by Dupuy of the Duvalier regime and that of his son, Jean-Claude, does not differ markedly from that offered by Nicholls. Color, in the form of distinctions in the ruling class between mulatto and black, continued to play a part. However, Dupuy claims that the popular upsurge, which led to the overthrow of Jean-Claude in 1986 and its five-year aftermath, created “a vast laboratory for popular participatory democracy” that introduced “the language of rights, justice and equality, in short of democracy, [that] decisively displaced that of identity or pigmentation and its presumptions as a claim to power.” This break, supported by Aristide in his first term in office, removed “the veil of colour in the political discourse to unmask the fundamental interests of both factions of the dominant class [mulatto and black] and their international allies.” In so doing it changed the discourse from “dictatorship to democracy,” marking “a fundamental turning point in Haiti’s political history.” These are very large claims that many commentators on Haiti would contest, as is evident in the highly polarized interpretations of the second Aristide administration of 2001–4.³ The issue is how politics is now played out, and in his final paragraph

Dupuy makes the point that the elections of November 2010 were fought on “grounds of legitimacy, not representation by colour.” The elections, however, were also deeply flawed and eventually subject to enquiries that proved this to be the case.⁴ In Haiti, as always, the path forward is never easy.

The nature of the political system in Haiti is the focus of Patrick Sylvain’s contribution. Much of it is a detailed description of the Duvalier years, and particularly the system established by François Duvalier. Sylvain agrees with Nicholls that the system cannot be called “totalitarian in the classic sense.” Instead he sees it as a form of “clientelist politics” embodied in a “patriarchal state.” The key elements in such a system were the Tonton Macoutes established by Duvalier in 1958 who grew in number to 10,000 by the time of his death in 1971 (and 36,000 by the time of Jean-Claude Duvalier’s overthrow in 1986). These were recruited throughout the country and operated a system of power that employed terror and rewards to punish enemies and build support. The central core was Duvalier himself although the macoutes often operated “independently” having in common only their intense loyalty to Duvalier. This created what Sylvain terms the *macoutized* state:

The *macoutized* state transformed the nation into an obedient, non-pluralistic entity where political action depended upon the blessings of the supreme executive. In Duvalier’s *macoutized* state, political clientelism and the systematic expediency of brute force were the most effective tools in creating a source of state power that was inescapable, apprehending any and all challenges to its legitimacy. (Sylvain, chapter 4, pp. 79–80)

Nicholls would probably have endorsed such a view although he would likely have argued that it was not as all-encompassing as Sylvain suggests, since Nicholls later discussed Duvalierism as a form of “sultanism” (Nicholls, 1998), which is altogether a looser and more capricious form of paternalistic/authoritarian power.

In the final part of his contribution, Sylvain discusses the legacies of Duvalierism. These, he argues, remain very much alive and are accessed through a *macoutarian* discourse “that was

heightened in 1990 against Jean-Bertrand Aristide and became voluminous over the past five years [2005–10] under the guise of nationalism against the United Nations military presence and Préval’s indifferent national politics.” It even embraces, he suggests, the current president Michel Martelly (who has been called a neo-Duvalierist) and some of his advisers. If this is so then post-Duvalier dechoukaj was more limited and the authoritarian impulses of Haitian society and politics more embedded than the reformers thought to be the case. The return of Jean-Claude Duvalier following the earthquake, and his seeming subsequent impunity, would seem to bear this out. The implication is that the political culture of Haiti is not an easy soil for democracy to take root in, liberal or otherwise, and so may well not survive. Sylvain’s position clearly supports this view, since he concludes:

Duvalier’s return crystallizes the desire or longing to return to an eventual *macoutized* state where the leader is seen as the father figure . . . guaranteeing the patrimonial political identity of the nation state . . . [and where] the thousands of Haitians who were murdered, exiled, raped and disappeared are ignored for the narrative of control that promises a new framework . . . built upon a *macoutized* state of order where power was fluid and privatised. (Sylvain, chapter 4, p. 87)

Millery Polyné also focuses on Duvalierism but in a very different context of the United States. The influence of the United States on politics in Haiti is a matter of record since the early years of the twentieth century and remains very strong and intrusive as the release of diplomatic cables by WikiLeaks covering the years 2004–10 decisively demonstrates.⁵ Polyné’s concern, however, is not US foreign policy, which has been the usual center of attention, but the relatively neglected subjects of the activities of Haitian exiles in the United States and the role of the African American elite in supporting or neglecting Haiti in its media and promotional activities during the regime of François Duvalier. The exiles were part of a major emigration from Haiti to the United States, Canada, the Bahamas, Francophone Africa, and Europe in the period

1950–70 amounting, Polyné suggests, to “nearly 8% of Haiti’s population.” Nicholls discussed this phenomenon in *Haiti in Caribbean Context* and noted that most emigrants were not from the poorest sectors of the Haitian community and that those in New York came from the middle and upper social classes and brought their color and class prejudices with them. Among these would have been a number of political exiles who also brought their political differences and political ambitions as well. The record of their opposition to the Duvalier regime, as Polyné recounts, was therefore largely one of failure: “Many Haitian exiles wanted Duvalier gone yet they did not offer a clear political/economic platform on which to build their case.” Given these limitations Polyné concludes: “I hesitate to affirm that replacing an autocrat with politically ambitious Haitian émigrés would have ensured a democratic and transformative Haiti in the 1960s.”

Polyné also recounts ambivalent attitudes toward Duvalier among the African American elites. The tradition among them was one of support to Haiti and in the early years (1957–61) Duvalier was able to rely upon this to counter the activities of the exiles and underpin requests for US economic assistance. However, with the illegal extension of his presidency in 1961, attitudes began to change and differences emerged as the brutality of the Duvalier regime became better known. The issue faced by African Americans, Polyné notes, was “the difficult dilemma of reconciling needed assistance and international collaboration with Haitians with publicly denouncing a black head of state who was piloting a historically symbolic nation of the African diaspora.” While some well-placed African Americans continued their support for Duvalier, others held back, and reports on Haiti in the African American print media became fewer. Following Duvalier’s declaration as “President for Life” in 1964 the response of most African Americans was silence. This was largely maintained until Duvalier’s death in 1971 when the African American community once more found its voice and began criticizing the assumption of power by his son. The issues involved here go beyond Haiti, as Polyné recognizes, to include the contemporaneous struggles of the African American community in the United States for civil rights and

the appropriation of Pan-Americanism by the US government in its confrontation with Cuban communism. One “spilt over” into another to create a very complex policy mix involving domestic and external factors in making US policy. This may go some way in explaining some of the confusions and contradictions of US policy to Haiti under Duvalier and after. It also anticipates, by some years, a not-too-dissimilar set of dilemmas posed to the US government and the “attentive public” in New York and elsewhere when Aristide was elected (1990), deposed (1991), restored (1994), re-elected (2000), re-deposed (2004), and now re-returned (2011) to Haiti, amid both popular support and outright hostility.

Tony Maingot is another who knew Nicholls very well. He reports some memories of him in his David Nicholls Memorial Lecture (2002), which also sets out Maingot’s views of Nicholls’s work on race and class, liberty and morality, and politics in Haiti. In this contribution the focus is on Haiti and the Caribbean. He offers two major themes. The first is Haiti as an example to the rest of the Caribbean. This has a heroic dimension in which Haiti is the forerunner of revolutionary change. It is a difficult, almost impossible, vocation to live up to, and it is not surprising that Haiti has often been found short in meeting the demands of those who subscribe to it. There is, however, another dimension, which is in direct opposition and sees Haiti almost wholly in negative terms. Maingot discusses how this was articulated in the nineteenth century with reference to Mexico, where it had little impact, Venezuela, where it was somewhat greater, and Cuba, where, with the exception of the Dominican Republic, it was greatest of all. The core issues were slavery, race, and the violence of the Haitian revolution. In the case of Cuba, for example, Maingot notes that fear of repeating in Cuba what had happened in Haiti “hung over Cuban life like a sword of Damocles” and held back abolition and independence. It also, Maingot notes, “poisoned Cuban society and its political process,” distorting the construction of a Cuban national identity—*cubanidad*—which “was framed in terms of white civilisation versus African barbarity” and which so permeated Cuban national consciousness that “five decades of revolution have not been able to eradicate the salience of race

in Cuban life.” These views were no doubt held not only by Cuban whites but shared also by many others in the Caribbean. The legacy of the Haitian Revolution “in that sense,” Maingot concludes, “had a negative impact on most of its neighbors, delaying in many cases the decolonization processes.”

The other theme is that of Haitian national development. Maingot identifies two propositions advanced by Nicholls. The first is that Haiti should promote an active decentralization to the provinces as an antidote to political authoritarianism and the second is a critical rejection of foreign aid designed by “international experts” and administered by the central government. These themes have a particular resonance in post-earthquake Haiti. Maingot criticizes Nicholls on decentralization maintaining that rural Haiti has been the source of authoritarianism and that Nicholls himself demonstrated this was the case in his discussions of the Duvalier regime. There is some merit in this argument, but there is also a strong regional identity in Haiti that must be recognized, encouraged, and developed if the many reconstruction problems of Port-au-Prince following the earthquake are to be effectively tackled. The second proposition is even more pressing. Haitians termed their country the “Republic of NGOs” before the earthquake and since then the NGO presence and that of the UN and its agencies has become all-pervasive and all-encompassing. The record of both sets of actors is very mixed and the longer historical record does raise many question marks over the motivations and results of foreign intervention. The development question then becomes, “What can work in Haiti?” Maingot argues that on its own external support has never “lifted a ‘failed’ state out of poverty.” He also argues that fundamental change has to come “from within” but sees no sign of it. The answer has to be, he then reasons, “a combination of internal and external drivers,” with a focus on “a people centred process of development.” Yet in the current reconstruction process Haitian grassroots organizations continue to be excluded and their contributions overlooked. While the earthquake could have provided an opportunity to radically rethink approaches to Haitian development and the relationship with foreign aid, reconstruction has instead been

characterized by the same old patterns in which “development” is prescribed from above and those who have traditionally been marginalized continue to be so.⁶ The lessons of Haitian history, it seems, have not been learnt.

History is also a major theme of Charles Forsdick’s chapter. In the first half, he examines Haiti’s troubled relationship with France in the early years after independence. The French at first harbored thoughts of recolonization but eventually abandoned these in favor of a recognition of independence in return for a substantial indemnity, which, Forsdick notes, absorbed “around 15% of the national income over a period of six decades” and seriously held back Haiti’s development. It also acted as an opening for France to impose commercial terms on Haiti that were favorable to French commercial interests and to further indebt Haiti through additional loans to pay the indemnity. Forsdick quotes the French envoy, Baron de Mackau, who announced the indemnity to President Boyer, as describing “Haiti’s status after the agreement as that of a ‘French province, contributing much and costing nothing.’” The baron does not appear in Nicholls’s discussion of the indemnity though he would have delighted in this quote had he known of it. Instead he cites a memorandum in the archives of the French foreign ministry arguing for “*un nouveau genre de colonisation, sans en avoir les inconvénients et les dépenses*” (1996, p. 62). The recommendation here is to create a condition of neo-colonialism in Haiti, and both Nicholls and Forsdick use the term to discuss Haiti’s relations with France after formal recognition. It led, of course, to continuing French influence throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century, which was only decisively broken with the US occupation.

While France continued to remain significant for Haitians, Haiti was largely forgotten by France until the speech by President Aristide in April 2003 to mark the bicentenary of Toussaint L’Ouverture’s death in a French prison. In it Aristide called for the return of the indemnity to Haiti and put a figure on it in today’s money in excess of \$21 billion. This triggered a reengagement with Haiti by the French government, which Forsdick considers in the second part of his chapter. This included French involvement in the “coup” that removed

Aristide in 2004, a much greater coverage of Haiti in the French press, and culminated in the very brief visit by President Sarkozy to Haiti shortly after the earthquake, the first ever such visit by a French president and one which Forsdick claims would not have occurred otherwise. As such it had “symbolic and strategic significance” not least because in the speech made by Sarkozy at this time he acknowledged that “the wounds of colonization and, perhaps worse still, the conditions of separation, have left traces which are still alive in the Haitian memory.” These observations and sentiments appeared to show a new sensitivity toward Haiti, but Forsdick warns against any such conclusion and provides evidence to show how Sarkozy, and by inference much of France, still has to come to terms with its colonial past. In these circumstances the acknowledgement of any indemnity, let alone its repayment, is likely to be put permanently on hold.

The final chapter is by Reginald Dumas, a retired diplomat from the Trinidad and Tobago public service and a former special adviser on Haiti for UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. Dumas has written a frank and revealing account of his mission in Haiti⁷ and his contribution to the conference was equally insightful and hard-hitting. It is published here as a record of the reaction of one very informed and sympathetic commentator on Haiti seeking to raise consciousness on the country and sketching out some practical steps that could be taken for its reconstruction. Several of these have been adopted but most have not, and the situation in Haiti at the end of 2011 was essentially much the same as it was in mid-2010, as Dumas made clear in a presentation to the Haitian Studies Association in Jamaica in November 2011.⁸ The presentation he made then raised “food for thought” as Dumas hoped it would, and the same intention infuses his presentation in London, although a comparison of the two shows he was a little more optimistic in London that something could be achieved for Haiti, than has subsequently proved to be the case.

The case presented by Dumas in London concentrated on “the role that the regional and international communities could play in their approach to Haiti” to help it recover and rebuild after the earthquake of January 12, 2010. It therefore contains

some practical suggestions, but it is characterized more by what he lists as seven considerations governing an approach to Haiti. They are based in part on his experiences and cover the themes of inclusion and exclusion, common perceptions and misconceptions of Haiti, the nature and use of aid, socioeconomic development, the role of the Haitian diaspora, the question of geopolitics, and the role and functioning of the UN in Haiti. In virtually every one of these, he cites misperceptions and missed opportunities, which raise serious questions about how the regional and international communities have approached Haiti in the past and how they are likely to do so in the future. Haiti itself, Dumas argues, is not without blame for its own predicament. For example, he asks “What will the regional and international communities do to encourage the wealthy to act in Haiti’s interests and not exclusively in theirs?” and later acknowledges that “Haiti herself bears a heavy responsibility” for her many problems that are rationalized away by her apologists who “too often slip into explanations . . . and defences based on victimhood.” But as the first quotation here makes clear, Haiti cannot be treated in isolation and the regional and international community, including the many NGOs, have to be held to account for their actions in the country. Mechanisms to do so are not yet in place, and so Haiti continues to suffer its many misfortunes, including now a deadly cholera inadvertently brought in by the UN in its “humanitarian role” and likely to remain active long after the UN has departed. It is a tragic legacy among the many others Haiti has had to bear. In such circumstances it is not difficult to conclude that the people of Haiti, as distinct from its elite, deserve better.

Looking Backward, Looking Forward

On January 16, 2011, Jean-Claude Duvalier returned to Haiti after nearly 25 years of exile in France. Two months later he was followed by Jean-Bertrand Aristide who had spent seven years in exile, mostly in South Africa. The runoff elections held two days after Aristide’s return saw Michel Martelly elected as president. What would Nicholls have written of these events? Would they have been a surprise? He wrote comparatively little either on the

younger Duvalier or on Aristide. The former he described as an “authoritarian and autocratic leader” in the mold of his father, but even more so and the latter as “no democrat” despite his “enormous popularity among the poor people of Haiti” (1996, p. xiv, p. xxix). He also spoke of Aristide’s 1991 administration as “a government of pals” and noted in Aristide’s confrontation with the elected legislature at that time, and in the use of supporters to intimidate opponents, “scant respect for law and for constitutional procedures” and fears by some of “the shades of neo-Duvalierism” (*ibid.*, p. xxxii). The theme is of an authoritarian Haiti and the “personalisation of power [which] has been the normal practice in Haiti since independence” (*ibid.*). This suggests that Nicholls would not have been surprised and that their return was entirely in keeping with established practice. The problem with the 1987 Constitution, he noted, was that it “ignores the political culture of the country. Throughout their history Haitians have assumed the existence of a powerful executive; the president was everything, taking credit for what went well and suffering the consequences of political disasters” (*ibid.*, p. xxiv). The “careers” of Jean-Claude Duvalier and Aristide demonstrate the enduring truth of this statement perfectly.

What of the future? Nicholls was hopeful but also cautious. The hope sprang from the development of new democratic movements, “peasant co-operatives, religious groups and the growing trade union movement” (*ibid.*, p. xxxv) that had evolved independently of government under Jean-Claude Duvalier and ultimately had challenged and helped overthrow him. He also spoke of Haiti as “among the richest countries of the hemisphere in the human resources it possesses—the ingenuity, enterprise and skill of its people” (*ibid.*, p. xxxvi), which he saw, among much else, affirmed in the colorful political murals that adorned Port-au-Prince.⁹ He also commended the Haitian diaspora, which, through its remittances and other efforts, has been “the most effective system of economic aid in Haiti” (*ibid.*, p. xxii). He believed the most gifted among them could play a constructive role in Haiti should they return. But at this point the caution sets in: “Whether a political system will evolve, within which they will be enabled to do so, remains in doubt” (*ibid.*, p. xxxvi). Here we meet again Nicholls’s adaptation of

the quote of Charles Peguy identified earlier: “*tout commence en mystique et finit en politique,*” but in Haiti the movement is frequently in reverse” (ibid., p. 231). The political system in Haiti is the starting point for any real change but to change it is a massive challenge. The real value of Nicholls’s work is the appreciation of this fact and the explanations he offers of why it is so. Not all of these remain unchallenged, as the various contributors demonstrate, but much of what he wrote is still very relevant today. The fact that French translations now exist of *From Dessalines to Duvalier* and *Haiti in Caribbean Context* allows some Haitians who might otherwise not have had access to his work the chance now to read it. We are certain David would eagerly await their comments.

Notes

1. The David Nicholls Memorial Trust maintains his library of over 4,000 books, papers, and articles, as well as notes etc. made by him, in a special room at Regent’s Park College, Oxford. They include many books on Haiti otherwise difficult to find in the United Kingdom. The library is open to scholars and others on application to the Trust and a catalog can be found online via Oxford University’s OLIS system—<http://library.ox.ac.uk>.
2. Nicholls used his macaw, named William Paley, as a pseudonym to dismiss arguments he found opinionated, foolish, or otherwise without foundation. In this case he was criticizing Norman Stone, later professor of Modern History at Oxford, who had written in an extensive review of *From Dessalines to Duvalier* that he had been “amazed” that power had passed smoothly from Duvalier father to Duvalier son. See Stone, “The Many Tragedies of Haiti,” in *The Times Literary Supplement*, February 15, 1980. David’s response to the review was in the form of a letter in *The Times Literary Supplement*, February 29, 1980, in which William Paley writes: “Having been born in the Caribbean and having spent the greater part of my life there I have for some time been interested in Haiti . . . what promised to be a bird’s eye view of Haiti, past and present, turned out to be little more than a flight of fancy in which all the old chestnuts and prejudices about this much misunderstood country are regurgitated.” A reference to this incident is in the opening paragraph of “Dynastic Despotism: From Father to Son” in D. Nicholls, *Haiti in Caribbean Context: Ethnicity, Economy and Revolt* (Basingstoke: Macmillan in association with St Antony’s College, Oxford, 1985), p. 217.
3. The arguments on the character of the Aristide administrations, particularly the second, have been intense and sometimes very bitter. For

- a pro-Aristide view see Peter Hallward, *Damming the Flood: Haiti, Aristide, and the Politics of Containment* (London and New York: Verso, 2007) and for an anti-Aristide view, Michael Deibert, *Notes from the Last Testament: The Struggle for Haiti* (New York: Seven Stories, 2005).
4. The turnout in the election was only 24 percent, and Aristide's party was banned from running. See David Rosnick, *The Organisation of American States in Haiti: Election Monitoring or Political Intervention?* (Washington, DC: Center for Economic and Policy Research, August 2011).
 5. The 1,918 cables obtained by WikiLeaks were released to the organization Haiti Liberté and can be accessed on its website at www.haitiliberte.com.
 6. For a full discussion of these issues see Mark Schuller and Pablo Morales (eds.), *Tectonic Shifts: Haiti since the Earthquake* (Sterling, VA: Kumarian, 2012).
 7. Reginald Dumas, *An Encounter with Haiti: Notes of a Special Adviser* (Trinidad: Medianet, 2008).
 8. Reginald Dumas, "Haiti at the Intersection of the World: Tapping the Past, Facing the Future," Keynote Address at the 23rd Annual Conference of the Haitian Studies Association, University of the West Indies, Jamaica, November 11, 2011. Available at www.umb.edu/haitianstudies/conference.
 9. The last book on which David Nicholls was working before his death was a collection of photographs of street murals to which he was to supply the text. The text was unfinished but the book has now appeared as *Urban Vodou: Politics and Popular Street Art in Haiti* Photographs by Pablo Butcher and Introduction by Carl-Hermann Middelani (Oxford: Signal Books, 2010). The book was produced with the support of The David Nicholls Memorial Trust and launched at the London conference "From Duvalier to Préval."

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Chapter 2

True *Dechoukaj*: Uprooting *Bovarysme* in Post-Duvalier Haiti

J. Michael Dash

At Duvalier's funeral, which I attended, there were numerous scenes of sadness and distress. We may well think that this popular attitude was ill-founded and misplaced but it did exist, and is part of the explanation for the survival of the regime.

David Nicholls, 1985, p. 224

It would not be an exaggeration to state that David Nicholls took a perverse pleasure in exposing the ways in which Caribbean intellectuals misinterpreted the region's social and political reality. Given the fact that the Duvalier regime was more than simply a reign of terror, he was quick to point out that many anti-Duvalier intellectuals “underestimated—sometimes to their own cost—the degree of popular support (or at least benevolent neutrality) enjoyed by Duvalier” (1985, p. 34). It was not just the ideologically blinkered Haitian intellectuals who came under sharp criticism. He was particularly keen on deflating the illusions of the Left in the Caribbean. He warns at the end of *Haiti in Caribbean Context* that “political strategies which assume the existence of a revolutionary working class or peasantry in the Antilles are bound to come to grief” (ibid., p. 238). This pattern is already evident in *From Dessalines to Duvalier: Race, Colour and National Independence in Haiti*. Nicholls, in his conclusion to this classic study of Haitian society and politics, took a swipe at Frantz Fanon whose theory of the importance of violence in the process of decolonization

was being blindly applied to the Caribbean by leftist thinkers in the sixties. He poured cold water on their dreams of national liberation through violence by noting that in Haiti authoritarianism and divisiveness were left in the wake of the war of liberation. "The story of Haiti's early years suggests that the violent decolonization struggle failed to bind Haitians together into an independent and united nation," he wrote (1979, p. 251).

A little earlier in the same work a University of the West Indies colleague, the far less eminent Archibald Singham, suffered a similar fate. Singham in a recently published essay lamented the fact that colonial intellectuals in the Caribbean had failed to advocate a genuine liberation of the people because of "their counterrevolutionary ideas" and their alignment with "petty-bourgeois interests." Nicholls wryly observed that "Singham (was) himself a startling exemplification of these tendencies, not only with respect to his collaboration with the conservative Jamaica Labour Party in the late 1960s but also to his recently acquired 'Marxist' jargon" (ibid., p. 249). He was no less brutal in deflating the self-importance of Haitian intellectuals. The leader of the Christian Social Party, the unfortunate Edouard Tardieu, might have quietly slipped into oblivion were it not for this memorably comic anecdote that Nicholls included not only in *From Dessalines to Duvalier* but also in *Haiti in Caribbean Context*.

Monsieur Edouard Tardieu was leader of the Christian Social Party in the election of 1946 and edited the party's newspaper, (*L'Action Sociale*) the columns of which were filled principally with reports of his speeches. On the back page however, a regular feature was an advertisement for Madame Tardieu's grocery shop. While he was upstairs writing political speeches, she was downstairs managing the family business and making sure that their budget could support the political adventures of her husband. (1985, p. 141)

Nicholls's sharp eye for domestic detail made Tardieu's defense of the oppressed and overworked masses of Haiti less than persuasive.

If there was one Haitian intellectual to whom Nicholls paid particular attention it was Jean Price-Mars. He begins the very

first essay of *Haiti in Caribbean Context* with an account of a visit to Price-Mars who had run afoul of the Duvalier regime in 1968 because he contested the radical application of *noiriste* ideology. Nicholls was particularly impressed by Price-Mars's feistiness when he, despite being hailed as the father of *noirisme*, criticized the ideological dogma of Duvalierism. Price-Mars was in his nineties when he wrote his *Lettre ouverte a Rene Piquion* challenging the *noiriste* position that "colour and class issues were one—that poor mulattoes and rich blacks were insignificant and could safely be ignored in a consideration of the social problem" (*ibid.*, p. 22). Nicholls made a distinction between the courage and independence of Price-Mars, at least in his old age, and the opportunistic Rene Piquion, whom Nicholls justifiably described as being "consistent in his adherence to whatever government happened to be in power in Haiti" (1979, p. 232). Price-Mars still remains important today despite the fact that it is now some 80 years since what must be considered one of the most influential books of essays in the Francophone world was published in Haiti. *Ainsi parla l'oncle* (1973 [1928]) by Jean Price-Mars was as much a founding text of Haitian *indigenisme* as it was of Parisian *negritude*. Indeed Senghor baptized Price-Mars the "father of *negritude*." Over time, we have tended to lose sight of the influence of Price-Mars and his ideas. The Haitian novelist, Dany Laferriere, however, in a recent reedition of this important work on Haitian ethnography, reminds us of its influence in the middle of the twentieth century:

It is difficult to imagine the intellectual weight of Price-Mars at the time. He was a scintillating presence in the meetings of black intellectuals in Paris (1956) and in Rome (1959), dominating with his commanding stature these festivals of the mind. The famous photo where he is seen surrounded by all the black intellectuals who mattered in the world clearly speaks to his strong influence. The young James Baldwin saw in him a noble elder with a kind smile. Senghor and Césaire repeatedly referred to him as their master. Price-Mars was already thinking intensely about and passionately debating what was being discussed at the Sorbonne in 1956, in the many lectures he gave travelling through the provincial towns of Haiti from the beginning of the 1920s. (2009, p. 264)

While it is regrettable that Price-Mars and his influential text have disappeared from discussions of the emergence of negritude, it is in part due to the appropriation of this text and its author by the Duvalier dictatorship in Haiti. In the words of Laferriere, he was “an intellectual held hostage” by the Duvalier regime (*ibid.*, p. 263). Price-Mars’s essay was as much a product of the nationalism produced by the US occupation of Haiti between 1915–34 as it was shaped by ideas of Charles Maurras. In his desire to establish a clear definition of national identity and cultural difference, Price-Mars took exception to talk of the “Latin mentality” of the Haitian people, which he saw as a betrayal of their true nature. This idea, promoted by a small Francophile minority in Haitian society—the Haitian elite—was seen as a fatal weakness in the Haitian body politic. Price-Mars argued that there was an authentic Afro-Haitian self that the urban, assimilated elite preferred to ignore or repress. He felt that it was only by reforming the elite, by making them recognize their true nature, that Haiti’s future as an independent nation could be assured. Not surprisingly, much of *Ainsi parla l’oncle* was devoted to studying popular religion in particular much in the way Charles Maurras felt that the hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church was the essential element that bound the nation together. Haitian folk religion was then not only the key to Haiti’s African past but was also crucial to understanding a distinct Haitian mentality.¹ The idea of a “collective self” (*moi collectif*), of a racially grounded “spiritual unity” became the rallying cry of anti-occupation nationalists in Haiti. Evidence of its spread to black nationalist movements in France can be found in the pages of the ephemeral student magazine *Legitime Defense* (1932) and later the negritude movement, which set out to express what Aime Césaire called “our fundamental self” (*notre moi fondamentale*) in their cultural politics. It was Price-Mars’s argument for black authenticity, the militant, Maurassian dimension of *Ainsi parla l’oncle* that would be used by François Duvalier to confer legitimacy on his dictatorship in the 1950s and to eliminate the mulatto elite as traitors to the Haitian nation. To make matters worse, Price-Mars during the Duvalier years did nothing to overtly

dissociate himself from the regime's pernicious reading of his work. Laferriere reminds us that "the pact agreed to between Price-Mars and Duvalier looked like this: silence. But it was a deafening silence" (ibid., p. 265). It remained that way until Price-Mars broke his silence in 1968 a year before his death.

In his promotion of cultural authenticity as an alternative to the aggressive modernizing thrust of the US occupation, Price-Mars used the metaphor of bovarysme to describe an educated elite that was alienated from Haiti's popular culture. He used Jules de Gaultier's term bovarysme in the preface to *Ainsi parla l'oncle* as a metaphor for a Francophile elite that never questioned the validity of its borrowed fantasies. He implicitly mocked the elite for its blind and passive imitateness because it donned the trappings of a foreign culture, in his words, "the cast off garments of Western civilization." By Price-Mars's account Haiti failed to secure its independence as a black community because its elite suffered fatally from "*un bovarysme collectif*, that is a society's capacity to see itself other than it is." This supposedly pathological condition then led to an uncreative mimetic impulse. Speaking in the name of the Haitian masses and addressing the educated elite, Price-Mars felt that the nation's prolonged experience of neocolonialism was the direct result of the passive and uncreative nature of the Haitian bourgeoisie. The latter were seen as responsible for the US occupation that ran the risk of effacing Haiti from the map of the world. He makes this clear in his Foreword to *Ainsi parla l'oncle*:

Is it not a singularly dangerous course of action if this society burdened by various impediments, stumbles in the ruts of uncreative and servile imitation, because then it does not appear to make any contribution to the complex dynamic of human progress and sooner or later will serve as a pretext for nations impatient for territorial expansion, with hegemonic ambitions to erase it from the map of the world. (1973, p. 44)

Price-Mars's unnuanced use of the concept of bovarysme is inseparable from his belief in Haitian identity as fixed and unchanging. He saw bovarysme as having an exclusively

negative function and illustrated his theory of elite bovarysme with the damning assertion that “all that is authentically indigenous—language, customs, sentiments, beliefs—has the stigma of bad taste in the eyes of the elite smitten with nostalgia for the lost mother country. Furthermore, the word negro, formerly a generic term, has acquired a pejorative connotation” (ibid., p. 45). The prevalence of this idea of an authentic self in anti-colonial thought in the Francophone world can arguably be traced back to Price-Mars’s influence. His use of Jules de Gaultier’s term bovarysme to signify racial and cultural self-denial helps explain the rapprochement in the 1930s between Price-Mars and the American ethnographer Melville Herskovitz whose theory of “socialized ambivalence” was used to explain the psychic disequilibrium resulting from the clash between fundamental African values and assimilated European culture in the African-American psyche. It would have been difficult for Price-Mars not to succumb to the temptation to see bovarysme as pathological. Not only did this term explain why many upper class Haitians sought to accommodate the American occupation but also the idea of identity as fixed and unchanging was generally the norm at the early twentieth century. As the Haitian literary critic Maximilien Laroche lucidly observes, “*Bovarysme* . . . is not that exclusively negative attitude that Price-Mars adopts and should not be seen solely in a negative light.” He continues: “Identity is not a fixed object; it is mobile because it is composed not simply of a single element but of diverse elements that we modify constantly by substitution or variation. This view of identity was not widespread at the beginning of the last century” (2009, p. 365).

The election of the François Duvalier regime in 1957 provided a political platform for the radical application of Price-Mars’s concept of cultural and racial authenticity. The “Marsistes” had come to power and soon set about cleansing the Haitian body politic of all symptoms of bovarysme.² This concept arguably became the ideological cornerstone of an inward turning, isolationist dictatorship that lasted 29 years. In *From Dessalines to Duvalier* the chapter on François Duvalier’s presidency is tellingly titled “Culture and Tyranny 1957–1971” and Nicholls persuasively demonstrates the ways in which the Duvalier

presidency did not depend for its survival solely on a reign of terror or on totalitarian policies but on the manipulation of culture. The “restoration” as it was termed of the legitimate flag of the state of Haiti, the black and red flag of Dessalines; the transfer of the remains of former president Dumarsais Estimé to a shrine of the *bicentenaire*, which was the occasion to attack the mulatto elite for its “borrowed occidentalism”; the monument to the unknown maroon, which was meant to cement Duvalier’s credentials as a black freedom fighter—these are all examples of Duvalier’s shrewd application of the concept of bovarysme. The cultural terrorism the regime unleashed on the nation has left an indelible mark on the Haitian national consciousness. Nicholls must have been smiling when President Aristide fashioned himself as a modern-day Toussaint defending the will of the disadvantaged black masses against the mulatto elite and declaring, when he found himself in exile, in the words of Toussaint: “They have cut down the tree of peace but it will grow again.” An inexplicably “morbid interest that Haitians take in their past,” as Nicholls warned, helps keep alive the ethno-national mystification of Duvalierism (1985, p. 35).

After the departure of Baby Doc in February 1986, the desire for change manifested itself in jubilant and angry crowds that tried to physically erase the Duvalier dictatorship from the face of Haiti. Dechoukaj took the form of destroying the headquarters of the Tonton Macoutes, the homes of Duvalier officials, the BMW dealership of Ernest Bennett, and ultimately the mausoleum of the Duvalier family in the national cemetery. Uprooting the physical traces of Duvalierism did not, however, guarantee the end of the politics of the regime, which divided Haitians into patriots and *apatrides* [enemies of the state], authentic and *bovaryiste*. The “numerous scenes of sadness and distress” (1985, p. 224) that Nicholls observed at Duvalier’s funeral meant that the regime had managed to stay in power not simply through the brutal repression of the opposition. It had created a national narrative based on conservative models of identity and belonging. It had secured the complicity of Haitians by invoking an ideal of ethnic and cultural authenticity which found its intellectual justification in *Ainsi parla l’oncle*.

Haiti and the Hemisphere

I worked in Port-au-Prince in the mid Seventies with a weekly politico-cultural newspaper called Le petit samedi soir which pulled together a group of twenty year olds who were dynamic, courageous, curious. The image of Haiti that we had at the time was rather blurred and a bit out of date. We still had that old photo of Price Mars (1876–1969) with canonical work Ainsi parla l'oncle (1928). Because it had been passed from hand to hand, it had lost its power.

Laferrriere, 2005, p. 10.

In his unswerving focus on the internal and destructive dynamic of race and class in Haiti, Nicholls seemed to share Price-Mars's belief in the inherent and lasting values of rural culture. Rural Haiti was an oasis of calm for Price-Mars. At the end of *Ainsi parla l'oncle*, a pastoral idyll is devoted to the mountain village of Kenscoff, which comes in for high praise because of its "cool pasturelands," its "clear stream," which refreshes either because "it has breathed in the sweet aroma of lantana or collected, absorbed and cleansed the centuries-old humus from the generous and fertile soil in which the watercress flourishes." This is a microcosm of the Haitian earth where Haitian man can be grounded in Price-Mars's view (1973, p. 273). Nicholls was aware of Price Mars's use of rural space for identity construction. He refers directly to Price-Mars's idealistic view of the Haitian hinterland as the space of timeless homogeneity that resists modernity. "Price-Mars insisted that it is important to understand the nature and the strength of popular beliefs and customs in order to appreciate the consequent conservatism of the peasant and the resistance which he will put up to 'hazardous enterprises of reformers in a hurry'" (1979, p. 157). Nicholls was a bit of a *Marsiste* himself in this regard. At the end of *Haiti in Caribbean Context* he warns that there are aspects of Haitian popular culture and rural life, "which visiting academics and North Atlantic experts on United Nations 'missions' (the term, incidentally, is significant) frequently fail to appreciate. Any sort of modernisation or development which fails to build upon what is valuable in Haitian rural life would be a disaster for the country" (1985, p. 238). It could almost

be the old Uncle Price-Mars speaking. However, it is clear from Dany Laferriere's comment in the epigraph that Price-Mars's ideas had begun to fade in the seventies, at least for Haitians of his generation. The need for Haiti to move beyond the idea of a romantic heartland and innate values is symbolized in the tattered copy of *Ainsi parla l'oncle* with the faded photo of Price-Mars in the office of the newspaper *Le petit samedi soir* in the 1970s. Even if Laferriere did not particularly care for Jacques Roumain's work, the picture he paints in the seventies can be likened to the image of the pregnant Annaise at the end of Roumain's 1944 novel *Gouverneurs de la rosée*. There was a future waiting to be born as an old order had lost its legitimacy. However, the length of this gestation remains unclear as Annaise is still waiting to give birth and Duvalierist discourse continues to persist after Duvalier.

If, as Maximilien Laroche has asserted, the concept of identity as "mobile because it is composed not simply of a single element but of diverse elements" was not "widespread at the beginning of the last century," the same cannot be said for the end of the twentieth century. Indeed, the concept of bovarysme itself has been rethought and its original meaning restored in a positive light. How else can one understand the dedication of Dany Laferriere's provokingly titled novel *Je suis un écrivain japonais* (2008), which is "À tous ceux qui voudraient être quelqu'un d'autre" (To all those who would like to be someone else). Irreverent and disruptive, Laferriere's novels engage directly with Price-Mars's celebration of ancestral values and true Haitianess. In his novel of a return to his "native land," *Pays sans chapeau*, he mocks the Haitian noiriste ethnographer, J. B. Romain, a disciple of Price Mars. In this satirical portrait of Professor Romain, the author visits him and enters a tiny office "cluttered with old papers, African sculpture, Pre-Columbian statuettes" that is completely disconnected from the real world. He is ridiculously Marsiste when he confides to the narrator that he cannot understand contemporary reality because in his analysis of Haiti he is "still in Africa" (1996, p. 134). Furthermore, the origin of the entire book is explained in the paratext at the end of the novel in terms of the importance of the individual freedom to fantasize. Laferriere directly addresses the

reader and explains that the idea for the book was inspired by his neighbor, an illiterate artist called Baptiste. Baptiste always painted scenes he had dreamt up instead of the drab reality that surrounded him. When asked by a foreign reporter why he did not paint reality, he replied, "I do not need to dream it." Baptiste the illiterate artist is defiantly bovaryiste in his capacity to see himself and the world other than they are.

In this regard, Laferriere's work is profoundly political and ultimately motivated by an intellectual and aesthetic dechoukaj. This anti-Marsiste deployment of bovarysme was made possible by the late Edouard Glissant who at the end of 1950s became fascinated with the idea of global diversity, which he had taken from Victor Segalen. Segalen feared that transcendent hegemony of the West would reduce the world's cultural diversity, which would inevitably succumb to the forces of entropy. Whereas Segalen was horrified at the probability of global entropy, Glissant went on to elaborate a theory in which diversity would continue to evolve because of the unpredictable transformations that would be produced from global creolization. It is not, for instance, surprising that Segalen is quoted in the epigraph of *Eloge de la créolité*, which attempts to defend creole identity as essential to global diversity. While Segalen feared the loss of cultural specificity in the homogenization that colonization would inevitably impose, Glissant felt that cultures did not collapse as easily as Segalen feared. While he was acutely aware of the threat of a totalizing sameness, he felt entropy unlikely because of the capacity of cultures to continue to resist by creating new orders of difference. Caribbean culture was not seen in atavistic terms but as heterogeneous and unpredictable. Both Glissant and Segalen agreed on the importance of alterity or opacity in a world of global contact. It is the theorizing of the importance of otherness that led Segalen back to Jules de Gaultier's idea of bovarysme as the creative principle behind theorizing diversity. Segalen actually declares that "the master" of bovarysme "is he who allows me to think" and that "everything that Jules de Gaultier says about Bovarysme can be applied word for word to diversity" (2002, p. 53). Hence, de Gaultier's bovarysme is recuperated to explain that individuals did not have an immutable essence but were in a perpetual

state of becoming other. Whereas bovarysme lead Price-Mars to conceive of Haitian identity as rooted in a stable essentialist idea of authenticity, it lead Glissant through his reading of Segalen to conceive of all cultures in terms of flux and multiplicity. Detached from its negative connotations, bovarysme became the essential principle to imagining cultures as composite and inexhaustible. As he declares in his homage to Segalen, *Introduction a une poétique du divers*, "I demand for all the right to opacity. It is not necessary for me to understand the other, that is to reduce the other to my own model of transparency, in order to live or build with that other" (1996, pp. 71–72). The redeployment of Segalenian thought in a Francophone Caribbean context has given a strange afterlife to bovarysme. For Glissant the real threat to composite cultures came from their atavistic turning inward, from their refusal of the other.

By revisiting the idea of bovarysme through the work of Victor Segalen, Glissant came to the conclusion that concepts such as a "collective self" or the "spiritual unity" of a people were merely strategies of containment for repressively nationalist dogma. One's true nature is not only unknown but also unknowable (opaque) and bovarysme was crucial in recognizing the importance of alterity to subjectivity. Literature may be crucial in this regard as it can provide a site for experimentation with the question of identity. Not all literature written in exile by the anti-Duvalier opposition led to this kind of experimentation. The need for uprooting Duvalierism discursively was often eclipsed by a kind of nostalgia for the past and the lost homeland that have exerted a Medusa-like petrification on Haitian writing. The nostalgia of such works as Jean Metellus's *Jacmel au crepuscule* (1981) or Rene Depestre's *Hadriana dans tous mes rêves* (1988) point not away from Duvalierism but ironically back to the conservative nativism practiced by the regime. Emile Ollivier, however, in an interview with Jean Jonassaint in 1981 spoke of the need to leave behind the aesthetic of indigenism and of being preoccupied by "finding, inventing new structures to better translate the Haitian imaginary. . . . Finding my own, personal voice which would allow me to express the 'irruptive' (*irrué*) dimension of the world" (1986, p. 87). His use of the neologism "*irrué*" clearly demonstrates the influence

of Glissant's 1981 book of essays *Le discours antillais* where this word was used for the first time. Furthermore, Ollivier has graphically illustrated the failure of the imagination of the traditional Haitian intellectual in the tragic figure of Normand Malavy in his novel *Passages* (1991). As his name suggests, Malavy is doomed to failure because the stable subjectivity he craves is forever lost and he is incapable of accepting a new, less grounded Haitian identity. The writer who first attempted to make uprooting the very principle of his creativity was Jean Claude Charles whose works broke radically with Haitian ideological and aesthetic traditions. The magical "ville natale" of Metellus and Depestre is replaced by Paris and New York and many of his works are situated in sites of mobile identity such as the airport lobby, the hotel, and the taxi as sites for the Haitian imaginary. The question of who is a true Haitian is indirectly addressed in the novels *Manhattan Blues* (1985) and *Ferdinand Je Suis a Paris* (1987) in terms of the recurring reference to the Polish soldiers who deserted Leclerc to fight for independence with the Haitian army. Dany Laferriere, who has a high regard for Charles, directly addressed the question of nativism in his novel of childhood *L'odeur du cafe* (1991), which is not set in the place where he was born but where his literary sensibility came alive. Petit Goave in 1963 is remembered not as a quaint provincial town but as one that has all the features of cosmopolitan urban New World space. It is not Price-Mars's mountain village whose "centuries-old humus" grounds Haitian identity. It is a port whose meandering main street leads to the Caribbean Sea and the Americas.

The question of Haiti's American identity as it is raised by Ollivier, Charles, and Laferriere is not a new one. John Garrigus in his remarkable study of Haiti's southern peninsula *Before Haiti* (2006) complicated Nicholls's emphasis on race and color by adding the American dimension to a discussion of Haitian identity politics. Garrigus did not subscribe to Nicholls's model of color conflict, which presented Haitian identity as a simple confrontation between France and Africa but offered an insight into how a creole consciousness emerged with its unexpected affiliations and strategic self-positioning in the shadow of plantation slavery. Garrigus also questions the historical convention

of portraying Haiti's revolutionary and postindependence conflicts in terms of ethnic warfare between the black north and the mulatto south. He argued: "The South differed from the North not because it was more French...but because it was more "American" in the broader sense of the term" (2006, p. 17). Garrigus's *Before Haiti* gives us a richly detailed account of the emergence of creole society in the new world. In stepping outside of the black and mulatto legend of the Haitian past, he follows the lead of Laurent Dubois in *Avengers of the New World* (2004) who saw in the Haitian revolution the emergence of a new American identity in the hemisphere. The role played by an "American" or hemispheric identity in shaping the Haitian nation is never taken in to account by Price-Mars and never really complicates Nicholls's history of color conflict in modern Haiti.

As Nicholls himself pointed out, imperialism and migratory movements go hand in hand (1985, p. 187). Haiti's neo-imperialist experience since the US occupation has had the same effect. The disrupted nature of Haitian social and geographical space has been further intensified by the earthquake of January 12, 2010. Haitian identity has become less and less the product of a unique Haitian space and increasingly more global, diasporic, and cosmopolitan in nature. Arguably the key to true dechoukaj may be to see all Haitian space as profoundly irrué as Ollivier felt in 1981. If the ghosts of Duvalierist discourse haunt the present unending transition from the politics of Duvalierism, it is because the idea of authenticity has not been exorcized from the Haitian imaginary. Today, the use of the word "Dyaspora" to designate Haitians who live outside of Haiti has all the sting of Price-Mars's bovarysme. As Edwidge Danticat confesses in her new book of essays *Create Dangerously*, the founding moment for her artistically was Duvalier's public execution of two members of Jeune Haiti in 1964. The violence of the state is not only aimed at the bodies of the captured but also at their very identity. They were guilty because they were foreign:

Marcel Muna and Louis Drouin were patriots who died so that other Haitians could live. They were also immigrants, like me. Yet they had abandoned comfortable lives in the United States

and sacrificed themselves for their homeland. One of the first things the despot Duvalier tried to take away from them was the mythic element of their stories. In the propaganda that preceded their execution, he labeled them not Haitian, but foreign rebels, good-for-nothing *blans*. (2010, p. 7)

Otherness could be deployed in a deadly manner by the Duvalier state. Danticat goes on to say that the late agronomist turned journalist Jean Dominique was one of the few to defend those who were not seen as true Haitians. She quotes him as saying, “The Dyaspora are people who have their feet planted in both worlds” (ibid., p. 51). In an apparently unwitting response to Price Mars’s use of *bovarysme*, Jean Dominique argued for the importance of recognizing multiple Haitian identities. Dominique’s own experience of exile, return, and assassination makes him a later day Muna or Drouin. The possibility of seeing identity as always incomplete and always extending outward is promoted by new practices of reading and writing diasporically. True *dechoukaj* means as much rethinking *bovarysme* as thinking diasporically. Thinking diasporically means calling into question the very term *dyaspora*. In reflecting on the rebuilding of Port-au-Prince after the earthquake, Laferriere thoughtfully suggests that “the most important material is still the spirit. We would like to see a spirit turned towards the world, and not turned in on itself. Lets us leave behind this insular mentality which keeps us warm in a sterile sense of self-satisfaction” (2010, p. 145).

Over 30 years ago, Nicholls set out to show that Haiti was not an anomaly in the region and that color divisions in the society were the major cause of Haiti’s political failures. It was the historical divisions between mulatto elite and the black mass of the population that “have been one of the principal reasons why Haiti failed to maintain an effective independence” as he said in his Preface to *From Dessalines to Duvalier* (1979, p. ix). Nicholls’s account of the emergence and the persistence of Duvalierist thought made his work stand out among the others at the time, which all treated Haiti as an exception. Works such as Robert Rotberg’s *Haiti: The Politics of Squalor* (1971) and Robert and Nancy Heintz’s *Written in Blood* (1978) attempted

to explain the Duvalier dictatorship in terms of defects within Haitian folk culture. Instead of the culture as destiny approach, Nicholls explained Duvalierism in terms of a very Caribbean contest for political power that resulted from the debilitating effect of racial conflict in Haitian society. The Caribbean context in which the study of Duvalierism was written helps explain Nicholls's concern with racial ideology. While doing research on Haiti, he was painfully aware of the explosive divisiveness of race and color in ethnically plural Trinidad where he worked in the 1970s.

Nicholls viewed the ideological conflict in post-occupation Haiti as a struggle between two extremes, the *noiristes* on one hand and the Marxists on the other. His conclusion was that "neither of these extreme positions merits much serious attention" (1979, p. 240). As far as the *noiristes* are concerned, he would have agreed with Remy Bastien who wrote more than a decade earlier that "the intellectuals on the side of Vodoun have been, for better or worse, more efficient than their opponents. Their task has been easier since with little critical sense they were also obeying the password given once more from abroad. Exalt your African heritage. In Africa the *clerics* have known how far to go. In Haiti the brakes failed" (1966, p. 64). However he would have added that the Marxists too were in a sense "obeying the password from abroad" by forcing Haitian reality into a "procrustean bed built at the British Museum in the nineteenth century" (1979, p. 243). Consequently both Afrocentric doctrine and leftist dogma failed to pay attention to the concrete and the particular. In this regard, Nicholls constantly reminds us never to neglect the specific and the local. He would never romanticize the rural as Price-Mars did, but he distrusted centralized power. In his view, the bureaucratic state-driven model of Cuba was hardly better than what he called the "dead hand" of the centralizing Duvalierist state (1985, p. 238). He worried about the deterioration of provincial life in once thriving port cities such as Cap Haitien, Jeremie, and Gonaives. His warning about the loss of the local is still relevant today and may be summed up in the words of another Caribbean thinker who distrusted systems and insisted on the importance of the particular. In the words of Edouard Glissant we should not "forget

a single detail, not a corner of existence, not one island not a single river, not any way of speaking nor any rock, in the Whole and in the World” (1993, p. 434).

Notes

1. The influence of Charles Maurras on Haitian nationalist thought has not been seriously studied so far. Current research by Chelsea Steiber of New York University on the journal *Stella* and on fervent Duvalierist Gerard de Catalogne will provide important and original material in this regard.
2. Price-Mars’s book so profoundly influenced his followers that “some of his disciples claimed the title *marsistes*,” Jacques Oriol, Leonce Viaud, and Michel Aubourg, *Le mouvement folklorique en Haïti*, (Port-au-Prince: Imp. De l’Etat, 1952), p. 20.

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Chapter 3

From François Duvalier to Jean-Bertrand Aristide: The Declining Significance of Color Politics in Haiti

Alex Dupuy

In this chapter I will argue that one of the major casualties in the struggle against dictatorship and for a democratic alternative in Haiti since the 1980s has been the interpretation of Haiti's political history as a struggle for power between the mulatto and black factions of the dominant class rather than a conflict between this factionalized dominant class and the subordinate classes whose exploitation they relied upon for their wellbeing. The former argument has been most compellingly defended by David Nicholls, whose seminal work *From Dessalines to Duvalier: Race, Color and National Independence in Haiti* remains essential reading for all serious students of Haitian history. Much of Haiti's postindependence history, Nicholls argued, "must be seen as a struggle between a mulatto, city-based, commercial elite, and a black, rural and military elite" (1979, p. 8). These two elites, moreover, do not constitute two distinct classes but are part of a single but factionalized class. In other words, Haitian history has been mostly an intra-class rather than an interclass conflict. However, Nicholls suggests, during the US occupation of Haiti between 1915 and 1934, which favored the mulatto faction, an urban working class and a small but important black middle class emerged and henceforth began to play a significant role in Haitian politics. The middle class especially would play a crucial role in the ascendancy first of Dumarsais Estimé in 1946 and later of François Duvalier in 1957, both

leaders of a resurgent black nationalist movement that sought to displace the mulattoes from power. Thus, Nicholls argues, the power struggles in the period since the US occupation must be understood in terms of the changing class structure of the country (*ibid.*, pp. 9–10). But, he concludes, it is wrong to account for political developments in that period primarily or solely in terms of class and to ignore the central role of color divisions (*ibid.*, p. 10).

I agree with Nicholls that color divisions existed and played a role in Haitian politics during, before, and after the Haitian Revolution and since Haiti gained its independence in 1804. But we differ in our understanding of the connection between color and class. Contrary to Nicholls, I argue that color ideologies were not simply symptomatic of a struggle for power between two factions of the dominant class but most importantly a struggle for a share in the exploitation of the subordinated classes in terms of which faction controlled the state and its apparatuses, on the one hand, and the private sector and its links to the world market and foreign capital, on the other. Put differently, even though the color question cannot be reduced to the class question, it cannot be understood independently of the system of class relations. The construction of ideologies of color differences and classifications to justify the unequal positions of members of such color groups differ from society to society, or even within the same society to reflect the shifts in the structural location of and relations of power between the contending groups. Practices of racial or color distinctions and racism, therefore, always articulate with other class practices and their economic, political, and ideological manifestations in a specific society in the context of that society's position in the hierarchical international division of labor of the capitalist world-system.

Moreover, to see color as operating independently of the shared interests of the factions of the dominant class in the exploitation of the subordinated classes makes it impossible to explain the shift that occurred in the political discourse in the wake of the movement for a democratic alternative to dictatorship since the 1980s, the rise of Aristide to power in 1990 and again in 2001, as well as the subsequent presidential electoral

contests of 2006 and 2010. That shift, I will argue, displaced color as the claim to power and replaced it with the questions of legitimacy, that is, government by consent of the governed, and whose interests the state defends regardless of who governs. Those questions may have always been present, but the exclusion of the majority of the population from participating directly in the political process through the exercise of universal franchise and the transfer of power by means of coups d'état throughout most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries made it possible to justify the de facto claims to power on the basis of identity politics rather than the right to govern by legitimate consent.

I also disagree with Nicholls's interpretation of the concepts of race and color. For him, "race" refers to the subjective belief that a set of people regard itself and is generally regarded by others as being connected genetically to some extra-familial common descent. By contrast, he sees "colour" as referring to objective phenotypical or somatic characteristics such as skin color, type of hair, or facial features and argues that in New World societies like those of the Caribbean; all those who had "non-white blood" were considered by colonial whites and came to accept themselves as sharing a common African race, even if they made distinctions among themselves as mulattoes or blacks depending on their phenotypical or color characteristics (1979, pp. 1–2).

The difference Nicholls makes between race and color, however, does not hold. First, both definitions are based on the premise that people who share a common biological heritage expressed in the idea of "common blood" belong to the same race. But this assumes that someone who is said to belong to a race, say in the nineteenth or the twenty-first century, is connected to a member of that same race in the fifteenth or seventeenth century through an invariant common line of descent. Going that far back in history, however, would surely mean that everyone who lived in the nineteenth or the twenty-first century would be descended from many people by more than one route, as modern DNA testing is starting to reveal, thereby making it impossible to hold that those who belong to a particular race today shared a common biological or genetic heritage with the presumed members of that same race several centuries removed

(Appiah, 1986, pp. 25–27). Since it was not possible to know the multiple lineages of people with any degree of certainty before the advances in modern genetic and cell research, the only criteria for ascribing membership in a race were the phenotypical characteristics of color, hair, and bone structure.

Second, there is nothing in the facts of visible physical differences that in themselves explain racism. As Barbara Fields argued, racial or color classifications are not elements “of human biology...nor [are they ideas] that can be plausibly imagined to live an eternal life of [their] own. Race [and color are] not an [idea] but an [ideology]. [They] came into existence at a discernible historical moment for rationally understandable historical reasons and [are] subject to change for similar reasons” (1990, p. 101). In other words, there are no genes for whiteness, mulatto-ness, blackness, or other classifications, only ideological interpretations of phenotypes (Allen, 1994, p. 22). The white colonialists were clear about where they drew the line. Anyone who was perceived to have non-white blood was defined as black and treated as such. That those who were defined and defined themselves as non-whites or blacks in turn came to distinguish among themselves along the continuum of color characteristics is simply a variation on the same theme. But the fluidity of these categorizations and the difficulty of drawing a clear cut-off line between mulatto and black makes them just as arbitrary and socially and politically contingent as the distinctions between whites and blacks.

As I have argued in several of my other writings,¹ the dominant class that emerged during the revolutionary war and after independence in Haiti was neither homogeneous in terms of the socioeconomic origins or the complexions of its members nor unified politically. That factionalized class consisted, on the one hand, of the class of predominantly mulatto property owners who descended from the *affranchise* [free black] class of Saint-Domingue, and, on the other hand, the new black bourgeoisie formed during the regimes of Toussaint Louverture (1801–3) and Jean-Jacques Dessalines (1804–6). A major consequence of the class structure of postcolonial Haiti was that the state became a source of accumulation and social advancement for those who controlled it. Failing to maintain the sugar-based

plantation economy created by the French slave-owning class and to expropriate the former slave masses from the lands they appropriated during and after the revolution and transforming them into a wage-labor force, the bourgeoisie turned to the importation and exportation of commodities and to its control of the state as its bases of accumulation. As such, it derived its wealth primarily from the circulation rather than the production process. Since the state also depended primarily on the circulation process—through direct or indirect taxation—for its revenues, the state bourgeoisie entered into conflict with the private sector bourgeoisie to appropriate part of the surplus wealth produced by the working and farming classes. Under such conditions, then, it became difficult to establish government by legitimate consent, thereby making the coup d'état the most common mechanism for the transfer of power and dictatorship the most common form of government in the nineteenth and most of the twentieth century.

The class divisions described above expressed themselves in terms of ideologies of color. As they developed during the nineteenth century, the ideologies of color consisted of a reformulation of the racist ideology created during the colonial period by the French and became an expression of the conflicts between mulatto and black factions of the bourgeoisie and middle class to justify their claim to power and impose their dominance. The black elite used the ideology of color as a means of social advancement by countering the mulattoes' contempt for and devalorization of blacks. For their part, mulattoes used it to preserve their dominant social and economic position (Péan, 2000, pp. 112–13).

The mulatto ideology rejected the notion of racial inequality proposed by European racism but adopted nonetheless the European somatic norm image, with one important modification. Contrary to the European racist ideology, which eschewed all notions of racial intermixing to depict its ideal type of "whiteness," the mulatto ideology claimed that all advanced civilizations, most notably European, were the products of racial intermixing, and that Africa remained "backward because she has always been outside the great currents of immigration" (Laroche, cited in Martinez 1973, p. 29 and also in Labelle, 1978,

p. 57). From this it followed that the mulattoes, as the product of miscegenation between Europeans and Africans, considered themselves “closer” to the Europeans and therefore “more civilized” and “more advanced” than the blacks who were “nearer” the Africans. Thus, mulattoes believed they should rule Haiti because they were the “most capable.” Edmond Paul, a leading defender of the mulatto ideology, put it thus: “The incapacity of the greatest number is exploited in our country . . . by those who sought to place at the head of the state the least capable among the people, and this to elevate their own prestige, and so that their merit would not be challenged, and their ambition would not be rivalled” (cited in Dupuy, 1989, p. 123).

By contrast, the noiriste or black nationalist ideology claimed that the selfishness of the mulattoes since independence caused the ills of the country and that only blacks could articulate the interests of the black majority against those of the minority mulatto elite. Therefore blacks, and not mulattoes, should be in power because they alone could be the “authentic” spokesmen for the black masses and represent their genuine interests. As Louis-Joseph Janvier, one of the leading intellectuals of the nineteenth century and an articulate proponent of the black nationalist ideology, put it, “a government of the majority by the majority and by those who respect the majority is the only one possible in Haiti” (*ibid.*).

The two factions or blocs of the dominant class, then, redefined the racist ideology of the slave and colonial era to legitimize their claim to political power. As Nicholls recognized, it was not always easy to distinguish between mulattoes and blacks since the definition of who was “mulatto” and “black” tended to coincide with the class position of the individuals being defined, a fact well captured in the popular dictum in Haiti and elsewhere in the Caribbean and Brazil that “money whitens.” Nonetheless, as a social category, skin color and color classifications, fluid as they were, tended to correlate more or less with social class position in such a way that those of lighter skin complexion tended to be found more among the dominant and wealthier than among the poorer and powerless sectors of the population (Trouillot, 1990, pp. 110–13). Mulattoes certainly used “colour” strategically in their choice of marriage

partners and to exclude blacks with non-identifiable mulatto or upper-class lineage from their social clubs. But they could not exclude blacks from having access to the means of production, especially landed property, or political power. The wealth or power of individuals from both color factions of the dominant class made it possible for them to acquire similar standards of living, to educate their children in the same schools, to bequeath their wealth to their offspring, to reproduce their particular racisms through social or familial alliances, and hence to reproduce the system of class domination and its characteristic cleavages.

For these reasons, and in arguments similar to Nicholls's, some like Carole Charles have suggested that to see race or color in Haiti primarily as either an ideology of domination or a manifestation of class strife between dominant and subordinate groups is to make it a residual category. Instead, she argues, race or color is best understood as a product of collective practice embedded in both social relations and individual identity. For Charles, then, "in the former case [race/colour] participates in the creation and ascription of place, in the latter it is a matter of identity formation manifested in taste, networks of friends and clients, strategies of reproduction through marriage, and self-identification, as well as in other ways" (1992, p. 108).

But the two facets of the "colour question" in Haiti, that is its role in class domination and conflicts between fractions of the dominant class, and its role in individual identity and social practices, are not mutually exclusive. While the color question cannot be reduced to the "class question," it cannot be understood independently of the system and history of class and political relations in Haiti as I suggested earlier. Charles herself understands this to be the case when she argues that the "perception of race/colour is conditioned by class and culture," and that "blackness [or, I might add, "mulatrism"] in Haiti is a conceptualization of class interest in the language of race. It is a racial symbol whose meaning hides class conflicts, in particular between those dominant groups" (ibid., pp. 107–8). "Mulatrism," or the self-perception, identity formation, and individual practices of members of the mulatto population, serves a similar function as blackness does for members of the

black fraction of the dominant class. It provides them with a set of cultural references with which to negotiate their personal and social relations with other groups and classes and to justify their dominant and privileged positions in the society.

It does not follow, however, that, as Leslie Manigat and Nicholls argued, the “cleavages of colour” aligned the “mulatto bloc comprising bourgeois and petit bourgeois mulattoes vis-à-vis the black bloc comprising the middle classes and the black masses, despite class differences within each bloc,” and that these conflicts were decisive over the conflicts between classes (Manigat, 1975, pp. 16–21). As suggested above, the dominant classes included both mulattoes and blacks, and though each fraction used the “ideologies of colour” for its respective purposes, they were identical in all other respects vis-à-vis the subordinate classes. Moreover, no president or dictator, mulatto or black, could rule without including members of the “opposite colour” in his government and without cross-class and “cross-colour” alliances to form a “pact of domination.” Insofar as an ideology is not reducible to the class or racial group whose structural location provides the contents for its formulation, one could find mulattoes espousing a black nationalist ideology as much as blacks could defend the mulatto counterpart. It is worth quoting Jean Price-Mars’s reply to René Piquion who advanced a proposition similar to Manigat’s and Nicholls’s:

[The] fortunate and the powerful who constituted the ruling class and which included blacks as well as mulattoes, and on the other hand, the immense majority of jobbing labourers, the workers, the non-specialized, the unemployed of all colours, and especially the mass of rural labourers, the mass of peasants...constituted the *social question* [since] 1804...[This question] has been misrepresented, has been systematically masked by cloaking it with false claims ever since, for a long time, blacks and mulattoes killed one another to conquer power without the success of one or the other faction having changed in any way the living standard of the unfortunate more or less black, or more or less light skin. (1967, pp. 20–21)

Neither faction ever became socially, economically, politically, or ideologically hegemonic because neither could crystallize the

ideology of color into structures of exclusion or institutional discrimination. Since the reunification of Haiti in 1818 until the United States invasion and occupation in 1915, a balance of power or “pact of domination” had been formed between the mulatto and black factions of the dominant class, with the former retaining its advantages in the economy and the latter tending to predominate in controlling the state and in land ownership, especially in the northern and Artibonite regions of Haiti. The US occupation from 1915 to 1934, however, would change that precarious balance of power in favor of the mulattoes, and this fact would set into motion important new processes that would ultimately set the stage for the rise of François Duvalier to power in 1957 as the purported champion of the black nationalist cause.

During the 1930s and 1940s there emerged two currents within the broad Indigéniste movement of that period. Linked internationally to the Négritude movement, the Indigénistes in Haiti criticized and rejected the racist claims of Western culture and the rearticulation of those beliefs in Haiti by the bourgeoisie (both mulatto and black) that valued European and especially French culture as a mark of its social superiority. By contrast, the Indigénistes promoted a “genuine” Haitian culture that recognized and validated its African roots and contents. An explicitly racist offshoot of the Indigéniste movement, known as the Griot group (of which François Duvalier was a founding member), also emerged and went further by claiming that there existed a specifically African psychology and culture that was biologically determined and present in the collective personality of the predominantly black Haitian population. Accordingly, the solution to Haiti’s ills, which the Griots attributed to the mulatto elite’s European cultural values and support for the American occupation, consisted of transferring political power to the “authentic” representatives of the black majority and reorganizing the institutions of the society to express the African cultural values of the masses. Thus, the differences between mulattoes and blacks were said to stem principally from their cultural differences determined by their biological (that is, color) characteristics rather than from their divergent class or economic positions. Moreover, contrary to those in Haiti who

advocated a democratic form of government, the Griot nationalists maintained that Haiti needed a black leader who embodied the aspirations of the black masses and would defend them.

This more explicitly anti-mulatto articulation of the Griot nationalists served as the rallying cry for those sectors of the black middle class and bourgeoisie who opposed the economic and especially political resurgence of the mulatto bourgeoisie during and after the US occupation. That movement succeeded in bringing Dumarsais Estimé to power in 1946 with the aim of shifting power back to the black elite and middle class. The so-called Estimist Revolution of 1946 was short-lived, however, as mulattoes seemed to gain the upper hand once again with the rise to power of Colonel Paul Magloire in 1950. Though not a member of the mulatto faction, Magloire nonetheless was allied with and served its interests. As a member of the Griot group and supporter of the “1946 Revolution,” Duvalier set himself the task of conquering power on behalf of the black bourgeoisie and middle class in 1957.

It is in this historical context, then, that one can understand better the objectives of the Duvalier regime between 1957 and 1971 and its use of black nationalism in achieving them. Once he was “elected” president with the help of the Haitian military in 1957, Duvalier proceeded to consolidate his control over the state apparatuses. Duvalier did not seek to alter the class structure of Haiti and thus the social and economic dominance of the Haitian mulatto bourgeoisie. Neither did he aim to reduce the economy’s subordination to and dependence on foreign capital. Duvalier’s and the black nationalists’ objectives were to capture political power for the black bourgeoisie and middle class as a counterweight to the mulatto bourgeoisie’s economic dominance. This would be achieved by forging an alliance with other class factions under the leadership of the black bourgeoisie and middle class. The other classes that formed the power base of the Duvalier regime included members of the expatriate Levantine business groups resented and socially excluded by the mulatto bourgeoisie, sectors of the medium-size farmers, and elements from the urbanized lumpen-proletariat. Duvalier had very little support among the urban working classes.

For all its anti-mulatto ideology, however, Duvalier did not exclude mulattoes who shared his views and objectives from his administration. Though they were small in number, several well-known high-ranking mulatto officers and members of the mulatto bourgeoisie were among the staunchest defenders of the Duvalier regime in its early years. This shows once more that ideologies of color cannot be reduced to the color of one's skin or to the class faction one belonged to but rather to one's self-identification, interests, and objectives. As Cary Hector pointed out, however, one needs to distinguish between the ideology of conquest of power and the ideology of power, that is, between black nationalism as a contesting and revanchist ideology and black nationalism as the ideology of the black bourgeoisie and middle class in control of the state. The former justified the claim to political power by Duvalier as the incarnation of the "historic mission" of the black elite to gain power in the name of the black majority against the exclusivism and elitism of the mulatto minority. Once in power, Duvalier moved to monopolize the political space by suppressing all competing political opposition (Hector, 1972, p. 52).

Duvalier did not limit his attack to ideological and political opponents, however. To achieve the black nationalists' objective of a social and political balance with the mulatto bourgeoisie, the latter had to be removed from positions of power or authority in the apparatuses and agencies of the state, including and especially the military. To be effective against the mulattoes, however, the government's purge and repressive measures had to be ubiquitous and include all opposition or potential opposition, and it could know no bounds. Therefore Duvalier's first order of business was to consolidate his power within the state and over the society, and he spent the first seven years of his rule implementing that policy. The regime created a vast clientelistic network by staffing all the apparatuses of the state, including and especially the military, with those loyal to Duvalier.

From 1957 to 1964, Duvalier unleashed a reign of terror hitherto unknown on all opponents, real, potential, or imagined, and on the population in general. No one was spared: men, women, children, families from all classes, and even entire towns were subjected to the tyrannical and unpredictable

violence of the state. By striking against all, anywhere, and at any time, the new violence became as symbolic as it was preventive. Moreover, he sought to extend his control over all major state and civil society institutions, from the military to the legislature, the media, the Catholic Church, the public schools, and the trade unions. Still distrusting the military for its historic role in the making and unmaking of governments, however, Duvalier built an alternative armed force directly under his control, the so-called Volunteers for National Security, more popularly known as the Tonton Macoutes, recruited mainly from the ranks of the lumpen-proletariat in the urban centers and landless peasants, section chiefs, and Vodou priests in the rural areas. With some 10,000 members, the militia readily became much larger than the regular armed forces, including the police, which numbered slightly over 5,000.

In my view, the significance of Duvalierism was not only the form in which it exercised power, but also that it used that power to restore the balance that the black bourgeoisie and middle class had achieved with the mulatto bourgeoisie under Estimé in 1946–50 but lost in the subsequent years. The Duvalier regime shifted the *balance of political power* in favor of the black bourgeoisie and middle class and achieved a greater degree of autonomy from the bourgeoisie as a whole. Those were its primary objectives. Control over the state apparatuses offered the only sure avenue for the social and economic advancement of the black middle class because of the limits of private sector development and the exclusionary barriers imposed by the mulatto bourgeoisie and foreign capital. It did not intend or attempt to eliminate the economic dominance of the mulatto bourgeoisie as such, or the exploitative economic system on which that dominance rested. The regime simply sought to force the social and political accommodation of the mulatto bourgeoisie with the black bourgeoisie and middle class as the only way for the latter to share the spoils of the extant economic system.

Though Duvalier was willing to risk alienating the mulatto bourgeoisie to consolidate his power, he could not afford to do so without the backing of some of the Western European powers and especially of the United States. It was therefore essential for Duvalier to maintain good relations with the latter, but not

at the expense of his regime, its objectives, and its practices. In short, Duvalier accepted his dependence on foreign capital, but under certain conditions that he was not willing to compromise. Duvalier was willing to offer all the necessary advantages to foreign capital, such as tax exemptions, an abundance of cheap labor, and a climate of labor peace due to the suppression of all independent labor organizations and the banning of strikes. In return, Duvalier expected to be given foreign economic and military assistance, especially from the United States, but without the latter interfering in how he governed the country.

Through his clever exploitation of the United States' fear of communism and Haiti's proximity to Cuba, Duvalier managed to win its support. After the successful Cuban Revolution and the United States' botched Bay of Pigs invasion, Duvalier managed to get a reluctant United States to increase its aid package to Haiti. Duvalier may have been a barbaric tyrant, but he was also staunchly anticommunist and knew how to exploit the East-West conflict. The United States, which had failed to launch a successful invasion against Castro, had also drawn strong international criticism for invading the Dominican Republic and overthrowing its democratically elected president and was getting more deeply involved in an unpopular war in Vietnam. Under those circumstances, it was far more desirable to acquiesce to the Duvalier regime than to alienate it further and push it to seek ties with the Eastern bloc, as Duvalier feigned. For its part, the Duvalier regime, now secured in its power, could rein in the militia. Repression was no longer a daily necessity because the regime had succeeded in silencing the internal opposition and/or forcing it into exile. Thus repressive practices could be relaxed and targeted against selected opponents.

Besides winning renewed economic and military aid from the United States, the regime sought reconciliation with the mulatto bourgeoisie, now politically tamed, and encouraged foreign capital investment, now that a climate of political stability had been created. The reconciliatory moves toward the mulatto bourgeoisie also entailed a marked decrease in the anti-mulatto rhetoric of the early years. For its part, the mulatto bourgeoisie realized that the Duvalier regime concerned itself primarily with the monopoly of state power and a share in the

spoils rather than with its expropriation. Faced with the choice of joining the opposition, most of which was in exile, or acquiescing to the rapacious Duvalier dictatorship to protect its own interests, the mulatto bourgeoisie chose the latter. Besides, the regime's repressive policies toward workers benefited the bourgeoisie directly and offered other advantages such as tax evasion and participation in the generalized corruption of the government.

Foreign capital, too, especially that sector that relied on intensive labor production, saw many advantages in investing in Haiti. The abundance of cheap labor, the containment of all labor discontent, the generous fiscal concessions of the government, and the proximity of Haiti to the United States, all served to attract foreign assembly manufactures to Haiti. By the time François Duvalier died and his 19-year-old son Jean-Claude succeeded him to the presidency in 1971, a new alliance or pact of domination had been formed between the Duvalier regime, that is, the black nationalist faction of the bourgeoisie and middle class, the mulatto bourgeoisie, and foreign capital.

The regime of Jean-Claude Duvalier ruled Haiti until it was overthrown in February 1986 following years of protests and opposition by a growing and radicalizing popular democratic movement. A power struggle ensued among the Duvalierist forces and the military to determine which faction would control the state and impose a new dictatorship. Thanks to relentless pressure from the democratic movement none of those factions could consolidate its power, and in March 1990 a civilian government was formed to organize national elections that resulted in the landslide victory of liberation theologian Father Jean-Bertrand Aristide in December 1990. The broad popular movement comprised many different political, religious, civic, human rights, neighborhood, women's, professional, labor, peasant, and media organizations that gave voice to the people and formulated their collective *cahiers de doléances* [register of grievances]. The democratic movement fought to rid the country of dictatorship, democratize the government, eliminate corruption in public office, reform the military and police, and create a more just and more equal society. The most important characteristic of that broad movement was its decentralization

and autonomy. No single political organization, individual, or group of individuals controlled it. Nevertheless, the emergence of Aristide on the political stage in the mid-1980s led him to articulate like no one else could the multiple grievances, interests, and objectives of that movement and to become its standard bearer.

My interest here is not to analyze the contradictory practices of the first Aristide presidency, which lasted a mere seven months, or his second term in office (2001–4)² that also ended prematurely but to emphasize the fundamental break that occurred with the racially based nationalist discourse of the Duvalier dictatorship, modified as it was under the regime of Jean-Claude Duvalier, in favor of a more democratic, egalitarian, and inclusive discourse. Put differently, the entry of the lower classes, that is the majority of the population, onto the political stage and their demands for a restructured and more egalitarian society made it difficult if not impossible for them to be played off by ideologies of color, which the experience of the Duvalier dictatorship had exposed as a shield for brute exploitation and repression. Aristide tried to infuse the emergent democratic discourse with his own theological interpretation of the world to justify his rise to power. But, I will argue, notwithstanding this personal deviation, since the fall of the Duvalier regime in 1986 the language of rights, justice, and equality, in short of democracy, decisively displaced that of identity or pigmentation and its presumptions as a claim to power.

For all his shortcomings and contradictions, Aristide's most significant contribution has been to remove the veil of color in the political discourse to unmask the fundamental class interests of both factions of the dominant class and their international allies. Aristide likened Haiti to a prison, where the rule of the game was that the "prisoners" (the poor and oppressed) were presumed guilty by virtue of being poor. They must accept their plight (their "prison sentence") without protest, without discussing their social conditions with their fellow prisoners, and without organizing to defend their rights and their interests for fear of worse cruelty or death (1990, p. 34).

In Aristide's view, the Duvalierists, which can also be read as a euphemism for dictatorships in general, intended to maintain

power at any cost and, to that end, they deployed permanent violence and repression against the population. The Duvalierists sought to preserve power not simply for its own sake but to enable them to plunder the public treasury for their own benefit. The Duvalierists ran the state and the government like an organized gang, with the Duvalier family originally at its head. Yet, even with the Duvalier family gone (which Aristide likened to the “king” and “queen” in a chess game), the “bishops,” “knights,” and “rooks”—meaning the lower officials of the regime or those who sought to replace it—remained to take over and perpetuate the system. The military commanders linked to the system had become a mercenary force. Its lower echelons, particularly the rural police and section chiefs, benefited from the system principally by extortion and by terrorizing the population (Aristide, 1990, p. 26; 1992, pp. 70–71).

The holders of state power formed an alliance with the moneyed and propertied oligarchy and protected its interests. The Haitian bourgeoisie, which includes the landed and commercial–industrial oligarchy and represents a tiny fraction of the population, is in reality nothing more than a comprador bourgeoisie that mediates between foreign capital and the national economy. Its primary concern is to enrich itself by exploiting the people as much as possible and without regard for their welfare (Aristide, 1990, pp. 6–9; 1992, p. 71, pp. 74–76). The whole system was shored up by the imperialists from the “cold country to the north” through their military and financial aid and their economic policies. In short, the government and the oligarchy were devoid of any meaningful development or social project, save that of enriching themselves and maintaining the population in their state of ignorance and misery (Aristide, 1990, pp. 7–8; 1992, p. 71, p. 76). Needless to say, that critical view of the status quo earned Aristide the bitter opposition from and hatred of the dominant classes and the United States, whose objectives were simply to get rid of him. They would never trust him, even after his return to power in 1994 and his second and also abbreviated term in office from 2001 to 2004 when he sought to appease the bourgeoisie and the United States by enforcing the latter’s neoliberal policies.

But from February 1986 to September 1991 Haiti was a vast laboratory for popular participatory democracy. The popular classes were mobilized and organized; they articulated their demands and pushed to actualize them. Rather than surrendering their agency to the new government in the hope that it would defend their interests, they took nothing for granted and held that government's feet to the fire. Once he assumed power in February 1991, Aristide tried to act on the broad demands for jobs, better working conditions, a higher minimum wage, ending corruption in the public administration and public enterprises, greater access to education, a literacy campaign, health care, and land reform, among others. As we know, however, that brief experiment in participatory democracy came to an abrupt end in September 1991. The dominant classes and the military felt threatened not only by the intended reforms of the government but also by the vast popular mobilization that pressed for their implementation. That combination portended a realignment of forces the dominant classes and their foreign backers could not tolerate.

When President Clinton returned Aristide to office in October 1994 on the back of 20,000 US troops to finish out the remaining 18 months of his first five-year term, Aristide had also undergone a major transformation. His main objective now was to monopolize political power for himself and his Lavalas Family (FL) party to create what Robert Fatton aptly called a "presidential monarchism bent on suppressing any alternative, independent power" (Fatton, 2002, p. 120). To accomplish that goal, two conditions had to be met. First, Aristide had to ensure his reelection and that his FL party would also win an absolute majority in parliament. They accomplished both in the elections of 2000. Second, the 1987 Constitution had to be amended to remove the two-term limit for the presidency separated by a five year interval. Lavalas legislators proposed to do so in September 2003, but US ambassador Brian Dean Curran made it clear that Washington would consider such a move "fundamentally destabilizing" (Curran cited in Dupuy, 2007, p. 167). There was also opposition from within the ranks of Lavalas. Father William Smart, once a staunch Aristide

supporter and founder of Lavalas, called on the population to resist the amendment, but time would not allow the FL legislators to push it through.

That Aristide and FL contemplated prolonging their hold on power indefinitely was in keeping with the historical tradition of using the state as a means of social promotion and personal enrichment. These practices are at the root of the prebendary or predatory state system in Haiti. In my view, these facts more than anything else Aristide did during his second term were the principal reasons the middle and dominant class opposition coalitions backed by the United States, Canada, and France wanted Aristide out of power. They knew that as long as he was around they would not easily dislodge him and his FL party from their grip on power through the ballot box. The main point to note here, however, is that whatever else he aimed to do, Aristide could lay his claim to power only by playing the democratic game even if that meant manipulating it to achieve his ends. Though he occasionally alluded to their color and chastised the mulatto bourgeoisie for their selfishness and exploitation of the masses, his language remained essentially one of class and social injustices, not pigmentation as was the case before 1986. Likewise, the opposition to Aristide did not come only from the predominantly mulatto bourgeoisie but also from the middle class sectors that had opposed the Duvalier dictatorship and supported Aristide in 1990. The political discourse, in short, had shifted decisively away from dictatorship to democracy and hence from justifying one's claim to power on the basis of color to government by and with the consent of the governed. This shift, I maintain, represented a fundamental turning point in Haiti's political history.

Aristide's break with the interests of the subordinate classes also expressed a shift in the balance of class forces since his overthrow in 1991. The popular movement was severely weakened after three years of brutal repression and a crushing economic embargo, and it was now fragmented into pro- and anti-Aristide factions. At the same time, the Haitian bourgeoisie, under the hegemony of Washington, regained the upper hand. In the absence of a strong popular movement to check him as before, Aristide pursued an accommodation with the bourgeoisie and

foreign capital during his exile in the United States and also to the US-led military intervention sanctioned by the United Nations that returned him to office. As a quid pro quo for returning him to power, Aristide accepted the neoliberal policies drafted for Haiti by the international financial institutions in October 1994 and continued to implement them during his truncated second term even though he got nothing in return from the international community for his compliance.

Moreover, and just as important, after assuming power in 2001 his Lavalas party and government officials transformed themselves into a mafia-like organization, complete with internecine conflicts among rival factions; engaged in rampant corruption, drug trafficking, and the diversion of funds destined for public works projects; profited from the sale of tax-exempt imported rice and from banking and investment schemes that defrauded middle-class Haitians of their savings; and last but not least, used gangs, some of whom were armed, against their opponents.

Noteworthy here is not the fact that a once popular leader brought to power by the people struggling for a more egalitarian and just social order ultimately broke with those objectives to pursue his and his party's own interests by transforming the state into their private fiefdom. It is rather the paradigmatic shift in the political landscape and language, which is no longer centered on which color faction of the dominant class ought to rule but whether those who rule do so with the consent of and are accountable to the people who put them in office. Though he occasionally made reference to color in his attacks on the mulatto bourgeoisie, Aristide's discourse was fundamentally one of class, not of color. He ultimately lost his legitimacy because he betrayed the trust the people had put in him to champion their interest over those of the foreign investors and the wealthy few. The return to democratic government in 2006 after Aristide's second overthrow in February 2004 and the interim rule of Prime Minister Gérard Latortue, imposed by the United States, Canada, and France, rekindled the discourse of democratic legitimacy and whose interests do the elected serve or ought to serve. The election of René Préval for a second and final term in 2006 and the inconclusive elections

of November 2010 that pitted political rivals from the traditional middle class political elites, the mulatto bourgeoisie, and the governing party of Préval were also fought on grounds of democratic legitimacy, not representation by color. Thus, while one could still argue that color identities may continue to play a role in the ascription of place and the social networks and alliances (marriage, familial, and so on) that individuals pursue, the economic, social, and political changes that have occurred since the fall of the dictatorships in the latter part of the twentieth century, at both the national and international levels, make it impossible to sustain and legitimize ideologies of color as claims to power. The emperor/press has no clothes.

Notes

1. Unless otherwise noted, full documentation for the claims I am making in the rest of the chapter can be found in Dupuy (1989, esp. Chapters 3 to 6 passim); (1997, esp. Chapters 5 and 6 passim); and (2007, esp. Chapters 5 and 6 passim).
2. See Dupuy (1997) and (2007) for my analysis of Aristide's truncated presidential terms.

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Chapter 4

The *Macoutization* of Haitian Politics

Patrick Sylvain

This chapter will explore the characteristics of what I will term here the “*macoutized* state” under the Duvaliers, which includes exclusionary acts and repression, the collapse of distinctions between public and private spheres; the assertion of politics as a mystical force whether Christian, Vodoun, or both; and the construction of a *noiriste* and nationalist ideology to solidify power. In essence, political activity was seen as something that only a chosen few could partake in, with François Duvalier (and later his son) as the supreme guardian and patriarchal father of the nation. Peasants and the urban poor were treated as subjects of the state and were therefore excluded as participants in the discourse of nation building and equality. In the Duvalier *macoutized* state, just as in a traditional family, the “children” or its citizens were thought incapable of making complex decisions; only the father was regarded as competent enough to decide. Anyone who dared redefine the private and public spheres was systematically repressed.

There were three dimensions of Duvalierist exclusionary politics and the entrenchment of the *macoutized* state: (1) deliberate ethnic policies against the traditional mulatto or white elites who maintained power along color and class lines, (2) systematic silencing, exiling, or imprisonment of university professors and students who did not adhere to the ideological framing of policies or the political leanings of the state apparatus, and (3) co-option and pressurizing of Catholic and small evangelical churches that had to adhere to the regime’s policies, teachings,

and choices of religious leadership. The repressive methods as well as the politics of rewards were so effective that exclusionary politics became self-regulated. As a result, the elites became subalterns to the Duvalier macoutized state and thus compromised any viable construction of a civil society and participatory democracy.

It is essential to locate the exclusionary politics of François Duvalier as a counter policy to the blatantly color-biased policies of President Élie Lescot (1941–46) and others who systematically favored mulattoes and whites over blacks. President Lescot, for example, systematically suppressed the Vodoun religion through the brutal anti-superstition campaign known as rejection or “*rejete*” that also brought, subsequently, the *apostolization* of the nation in all institutions. At this time, the Catholic Church became much more involved in governmental politics and grew to become one of the strongest institutions in Haiti. Lescot publicly antagonized the black majority by excluding black officers and high ranking soldiers from almost all public functions, including his regular Sunday outings to the Rex Theatre and frequent fêtes at the Cabane Choucoune. Further exclusionary politics were fueled by the popular students’ “revolution” of 1946 that ushered in noiriste sentiment and embraced the accomplishments of President Dumarsais Estimé. Elected in 1946, Estimé increased the induction of blacks into the middle-class, modernized Port-au-Prince, and valorized Haitian culture, but his full term was brought to an end by a military coup led by General Paul Eugène Magloire. In the 1957 elections, the mulatto presidential candidate Louis Déjoie, an influential businessman and senator, used racially derogatory language to refer to the peasant majority as “big toes” (uncivilized persons) and declared that the combined presidencies of Estimé and Magloire (1946–56) were wasted and regressive years due to the fact that they were led by black presidents. Described by Diederich and Burt as a “haughty mulatto patrician,” Déjoie “claimed the office as birthright passed down from his ancestor, President Fabre Nicolas Geffrad” (1986, p. 14). Such attitudes typified the pseudo-aristocratic tendencies of Haiti’s elite that perpetrated the politics of exclusion and corroded the making of the nation-state.

The spillage of racial politics from the private sphere to the public sphere in the 1957 election empowered Duvalier who had gained legitimacy from the high ranking officers (by then, mostly blacks), the energized black youth, and the disenfranchised peasants who, for the most part, saw in François Duvalier the embodiment of Estimé. This perceived embodiment, linked with Duvalier's political ruses and General Antonio Kébreau's ambition to remain as the head of the army staff, led to the army-controlled election of 1957 that favored Duvalier. Although the army had historically been the arbiter of power, *noirisme* à la Duvalier was not only symbolic but also translated into a form of material power to co-opt and silence members of the military. David Nicholls provides a substantive reading of the country's institutional struggles with Duvalier's ideological and tactical control of the military: "Throughout his fourteen years in power Duvalier maintained a continual watch upon the army's leadership and thereby prevented it from becoming an independent variable in the political arena" (1987, p. 216). Duvalier also successfully controlled the influence of the mulatto class by curtailing much of their economic and labor-related activity and appointed key Syrian-Haitian business leaders to his cabinet.

The very existence of the miniscule Haitian bourgeoisie, which in itself is a misnomer, depends entirely on state power and foreign capital. Since the inception of the Haitian state, the oligarchy and the political classes have constantly either colluded or collided over political leadership and economic patronage, or, simply put, they have always contested the dominant structures of power. The crisis of 1956 through to the 1957 election proved to be, as Michel-Rolph Trouillot argues, a "crisis of hegemony" that was marked "by *the impossibility for the Haitian bourgeoisie of formulating a political discourse, even through an intervening class*" (1990, p. 146). Despite the political opportunity offered by the establishment of universal suffrage in 1957, slight gains in literacy, and the increase of the urban population in Port-au-Prince, the military, and the bourgeoisie systematically failed to seize the cultural and political opportunity to democratize the political space. As Trouillot further remarks, "it is here that one can speak of an ideological

handicap: the bourgeoisie was unable to fight in the open. The total powerlessness of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate in 1956–57 marked the end of the nineteenth-century legislative tradition” (1990, p. 147).

This ideological handicap coupled with an inability to fight in the open ultimately resulted in Duvalier’s control of the public and private sectors to form one dominant political sphere within his reign of power. Four days after Duvalier was declared president-elect, senator and businessman Louis Déjoie called for a general strike, a tool that had been proven effective against the Magloire government. This action however was met with systematic force by the military that torched all closed businesses and allowed the population to ransack stores and depots. Furthermore, on September 29, the army declared martial law and an order to shoot on sight was given allowing plain soldiers and military attachés executionary power.

The 1957 election was, as Trouillot reminds us, “gutter politics, politics of the lowest caliber: no standards, no ideals, no restraint. Control of the executive was not merely the main issue; it was the only issue” (1990, p. 147). In the absence of either a viable private sector or a functioning social security system, securing hegemony over the executive became a national and, specifically, a class obsession. Controlling the supreme branch of state power held forth many temptations: access to economic resources, impunity, and even the possibility of eternal power. It was the military order of September 29 that brought the Haitian people into the abyss and cemented Duvalier’s hold on power.

Duvalier’s Ideological Formation and Rise to Power

François Duvalier’s paternal grandfather, Florestal, was a tailor. His father, Duval Duvalier, was a schoolteacher and justice of the peace. Both were born in Martinique and migrated to Haiti. François was born in Rivière Froide, a very small rural town in the south of Carrefour, which is located between Port-au-Prince and Leogane. His mother, Uritia Abraham, worked at a bakery in Port-au-Prince shortly after the family had moved from Bizoton to Rue des Miracles, where François grew up (just a

few blocks from the National Palace). Before Uritia's death in 1912, she worked in the home of Jean-Marie Moïse, a wealthy businessman, where François spent his young years.

While growing up on Rue des Miracles, he befriended Jean-Joseph Lorimer Denis, who was also a student of Jean Price-Mars and an Africanist who studied mysticism and the Vodoun religion. By the time Duvalier graduated from Lycée Pétion in 1928, his mystical studies with Lorimer were in full progress. It is also crucial to note that Dumarsais Estimé, before he became president, was Duvalier's mathematics teacher and mentor, and Jean Price-Mars was his social science teacher. Lorimer, Estimé, and Price-Mars formed the trinity in François Duvalier's intellectual, spiritual, and political life. That trinity formed the basic scaffolding of Duvalier's Haitianist, noiriste ideology that fundamentally rejected the pro-mulatto rules of the day. As Nicholls reminds us, Duvalier and Denis believed that no leader "who was sincerely devoted to the cause of the masses could possibly emerge from that group" (1987, p. 194).

Given the limited avenues to upward mobility for the lower middle class in Haiti, Duvalier tried the first secure route to increased power by enlisting in the military academy right after finishing secondary school. He failed the military exams and shortly thereafter entered medical school at the National University, where he later graduated as a doctor in 1934. Upon graduation, he automatically entered the ranks of the middle and intellectual/political class in a country with an illiteracy rate of about 92 percent. While in medical school, as an intellectual, he became a member of a group of early Haitian Africanists who were displeased with the US occupation of Haiti and were witnesses to the cultural alienation and social chasms that resulted from the 1860 Concordat, that not only Gallicised the Haitian elite, but imposed Roman Apostolic Catholic doctrines upon the society. Hence, when Duvalier, Lorimer Denis, and a few others founded the Griots movement, it was simply an extension of the Indigéniste school of literary thought that Emile Roumer, Jean Price-Mars, and Normil Sylvain founded.

By 1938, members of Les Griots ventured into systematic study and research of anthropology, sociology, ethnology, religion, and history with great emphasis placed on cultural history

and the effects of colonization. Given that the executive was and still is the supreme branch of structural power in Haiti, black intellectuals felt snubbed as they were excluded from power from 1908 to 1946. (The US occupation also buttressed the power-based color ideology to favor the small mulatto elite.) As David Nicholls states, "*Griots* writers called for the development of a "*conscience nationale*," which would involve the acceptance of new values and a rejection of the old individualism and of the colonial mentality which was still a powerful factor in Haiti" (1987, p. 196). The Griots also conceived of restructuring the school system to include the teaching of the Créole language at the primary level to reform, if not limit, the control the Roman Catholic Church had in education, which undermined the culture of the people. Additionally, though not overtly, Les Griots ultimately aimed at entry to the executive branch in order to carry out their national projects. Before Duvalier began working as a civil servant in the Estimé government, he had already built a reputation as an effective country doctor, a scholar, an ethnologist, and a folklorist. Even before becoming president, he was already at an advantage over his future opponents as he had a fundamental understanding of the people and the dynamics of power relations as arbitrated by the military.

The 1940s would prove extremely important to Duvalier's professional and political career. He worked closely with American doctors and army officers, met Clément Barbot whom he had hired as a material and supplies inspector, came in closer contact with the peasants, and studied the Lescot government's policies and the way the Haitian army had overthrown it. In 1943, he participated in a campaign sponsored by the United States to control the contagious tropical disease yaws, an infection of the skin, bones, and joints. As a result of his success in that regard, from 1944 to 1945, he received grants to study public health at the University of Michigan. After returning to Haiti a year later, he joined the government of President Estimé as director general of the National Public Health Service and in 1948 was appointed as minister of Health and Labour. After opposing Paul Magloire's coup d'état in 1950, Duvalier returned to the practice of medicine, becoming heavily involved in malaria campaigns, refusing Magloire's offers to join his government.

In 1954, due to his centrality in the opposition, he abandoned his medical practice and went into hiding for two years until President Magloire in 1956 granted general amnesty to all political opponents before he was overthrown by the military.

Within a ten-month period, six governments were formed, and with the blessings of General Antonio Kébreau and various tactical alliances, Duvalier confidently declared his candidacy in the 1957 army-controlled elections and ran on a platform based on national reconciliation and reconstruction. Duvalier knew that he “ultimately owed his power to the Army, which supervised the voting process and exercised a veto over his presidency” (Trouillot, 1990, p. 136), and therefore, at the beginning of his presidency, he acquiesced to Kébreau’s demands until he was able consolidate his power.

The Presidency and Power Consolidation

Whether Duvalier intended to be a dictator or if political circumstances instigated the outcome is somewhat irrelevant. One cannot arrive at an empirical fact through interpretive deductions of historical intentionality. However, the historical structural function of the presidency is central to understanding Duvalier’s evolution within a sociopolitical framework. Scholars of Haiti disagree on the nature of the Duvalier presidency. On the one hand, Nicholls contends that “it would be a mistake to think of Duvalier’s regime as either totalitarian or fascist,” correctly arguing that “there was no consistent attempt to impose upon the country a total ideology, or to dominate the whole life of the average citizen” (1987, p. 213). Because life for the non-politically involved citizen went on without interference from the regime, that is, as long as a family member did not encroach or was not accused of participating in subversive politics, particularly for the mulatto elite, the Duvalier regime’s tentacles were not felt. On the other hand, Trouillot characterizes the Duvalier presidency as a “totalitarian executive,” resting on a tradition of centralized power that “necessitated violence without limit [and] also implied the reshaping of the networks of power” (1990, p. 171). Trouillot’s Arendtian reading of totalitarianism, while important, does not fully fit the Haitian case,

for the Duvalier regime lacked what Arendt termed “ideological scientificity,” which she described as “an almost exclusive insistence on scientific prophecy as distinguished from the more old-fashioned appeal to the past” (1973, p. 345). In Haiti, the use of science on behalf of the regime was completely absent; even the use of psychological warfare, an integral part of propaganda for the totalitarian regime, was also absent. Likewise, Arendt’s poignant definition of totalitarian violence does not correlate with Haitian realities. In Arendt’s terms, “terror continues to be used by totalitarian regimes even when its psychological aims are achieved: its real horror is that it reigns over a completely subdued population” (ibid., p. 344).

However while terror through material violence was systematized in Haiti, and was used to consolidate power particularly in the urban centers, and specifically in Port-au-Prince where the nucleus of power resided, it was used primarily to dissolve the power of the military and the traditional oligarchy. As early as April 1958, Duvalier had revamped the military by firing, sending into exile, or giving ambassadorial and consular positions to many high level officers, particularly those who were General Kébreau’s allies. Thus, a different assessment is needed to understand the centrifugal (center-fleeing) dynamic of the Duvalier regime versus the centripetal (center-seeking) dynamic of the likes of Trujillo, Mussolini, or Hitler. It is the distributive aspect of the Duvalierist axis of power that allowed each tentacle to operate independently while remaining ideologically aligned with the center.

Duvalier’s clientelist politics were also embedded in the distributive allotment of money and power that kept the system afloat. In a poor and traditionally authoritarian society without job security, Duvalier knew the price of each person and also played on the cultural notion that in Haiti each man wants to be a strongman and wants to taste power. Each *grese pat* (greasing of the hands) that Duvalier or a Duvalierist made was therefore an act of largesse that automatically guaranteed loyalty but also tagged the individual as a commodifiable subject/object. Each personal tie and friendship made with the macoutes and later the macoutized military was regarded as beneficial to the system. Duvalier made sure he knew the personal vices and

behaviors of each of his close collaborators in order to ensure that the proper punishments would be rendered, especially within the core of the *Volontaires de la Sécurité Nationale* (VSN). Duvalier founded the VSN, popularly known as the *Macoutes-lou* (powerful *macoutes*) on July 29, 1958. It must be noted that by May 2, 1958, the House of Representatives had given Duvalier a full decree to rule as he saw fit in the “interests” of the nation. Unintentionally, the May 2 decree eventually brought the *Cagouards* from obscurity into a visible force that would be assembled into the *Milice* (militia) and later VSN.

The May 2 decree also solidified in legal terms, the demise of parliament as a legal and political arbiter. Hence, a new and systematically enhanced distribution of power was born out of a leader who presented himself as a father figure and also as a nationalist who bid for “autonomy” and certain type of “ethno-Haitian” rule. The violence rooted in false nationalism and a type of ethnic-power-equilibrium was the embodiment of Duvalier’s fundamental ideology. Thus, the patriarchal state embodied in Duvalier was reproduced within each *macoute* in order to maintain or acquire support. Hence, the material distribution of money took place in a manner similar to the way that the distribution of manpower was administered to various Duvalierist actors who were strategically placed throughout Haiti. Each of these actors became not only a material symbol of the regime but also a clientelist gatekeeper that acted as a portal to power, security, connection, and privatized law. The idea here is that these actors embodied a personalized federal system of central power that disseminated Duvalier’s doctrine of *la Patrie*, the father country, loyal to the family that Duvalier himself symbolized. Thus, any misalignment or treacherous acts against the doctrine, whether external or internal, were perceived as an act against the country and therefore merited severe punishment.

The perfect example of this phenomenon is Clément Barbot who was considered almost a brother to Duvalier and was the head of the regime’s Detective Services (SD) formerly known as the *Cagouards*. It was the *Cagouards* that first provided security for the new government and started its reign of terror

within a week of winning the 1957 election. Barbot became the head of the VSN. During the first two years of the regime, Barbot was a most trusted individual and even resided in the palace. After Duvalier's first cardiac arrest, which incapacitated him for two months, Barbot was temporarily in charge of the executive. Due to his power and trust within the regime he brokered various deals. Members of the State Department and American operatives in Haiti as well as President Trujillo of the Dominican Republic saw him as the logical successor (Ferguson 1987; Nicholls 1987; Florival 2007).

Given that the executive is the axis of power in Haiti, and is highly desirable given the benefits it offered, Barbot immediately saw himself as the future president and made the mistake of confessing that desire to a known Duvalierist, Dr. Rousseau, who was personal physician to the president. Once Barbot's intention became public, Duvalier decided to monitor him closely and banned him from going to the kitchen of the palace for fear of poisoning. Deducing that Duvalier's knowledge of his desires to become president derived from Dr. Rousseau, Barbot made the fatal mistake of killing him. Later, having concrete evidence of Barbot's disloyalty, Duvalier ordered his arrest on July 14, 1960, after incriminatory materials were found in his house. He incarcerated him for 18 months in the very prison that he directed, in a tiny room without light. Interestingly, once released, Duvalier summoned him to the palace, fed him his favorite meals, and offered him a brand new English car that he could not drive, but that would take him via chauffeured police from his house arrest to a seminary where he was ordered to pray for forgiveness. His house arrest lasted till April 19, 1963, when he managed to escape. He soon became the system's archenemy, participating in several failed plots, including the attempted kidnapping of Jean-Claude Duvalier. He was eventually killed on July 14, 1963. "Barbot died three years to the day after Duvalier ordered his arrest and imprisonment at Fort Dimanche" (Diederich and Burt, 1986, p. 241).

From September 1957 to May 1963, the Cagouards, the Milice, and the VSN continued to grow as part of a noiriste, Duvalierist, and nationalistic corps. Through brutality, patronage, and terror they not only eradicated opposing elements,

but they also psychologically weakened any entities that might have materially opposed Duvalier. Although the Macoutes were not invisible, their invisibility was found in the material silence felt from members of the Haitian middle class who aspired to control the executive. After Léon Cantave's failed attacks of May 1963, the regime's opponents within the country became publicly resigned to accept Duvalier's permanent reign. Later, Coast Guard commanding officer, Colonel Octave Cayard, after being summoned by Duvalier in April 1970, decided not to render himself to the Dessalines barracks, pulled out into the bay, and attacked the palace. According to Diederich and Burt "some fifty shells struck the palace and around it, but there was no heavy damage" (1986, p. 393). Two days later, on April 25, after Cayard's boats had run out of fuel, "the US Navy stripped their guns, and referred them to its Roosevelt Roads Base in Puerto Rico" (*ibid.*).

After the 1961 assembly elections/selections, the United States made it clear that its government regarded those elections as fraudulent and that Duvalier's constitutional term should end in 1963. By early 1962, the American AID Mission was withdrawn from Haiti, and by April 1963 an American fleet maneuvered close to Port-au-Prince. On May 15, in an attempt at further isolating Duvalier the, United States suspended diplomatic relations. At the same time, with Haitian-Dominican relations under President Juan Bosch at an all-time low, Duvalier became an ideological enemy and strategically claimed that Bosch had planned to invade Haiti, thus turning it into another communist country. Even the Organization of the American States (OAS) became involved, sending a fact-finding mission to Haiti. However, Duvalier remained firmly in control, and the Dominican Republic backed down. Meanwhile, diplomatic relations with various countries worsened, as British ambassador Gerard Corley-Smith was expelled in 1962, and the removal of the US military mission and ambassador was sought. "Washington complied and followed up by revealing Thurston's recall at Duvalier's request" (Diederich and Burt 1986, pp. 234–35). After the "election" of 1961, and following the decree of 1958, Duvalier used his success at thwarting "invasions" to make the nation believe

that attacks on him were attacks on the nation. In a rare video interview by British journalist, Alan Whicker, Duvalier calmly and emphatically said, “they spent several million dollars to destroy our fatherland, I stress on it, to destroy our fatherland” (Whicker, 1969). Depicting himself here as both the nation and the protective father of the nation, it was only a matter of time and convenience before Duvalier moved to be installed as President for Life. Notably, it was the Legislative Chamber that “requested” Duvalier to be installed as President for Life, to which Duvalier “consented” on April 1, 1964. The Legislative Chamber also rewrote the 1957 Constitution and specifically altered Article 197 to facilitate a legal move toward establishing a permanent executive. The June 22, 1964, “referendum” achieved that. Having dominated the country’s political machine, and in the process having stymied the United States, the OAS, and the Dominican Republic, Duvalier successfully macoutized the state and the army in his vision of structural power.

Duvalier’s Clientelist Dictatorship and Macoutized Power

In the absence of technological advances and corporate structures, the economic system was not dependent on the power of the central state nor was it committed entirely to Duvalier’s fiefdom. However, Duvalier’s control over the armed forces, the removal of strikes as a political weapon, the maintenance of hegemony over the governmental machine, and the permission of corruption as an operative norm provided mechanisms that sustained the status quo. With widespread illiteracy, massive exploitation, large scale unemployment, no real representative institutions, relatively rigid class and ethnic structures, the traditional dictator thrived in an environment that was historically nondemocratic and unmodernized. The dictator became a product of his environment, and his level of success depended on how well he comprehended that environment and how he was able to manipulate it. According to Howard Wiarda, the traditional dictator “emerges as a deliverer and savior, as a symbol of the aspirations of his people, and as their incarnation . . . The

grounds of his legitimacy tend to be shaky which means he may have to compensate for it by using arbitrary methods and by imposing a system of tight control" (1968, p. 190). It is the fundamental issue of legitimacy and the need to impose tight controls that resulted in Duvalier's clientelist dictatorship and a macoutized system of power to ensure conformity.

While the Haitian peasants remained relatively inarticulate, unorganized, isolated, and dehumanized, they embraced Papa Doc due in part to the notion that Duvalier and the nation were one and indivisible, and he occasionally provided for them like a "good father" with monetary rewards for keeping the country safe from all communists. They also embraced him because any of them could be a chief, a Tonton Macoute. In another dimension, there were the lower to middle-class bureaucratic technicians, the civil servants. While many of them were competently capable of carrying out their professional duties or governmental business, several of them were chosen for their loyalty to the Duvalierist ideology and their personal commitment to a patron who happened to be connected to the Duvalier circle of power. Unlike a totalitarian regime, allegiance here did not have to be directly tied to the president; power was distributed so that an expansion of clientelism could occur and further ensure the consolidation of power and loyalty. In a sense, Duvalier became an "-ism," a systematized way of operating without having the constant presence of the subject of distributive power himself. As if by proxy, power was generated and distributed as long as the extended spokes remained Duvalierist. As Diederich remarks:

The Duvalier governmental machine was peopled with innumerable opportunists at all levels. There were others who, looking for their own future protection, were open to pleas for help. Thus, Haitians finding themselves in difficult straits with some government agency or official were able to neutralize the threat themselves by obtaining the higher-ups with whom they had a social, monetary, or blood relationship. (1986, p. 224)

In taking into consideration the distinctive role of the most important actor, the dictator, in the wielding and distribution

of power, it is essential to probe the systematic role of inclusionary as well as exclusionary practices at the organizational, personal, and ideological levels that are integrated and embodied in his person. Through such practices, he gained hegemony over his associates and created a passively lethal atmosphere for loyalty, patronage, and control of powerful positions within the state apparatus. Duvalier as well as his followers became merciless when dealing with disloyalty and appeared extremely generous in their appreciation of loyalty. In terms of what one may consider the establishment of a false nationalistic consciousness among the peasant majority, Duvalier was devilishly brilliant, and I concur with David Nicholls when he wrote:

Perhaps the most significant result of Duvalier's "revolution" will turn out to be the sense which was given to the mass of the peasants that they were really citizens and that what they did was important. The actual power which they possessed to influence the course of events was negligible, but the rhetoric of populism, the mass rallies and the countrywide organization of the VSN may have led to a new consciousness on the part of the masses. If people are told often enough that they are important, they may begin to believe it. (1987, p. 237)

The Macoutes and the Privatization of Law

In Haiti, a macoute was an agent of the law whose extralegal acts were viewed as normative due to the mode of operation of the macoutized state, which permitted its agents free interpretational ranges as long as the centrality of the state and that of its powerful leader remained unchallenged. Jean-Pierre Gingras, although a sensationalist writer, was correct when he stated:

Duvalierism, the Machiavellism of its epoch, is the sacrifice of all principles to self-interest without regard for any preconception of moral order. When this formula is taken for granted and adopted as the paramount rule of conduct, any crime no matter how heinous is possible. (1967, pp. 111–12)

Duvalierism constructed an environment that was coagulated around a linear, but relatively fluid, power of self-interest that

was intrinsically linked to the sociopolitical culture of the macoutized state.

It is the free interpretational range within a hyper-dictatorial and legal state that allows “laws” to be privatized thus propagating a culture of corruption and strong-man sociopolitical relations. Laws in Haiti were privatized in the sense that an individual macoute and his entourage had a free range to carry out “the law” in the name of the state even in the absence of the judicial body of the law. The law was extralegal and could be materially interpreted to fit any personal parameters as long as the macoutized state was not endangered. As James Ferguson remarked, the “*Tonton Macoutes* were Duvalier loyalists intended to provide information and detect subversion in every sphere of Haitian society” (1987, p. 40). Hence, extralegal acts within a juridical framework were completely legal because the person who carried out the act embodied the law and acted, if he so desired, on behalf of the head of state who was revered for having deputized to him, thus providing him with a sense of prestige and worth, however minimal. As Ferguson asserts, the Macoutes’ “function was clear: to act as political cadres, secret police and instruments of terror” (ibid., p. 41) in shaping a Duvalierist nationalism via a macoutized framework.

The privatization of law through Duvalier’s successful monopolization of power placed the Macoutes in a role that was of primary importance to the state, as they, by legal dictum, had blanket authority to either repress or suppress dissent and discourage social upheaval and coup d’etat. As a result, VSN (Macoute) headquarters proliferated across the country (principally in the large urban centers) and created an effective system of restraint that ensured sociocultural conformity, the ideals of which filtered through a range of institutions as they coalesced around the macoutized state.

The macoutized state became the emblematic vehicle of resistance (albeit symbolic) to foreign intervention, mulatto economic supremacy, Vatican interference, liberal and democratically oriented university education, and organized labor. The macoutized state transformed the nation into an obedient, non-pluralistic entity where political action depended upon the blessings of the supreme executive. In Duvalier’s macoutized

state, political clientelism and the systematic expediency of brute force were the most effective tools in creating a source of state power that was inescapable, apprehending any and all challenges to its legitimacy.

Duvalier's macoutized state, although not totalitarian in the classical sense, is the quintessential Latin-American dictatorship that seems to grow in strength after each failed attempt to unseat it. At the same time, it benefited from the existence of Castro's Cuba while the United States engaged with it in a hegemonic war against communism and its potential to spread throughout the Caribbean region. Placing itself in a position of alignment with the United States, Duvalier's strong stance against communism brought reinforcements to his state-controlled apparatus.

With each political and/or military challenge that Duvalier overcame, the mythology of his invincibility was further embedded in the psyche of the population who had largely been seduced by power and his "love and guardianship" of the black nation. The supremacy of his being became even more entrenched as rank-and-file individuals joined the Macoute corps not only to serve the president but also to enjoy the benefits of wielding the law for personal gain. Not surprisingly, privatized law as enjoyed by the Macoutes allowed guided clientelism and opportunism while Duvalier became the supreme subject of cultural aggrandizement, seduction, and fear. The expression of his power rested in the capture and execution of all who plotted against him, turning his victories into national gains as institutions mirrored and folded into the ideals of the macoutized nation. Duvalier's tactical propaganda was extensive, as for "several years cars carried the slogan 'To wish to destroy Duvalier is to wish to destroy Haiti'" (Nicholls, 1987, p. 232).

Alan Whicker's 1969 documentary provides an unprecedented and crucial primary source through which one can best access and deconstruct the semi-codified discourse and macoutized framework of the Duvalier regime:

Duvalier: "What they call *Tonton Macoute* is a peasant who received medical care from me for seven years. He is a militia,

we call the *Corps de Volonté de la Sécurité Nationale*. They help me clean the street, they help me to cultivate the land, they help the Haitian army and they fight side by side with members of the Haitian army to face armed invasions.”

Whicker: “Now, you’ve created what has been called the *Tonton Macoute* because you could not rely on the army?”

Duvalier: “No, because the army we have, we have 5,500 men for all of the regular army. We have, you can call that the corps of police. Because, we don’t have enough money to have a big army like the seven big countries of South America; I am the strongest man. The strongest anti-communist man in the Caribbean islands.”

Duvalier’s discourse regarding the Macoutes in relation to the army demonstrates their fundamental role in his success. It also points to the malleable position of the macoute as an agent/peasant/worker that had social and political latitude within his government.

The Duvalierist macoutized framework was fluid, despite Duvalier’s permanency as the figure situated at the epicenter of executive power: “[He] knew the importance of his rural class and kept in close contact with local leaders through his network of protégés and informers” (Ferguson, 1987, p. 58). This network created the macoutized state and a crystallized political identity. The National Palace was the base, the nerve center, and only the high-ranking commanders and officers of the intelligence unit had access. Commanders gave daily reports. Each commander had seven sub-commanders, and the sub-commanders were responsible for 17 heads of unit. In turn, each unit had 37 members known as Milice. The unit members along with the higher officers could deputize anyone who wanted to be affiliated with the corps. The more intelligent you were, the more prestige and access you had, and there was the possibility of becoming an SD (Service Detective). Furthermore, due to the division of Haiti into geo-political departments and Duvalier’s need to establish a firm grip upon the country, each of the communes had a Section Chief who served as the judge and the executioner.

Duvalier, through his perversion of populace power, made the Macoutes the guardians of the nation and his nationalist

ideology of noirisme. He understood the psychology and needs of the people in terms of their desire to have a “chief,” to be culturally validated, and to prevent abuse of power perpetuated upon them by the traditional “bourgeois” class. He gave them a political identity, a framework for nationalistic identification. However, at the end of the day, as Joan Dayan remarked, “Duvalier idealized the peasantry as the source of what remained uniquely Haitian, while he followed the governmental tradition of expropriating peasants’ lands, taxing their produce, and ignoring the right to education and health care” (1995, p. 77). Duvalier’s militia members along with his Section Chiefs were among the least educated, yet most powerful members of the country. They had the arbitrary power to life and death.

The crystallization of the macoutized culture and its political identity started at the center of power, the National Palace, and slowly moved outward like a reverberating ring that shook the nearest urban centers and picked up force as it widened. “*La Classe*,” was the black intelligentsia that formed the 1957 Duvalier network and subsequently became known as “Macoute ’57.” Its slightly over 2,000 members grew to 10,000 by the time of François Duvalier’s death, surpassing the total number of constitutionally recognized armed forces. Interestingly, under Jean-Claude Duvalier, the number of the Macoutes had tripled to 36,000 by 1986. The 1971 Macoutes, for the most part, were considered slackers, drinkers, and referred to themselves as “the Promotion.” Although the Promotion had increased in number, members of *La Classe* still consider themselves the inheritors of order (Barthelemy 1992; Florival 2007). Coincidentally, in terms of numbers, the army still had 6,000 members with over 2,000 members of the newly constituted Leopards forming the elite presidential squadron or corps. With the macoutization of the state fully crystallized, Jean-Claude inherited fully unified armed forces that were subservient to his needs in the same way that the Tonton Macoutes did for his father. The Duvalierist macoutized framework of authoritative legitimacy was crystallized in violence and fluidity of ambivalent membership that held allegiance to the supreme leader.

Macoutarian Discourse, Nostalgia, and Duvalier's Surprise Return

What is pervasive and most striking is the emergence of a post-Macoute/Duvalier discourse that was heightened in 1990 against Jean-Bertrand Aristide and became voluminous over the past five years under the guise of nationalism against the United Nations military presence and President René Prével's indifferent national politics. In a 1988 interview given to the Haitian National Television and Radio (RTNH), the then president Leslie Manigat proudly claimed: "I voted for François Duvalier. His principles were clear. I was never an anti-Duvalierist; after all, his message profoundly resonated throughout the country" (Manigat, 1988). Having been a part of the intellectual architecture of the macoutized state, President Manigat, one can argue, directly condoned the regime and no *mea culpa* was offered as a symbolic gesture for the crime committed against the nation despite the grievances Haitians expressed after February 1986. Furthermore, editorials written in the conservative and fervent Duvalierist journal, *Le Petit Samedi Soir*, continued until their hiatus from 1989 to 2009, to carry the ultraconservative mantle. The Macoutes, being constitutionally excluded for a 10-year period from participating in national politics, solidified their positions through Duvalierist leaning newspapers and other media outlets. Edouard Francisque, Jean-Claude Duvalier's secretary of state for Foreign Affairs, nostalgically and boldly stated that "the Americans and the Haitian people have now recognized that there were competent people who served under the Duvaliers' regimes and one must recuperate their talents and have them serve in a country where talents are lacking" (1989). The trenchant ideology of the Duvalierists and the social rigidities they occupied within a traditionally underdeveloped and patrimonial space hindered the development of democracy. This was despite the forced exile of Jean-Claude Duvalier and a desire to de-macoutize the society. Members of La Classe and the Promotion were never rehabilitated or curtailed from their authoritarian views. Even today, they still see themselves as the true democrats, the inheritors of the state, and the middle-class intellectual elite that must lead the country.

The macoutarian discourse is also expressed through national symbols, including street hangings of black and red banners that called for a Duvalier return or declaring happy birthday wishes. Following the January 12, 2010, earthquake, walls throughout the capital were strewn with “long live Duvalier” graffiti. The macoutarian discourse has an intense tone of nostalgia, a conditionality of hope based on an evasive past that is somehow projected onto a future of valiant Duvalier-nationalism. The macoutarian discourse forms an intrinsic narrative for Duvalierists old and new, including current president Michel Martelly, who, although he never was a macoute, was an early sympathizer. Martelly not only surrounds himself with hardcore Duvalierists but also has been in constant contact with Jean-Claude Duvalier since his return to Haiti in January of 2011. He even went so far as to hire Duvalier’s son, Nicolas, as one of his key advisors.

Among Duvalierists and others, there is nostalgia for strongmanship that permeates the Haitian culture. Dissatisfaction with the political class (Aristide, Préval, and so on) has slowly manifested into a popular desire for stability and national pride. The vocal minority, which depicts itself as the “silent majority,” reconstituted Duvalierists, are expressing themselves as individuals and not yet as a publicly unified block. The legitimacy of the anti-Duvalierist camp was lost when Michel Oreste Alerte set out to condemn the authenticity and discipline of the Duvaliers while rejecting the practices of Aristide. He declared in an editorial: “They have during the reign of Aristide-Préval, Aristide-Malval, Préval-Michel, Préval-Alexis, reincarnated the *Tonton Macoute* under the guise of *Pè Lebrun*, the popular brigade of vigilance, that became the interim rival of the *Volontaires de la Sécurité Nationale* (VSN), until it is certainly formalized by the government” (Alerte, 1999, p. 6).

The dangers and limitations of the macoutarian discourse are embodied in the valorization of a fabricated “orderly and respectable” past that Haiti witnessed under the Duvaliers, and the crimes committed are excused by blaming “rogue elements” in the government who did not represent the “true” aspirations of the Duvalier regime. There is a tendency to legitimize brute force as a natural method of control toward the unruly Haitians. In a

sense, the authoritarian and plantation rules remain circular and politically normative. In addition, there is also a Bennettization of blame that is, a blaming of the downfall and the exaggerated attributions of the Duvalier regime on the excessive indulgences of Michèle Bennett, Jean-Claude Duvalier's former "mulatto" wife. The Bennettisation of blame takes two symbolic characteristics: one, the fact that Duvalierism, à la François, was the establishment of a noirisme movement that effected the reversal of the *mulâtrisme* political order as well as the removal of the bourgeoisie from direct political involvement, and two, Michèle Bennett was seen as the embodiment of moral disorder, sociocultural detachment, and corruptible opulence that is the essence of the mulatto-bourgeoisie class. The macoutarian discourse refuses to connect the regime to its draconian policies and its failure to take into account the historically insalubrious role that the Duvaliers played in bankrupting the country and further destroying civil society.

The macoutarian and neo-Duvalierist discourse is a calculated effort at renegotiating dominance as well as re-historicizing Duvalierism. As reported in the Haitian weekly newspaper, *Haiti Progrès*, in September 2000, ardent Duvalierists in New York made public pronouncements on the eventual return of Jean-Claude Duvalier and swore to pledge their allegiance, one Frantz Bataille declaring: "We are the generation who grew up under Duvalier and we must be proud. It is such national pride that we've lost and we are retaking" (*Haiti Progrès*, Haas, 2000). The self-proclaimed experts, over one hundred of them, elaborated on the economic and political successes of the Duvaliers, and Parnell Duverger, a renowned Duvalierist, claimed that "the country was in its golden years with a robust growth, and since 1986, there has been nothing but economic and political disorder" (*ibid.*).

From February 1986, when Jean-Claude Duvalier went into exile in France, to January 2011, the time of his surprise return to Haiti, 25 years had passed and over four million Haitians were born. The younger generations, those under 40 years, tend to look at Jean-Claude Duvalier with a heightened romantic sense of nostalgia. Despite the fact that they neither lived under nor had a conscious recollection of the Duvalier regime, they profess

a desire for his return and for the politics of respectability. Their political and historical consciousness has been marked by the constant breakdowns in government following Duvalier's exile, along with the existence of military dictatorship, tumultuous democracy, inept leaders, and caustic natural disasters.

Duvalier's surprise return and the way in which he was received, is disturbing. Some explanation may lie with the perception that President Préval had failed to demonstrate leadership in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake of January 2010. Indeed, his silence and seeming detachment was interpreted by some as a treacherous abandonment of the destitute population and of the nation. The loud applause and fervent accolades with which Jean Claude Duvalier was greeted in some quarters is perhaps not therefore surprising, not least given that the macoutized state was never fully de-Duvalierized and the post-Duvalier governments never achieved full legitimacy. In the speech delivered on his return, on January 21, 2011, Duvalier strove not only to demonstrate the statesmanship and sense of leadership seen as lacking in Préval's response to the earthquake but also to rewrite his own role in Haiti's sufferings:

Dear compatriots,

I return to show my solidarity in this extremely difficult period of national life where you are still hundreds of thousands living under the stars, amid the ruins. From the moment that I decided to return to Haiti to commemorate with you, in our country, this sad anniversary, I was expecting all sorts of persecution; but believe me, the desire to participate with you in this Konbit for national reconstruction, far exceeds the annoyances that I could be facing... Whatever the cost, the main thing for me is being here with you. And I say that as such, all Haitians of goodwill have the right to participate.

I take this opportunity to publicly present my condolences to my millions of partisans who, after my voluntary departure from Haiti to avoid bloodshed and facilitate the rapid conclusion of the political crisis in 1986 were delivered to themselves. Thousands were brutally murdered, smoky, grilled, who have suffered the torment of "Pè lebrun," a word that became sadly notorious, their homes, their goods looted, déchoukés, burned. And all this under the glare of the cameras around the world.

I also take this opportunity to express once more, my deep sadness to my compatriots who recognize, rightly, to have been victims under my Government.

Youth of my country,

During my long stay in France, I was always attentive to your cries and your misfortunes. I lived your difficult times with great sorrow and grief. It is to you future leaders of this country, to assume the succession and show to the world that the Haitian soul is perennial and strong.

Jean-Claude Duvalier (Duvalier, 21 January 2011, cited in Olivier, 2011, 2011)

Duvalierism or neo-Duvalierism epitomizes a sociopolitical revivalist movement that aims toward hegemony. This movement seeks to relegitimize the need for a strong state in ways that would maintain traditional forms of power and yet, not surprisingly, ignores the pathologies of power that destroyed the middle class and created a major brain drain in the society, starting in 1960s. Thus, the macoutarian discourse and neo-Duvalierist tendencies among the emergent political players are, in a sense, a threat to the development of democratic institutions and yet they bring a certain level of legitimacy to the political sphere that seeks a greater level of transparency and plurality. The threat is real since it is anchored in a material past that has both actual and remnant memories, and underpinning the sociopolitical Duvalierist movement is the desire to be human despite abject deprivation.

Jean-Claude Duvalier's return crystallizes the desire or longing to return to an eventual macoutized culture where the leader is seen as the father figure, a strong patriarch guaranteeing the patrimonial political identity of the nation-state and the desired peace, stability, and progress. As historical subjects, Haitians "straddle the two sides of history. They impose a silence upon the events that they ignore, and they fill that silence with narratives of power about the events they celebrate" (Trouillot, 1995, p. 119). The thousands of Haitians who were murdered, exiled, raped, and disappeared are ignored for the narrative of control that promises a new framework, a framework built upon a macoutized state of order where power was fluid and privatized.

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Chapter 5

The Moody Republic and the Men in Her Life: François Duvalier, African-Americans, and Haitian Exiles

Millery Polyné

The Republic of Haiti is a beautiful woman waiting to be wooed. Unfortunately, her political behavior tends to scare away potential sweethearts, and on this fact alone rests the tale of the republic's chronic economic woes

Evans, 1959a, p. 9

This chapter explores the complex relations between African Americans, Haitian exiles, and the Haitian state during the early period of the Duvalier regime in Haiti.¹ It examines how competing visions of Haitian development, Pan-Americanism and US-Haitian relations were debated and shaped within and between these communities in response to Duvalier's rule. While the Haitian exile groups were invariably anti-Duvalierist and pursued a vigorous campaign against the Haitian leader within the United States, African American responses to Duvalier were not so clear-cut. Indeed, in the early years of his rule, many within African American media, business and intellectual circles expressed public support for Duvalier and, by extension, criticism for those Haitian exiles who sought his downfall. Although some members of the black press were among the first to "raise the red flag" (Pamphile, 2001, p. 168) on state tyranny in Haiti, other significant voices defended the Duvalier administration as "the brightest hope for the future" of the country (*Chicago Defender*, 1959). These competing

viewpoints were often played out in the pages of the black press as the various interests sought to promote their particular political agendas and to influence the shape of US policy toward the Haitian state. However as the excesses of Duvalier's rule became more apparent, it was increasingly difficult to sustain a supportive position. By 1964, when Duvalier formalized his position as President for Life, the diversity of positions articulated by the interested African American community in the early years of Duvalier's presidency was replaced by a notable silence.

An early example of the conflicting views over Haiti can be found in the pages of the *New York Age*, one of the most influential African American newspapers in the period. In 1959, Haitian exile Camille Lhérisson, former secretary of state for Public Health and Education under the Magloire administration, used the paper to voice his displeasure with the Friends of Haiti, a US-based philanthropic group that supported Haitian nongovernmental organizations despite the abuses carried out under Duvalier's regime. As secretary general of the Democratic League of Haiti (DLH), part of a constellation of anti-Duvalierist political factions that had emerged in key sites of Haitian migration, Lhérisson argued that any help from the Friends group would be fruitless "until an atmosphere of democracy and human liberty was restored to the Republic" (Evans, 1959b; Pamphile, 2001, p. 167). In January 1959, Lhérisson warned *New York Age* readers not to be fooled by Duvalier's "new found love for the United States," noting that "unspeakable tortures and humiliations" were still being inflicted upon the elderly, women, and children by the Cagoulaards, the "infamous night prowling secret police" (1959).² Furthermore, he cautioned Washington to "think carefully before making any further decisions to prop up a regime... which is due to fall momentarily" (ibid.). In this view, the potential \$6 million grant-in-aid offered by President Dwight Eisenhower's administration, coupled with support from US advocacy groups, served only to perpetuate a Haitian authoritarianism firmly rooted in the country's postindependence period.³ Exiles such as Lhérisson therefore attempted to establish the Duvalier government as lawless, "authoritarian," "nihilistic," and—in the era of the Cold War—pro-communist—to push a political agenda

that included the forcible removal of Duvalier and the severance of US financial assistance programs.

A different perspective was offered by Lancelot O. Evans, a journalist for the *New York Age* who had been invited to Haiti as a guest of the government in 1958. In 1959, Evans penned several articles that were highly critical of the Haitian exile groups, characterizing them as a “moody group” of elites “waiting for a chance to grab power through force instead of by orderly constitutional progress” (1959a). In attempting to demonstrate support for a democratically elected government in a sovereign black nation, Evans depicted Haitian exiles as obstacles to the political and economic development of Haiti, interested only in toppling the regime for self-serving purposes. Yet in depicting Haiti as a “beautiful woman waiting to be wooed,” as quoted in this chapter’s epigraph, Evans placed Haitian development within the framework of a transnational courtship, privileging US government and business interests as ideal “sweethearts” to aid Haitian economic progress and democratization. As this chapter explores below, the divergent views of men such as Lhérisson and Evans formed part of a broader debate over Haiti in the US context that can deepen our understanding of US-Haitian relations at the non-state level and shed light on some of the tensions and fractures within the wider black diaspora over issues of transnational racial solidarity.

Haitian Exiles and the Campaign against Duvalier

The Duvalierist state amassed many enemies over the course of the regime, including a number of anti-Duvalier groups who advocated vague democratic reforms, but primarily fought to remove the president. Many of Duvalier’s political opponents who chose or were forced to leave the country sought asylum and opportunities in metropolitan centers of the United States such as New York, Chicago, and Miami. On June 8, 1958, a US newspaper reported that technically trained Haitians were “dissatisfied with conditions at home and [were] eager to take jobs in other countries.”⁴ Nearly a decade later the *Chicago Tribune* observed that “the exodus of doctors, lawyers, teachers, business men and young people is depleting the small upper class

which normally runs the country” (Uchitelle, 1965). This exodus was further intensified by Duvalier’s attack on many of the social and economic institutions that had been supported by, or were beneficial to, the Haitian bourgeoisie and elite. As a result of the 1960–61 student strikes, the Université d’Haiti was closed and the Université d’Etat formed under the auspices of the state. Between 1960 and 1962, the conflict between the Catholic Church and the president intensified, with Duvalier gaining dominion over the official church by replacing foreign bishops with Haitian ones. While David Nicholls argues that Duvalier’s *noiriste* critique of the Church and the Francophile elite was an attack on “ecclesiastical colonialism” (1979, pp. 221, 226), nevertheless Duvalier’s replacement of religious colonialism with state despotism drove many Haitians away from the island. Between 1950 and 1970, nearly 8 percent of Haiti’s population emigrated to the United States, Canada, the Bahamas and Francophone Africa, and Europe. Fleeing largely because of the formation and strengthening of Duvalier’s totalitarian regime, many of these Haitians were educated and technically skilled citizens who sought freedom, safety, and economic opportunities. As a result of this massive exodus, Haiti experienced a sizeable brain drain during that period from which it has yet to recover.

A number of Haitian exile groups, largely consisting of these opposition and elite elements, emerged in the main sites of Haitian migration, among them were the Democratic League of Haiti, Jeune Haiti, Combat, and the Alliance Patriotique Haïtienne. The involvement of exile groups with a number of attempts to overthrow the Duvalier regime made them a particular target for the president’s ire. In a speech delivered on October 22, 1958, Duvalier proclaimed that “[with] God’s help... we are determined that no selfish human being nor malevolent and despoiling world forces will conquer and destroy [Haiti’s] national will” (1958a). The speech was made in the aftermath of the failed July 1958 invasion led by Alix “Sonson” Pasquet, a Haitian exile in the United States and a former military commander. Pasquet’s eight-man invasion team, consisting of five US nationals and three Haitians, had drifted into the coastal village of Montrouis and managed to subdue the army barracks

and capture an ammunition depot (Abbott, 1988, pp. 83–84). Duvalier's forces quickly suppressed the incident and blamed the attack on the influence of former president Magloire, now residing in New York City, and on former presidential candidate Louis Déjoie, president of the Democratic League of Haiti. Despite their victory, the Haitian government remained uneasy about the existence of oppositional exile groups in the United States. As the *New York Times* reported, one high-ranking Haitian official stated: "We do not care where they [Magloire and Déjoie] go, Europe or even Russia, just so they get out of the United States where they can cause our Government so much harm with their plotting" (Kennedy, 1958). Turning on the exiles, Duvalier's speech declared that anarchy from home and abroad had "thwarted" him from providing "the peace and security" that he had "hoped to give . . . during this first year of [his] administration." He further blamed invading exile groups, coupled with the political and economic corruption inherited from the Magloire administration, for causing the social and financial upheaval his government faced in the present day. Thus Duvalier maintained that it was his celestial right, "whenever circumstances warrant . . . to act openly against false friends as well as against the avowed enemies of our country." (1958a). Duvalier's address established the tone of his administration—that order would be instituted through him personally and that Haitian opposition would meet with severe repercussions.

Although Duvalier wielded a great deal of power, at different moments he negotiated that authority with various Haitian classes and embraced, in particular, the black petty bourgeoisie and the peasantry through propagandistic mass rallies, songs, and cultural programs. The victory of the government forces over the Pasquet invasion of 1958, for example, was celebrated in the meringue song "Duvalier nan Bataille" (Duvalier in Battle) by Ensemble Raphaël Nérette, which described Duvalier as the God-sent savior of Haiti (Averill, 1997, p. 73). Noiriste politics also became an effective tool to garner grassroots and popular support. *Noirisme* confirmed two main principles: that dark-skinned Haitians should wield state power and that "the black petty bourgeoisie is the natural representative of the masses" (Trouillot, 1990, p. 192; Nicholls, 1979, p. 258).

Duvalier privileged the black middle class and considered it best suited to lead the masses and to shape the Haitian “soul” (Remy, 1974, pp. 47–48).⁵ In a speech made on Pan American Day, April 14, 1963, Duvalier argued that Haiti’s true consciousness and will stemmed from the radical abolitionist period of the late eighteenth century, culminating in Haitian independence in 1804 (Duvalier, 1963).⁶ The spirit of the Haitian Revolution affirmed the humanity of enslaved African descendants and pushed forward the progress of African-descended peoples in spite of Western oppression. Duvalier’s speech constructed the Haitian Revolution as setting the mold for a “true” representative democracy that upheld the “principles of self-determination and non-intervention” in the Americas. This reference to the Haitian Revolution within the context of Pan American Day is significant for two reasons: first, because it situated Haiti as a founder of an anti-imperialist, mutually cooperative, inter-American ideology, which had been historically compromised by the US government and second, because Duvalier believed he was fathering a new nation, forging a fresh identity in the tradition of Toussaint L’Ouverture, in which the “responsibility to encourage and promote the economy by putting the country back to work on a practical and productive basis” (1958a) echoed L’Ouverture’s militarized labor reforms.⁷ Duvalier believed it was up to the Haitian state to refashion the Haitian soul.

In opposition to Duvalier’s brand of Haitian nationalism articulated in the Pan American Day speech, Haitian exiles in New York formulated their own nationalist response in a press conference held a month later on the symbolic day of La Fête du Drapeau (Haitian Flag Day), May 18, 1963. Ironically, in the office of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in New York, Hermann L. Desir, representative of the League of Haitian Patriots (LHP) and former Haitian consul, stated that the LHP acted as a “spokesman for and coordinator of several smaller exile groups throughout the Caribbean area and the United States.” Claiming to have “2,000 to 3,000 men presently under league command” from New York to Jamaica to Venezuela, Albert Chassagne, a medical technician at St. Vincent’s Hospital, said that the LHP possessed a “good

chance” of ousting Duvalier (*New York Times*, 1963, p. 63). In 1966, the New York-based anti-Duvalier group Alliance Patriotique Haïtienne expressed in broad terms that their goals included removing the “tyrant Duvalier; proclaim[ing] its solidarity with democrats at home . . . [and forging] unity between political leaders and workers’ organizations . . .” (Haitian Patriotic Alliance, 1966). Thus in contrast to Duvalier’s emphasis on nonintervention and self-determination, Haitian exiles framed interventionism as a patriotic duty.

By 1965, Haitian exiles had tried and failed to expel Duvalier seven times. However while many of these exile communities wanted Duvalier gone, few offered a clear political/economic platform on which to build their case. Typically from the bourgeoisie or the elite, Haitian exiles refused to believe that their social classes had played any part in creating the poverty and political and economic discord of the country. This attitude partly explains the chorus of protest against the Haitian elites as articulated in both Haitian and North American literature since the beginning of the twentieth century, including Jean Price-Mars’s *La Vocation de L’Élite* (1919) and Langston Hughes’s novella *Popo and Fifina* (1932), which exposed the gross inequities embedded in the Haitian class structure. Thus it is not surprising to find that Haitian exiles, associated with the perpetuation of such conditions, should have met with opposition from within some African American circles in the Duvalier period. African American dancer Katherine Dunham, for example, expressed immense frustration with the elite and “complaining” expatriates, writing, “this is your monster! You have created it, live with it, don’t be afraid to die if you feel it pulling you and yours into the dark ages!” (1994, p. 172). Dunham, whose activism in East St. Louis during the civil rights era is well-known, could testify to young African American protests against racial violence and segregation in the US South. Yet while Dunham supported the Lockean belief that resisting unjust state power is the citizen’s right, she also warned Haitian elites and opposition groups that their politics and privileges in Haitian society figured prominently in the architecture of inequality and disorder.

It is important to understand that Haitian exiles responded to a specific political emergency after having witnessed the brutality of the Duvalier government and the consolidation of his authoritarian administration. Protests, large and small, were needed to defy the regime and open up dialogue in North America and Haiti about human-rights issues and democratic change. The establishment of exile newspapers and pamphlets in New York City in the late 1950s and 1960s such as *Le Voix*, *Le Combattant Haïtien*, and *Liberté: Bulletin du Mouvement Démocratique Révolutionnaire Haïtien* demonstrated a critical voice against suppression of Haitian worker rights, in addition to resistance to state violence. When innocent people were arrested and tortured for associating with an anti-Duvalierist or even for simply refusing to sell a pro-Duvalier newspaper, as was the case with bookstore owner Madeline Sylvain Bourchereau, the objections and dissent voiced by Haitian exiles proved valuable in challenging social and political injustices (*New York Age*, 1959, p. 6). The picketing of the Haitian ambassador's residence by members of the Democratic League of Haiti in New York City did little to arrest state atrocities in Haiti; however, it informed neighbors and drew local media attention to anti-Duvalierists's displeasure and to Washington's support, although waning, of an unpopular dictatorship.

Yet each foreign attack and threats from Washington to discontinue aid appear to have fortified Duvalier's regime and to provoke deeper criticism of Pan-Americanism by the Haitian government. The *New York Times* reported in October 1962 that in the face of significant decreases in US aid (except for \$1 million earmarked for an anti-malaria campaign), Duvalier attempted to rally the Haitian masses to "self-finance" their destiny. "Construct your roads with me in joy," Duvalier announced at a construction site near Port-au-Prince (Eder, 1962, p. 17). In Duvalier's view, Pan-Americanism was deficient because the United States gave little aid. In a speech titled "*Paix et Pain Pour Survivre*" (Peace and Bread for Survival), Duvalier scoffed at Haiti's position under the "optics of world interdependence and continental solidarity," arguing that "we will not surrender this country to slavery in order to supply our arid soils with water, with roads to foster civilization and

progress . . . [Therefore,] the country and the people will have to do away with deceitful and delusive notions of mutual assistance” (1962, pp. 38, 41). The *New York Times* reported in October 1962 that an excise tax on consumer goods and a “forced payroll and business levy in the form of ‘liberation bonds’ had been implemented” (Eder, 1962, p. 17).⁸ In addition, tollbooths were erected on roads and bridges to raise funds. The United States was also denounced for the role it might have played in attempts to overthrow the Duvalier administration. As historian and journalist Elizabeth Abbott notes, Duvalier’s personal physician, Jacques Fourcand, called the United States a “‘nation of sluts’ who raped black girls in Alabama and loosed police dogs on them” (1988, p. 108). Fourcand warned, “if Haitians joined [North] Americans to plot against Duvalier . . . blood will flow in Haiti as never before. The land will burn from north to south, from east to west . . . The dead will be buried under a mountain of ashes because of serving the foreigner” (ibid., pp. 108–9). By intimidating Haitians at home, Duvalier hoped to thwart opposition abroad.

The Haitian diaspora in the United States played a functional role in Haiti’s transnational political field. Speaking as immigrants and concerned Haitian citizens, the exiles’ protest expanded national political discourse, challenged the authoritarianism of the Duvalierist state and transformed the exiles themselves into mobile transnational actors. Anthropologist Michel S. Laguerre defines the transnational political field as “an open arena in which elected and nonelected individuals, with or without the explicit knowledge of the state, and sometimes acting against official state policies, engage in formal and informal political practices for the purpose of influencing the everyday policies and politics of another state” (1997, p. 170). Haitian exiles in the United States, the Bahamas, and the Dominican Republic undoubtedly took advantage of US liberties to organize and to develop political and intellectual activities aimed at removing Duvalier.

Scholars such as Averill and Laguerre view the emergence and protest of the Haitian diaspora as the “antidote to Duvalierism” and as providing more democratic ideas for Haitian governance and social relations (Averill, 1997, p. 110). However, Trouillot

and other scholars are more critical of the role the Haitian diaspora played in pressuring the totalitarian system. Trouillot asserts that “the possibility for the middle-classes of establishing themselves in Africa (the Congo and Senegal), in Europe and especially in North America (Canada and the United States) under-burdened the political arena, adding to the [Haitian] state’s margins for maneuver” (1990, p. 162). Both assessments provide constructive insights into the impact of the Haitian diaspora on affairs in Haiti. Haitian exiles were needed to disseminate news about the Duvalierist state, to articulate an interventionist vision of inter-American affairs (calling for US military aid in ousting Duvalier) and to challenge a prevailing African American silence on Duvalier’s regime. At the same time, exiles lacked a coherent and specific vision for Haiti’s future beyond expelling Duvalier. Given this limitation, I hesitate to affirm that replacing an autocrat with politically ambitious Haitian émigrés would have ensured a democratic and transformative Haiti in the 1960s.

African Americans, Pan-Americanism, and Haitian Economic Development

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, it is critical to understand how African Americans viewed Haitian exiles as obstacles to progress in Haiti. This perception, and exile involvement with unconstitutional invasions, made it difficult and uncommon for US blacks to criticize the Duvalierist state. Indeed many blamed anti-Duvalierist Haitian exiles, as well as the racist foundations of US foreign assistance, for the black republic’s ongoing economic hardships and political instability.

Foreign aid, particularly from the United States and international aid organizations such as the International Monetary Fund, financed minor structural improvement projects in Haiti, such as building new roads and developing the Port-au-Prince wharf. Yet foreign aid also reinforced Duvalier’s dominance by “passive acceptance and outright endorsement” (Smith, 2000, p. 159). In October 1959, Duvalier thanked President Dwight Eisenhower for the \$6 million relief grant the state had received the previous year but argued that it remained insufficient. Still

facing a \$2.5 million state deficit, Duvalier argued that the government was “obliged to cut government spending drastically in many areas” including public works, education, health services, and salaries for government employees. According to Duvalier, the budget cuts fueled “political unrest” and supplemental aid was critical to maintain order and democratic ideals. By 1960, in an effort to “achieve a sustained increase in national income and employment” and to finance projects to “fight underdevelopment,” the Haitian government sought between \$25 million and \$30 million from the United States (Government of Haiti, circa 1959–60).

It remains unclear how much money the United States loaned to Haiti during Duvalier’s presidency. One early estimate suggests that it averaged \$12.5 million annually (Uchitelle, 1965, p. 3). By 1961–62, US aid had temporarily ceased due to the opposition of the US public to the brutality of Duvalier’s dictatorship. However, it is well known that Washington backed the Haitian leader during the first few years of his presidency in an effort to placate the Haitian chief executive and to win key Haitian votes within international policy institutions such as the Organization of American States and the United Nations. One unidentified Haitian businessman asserted that the “thinking people of Haiti all know that Duvalier was put in power by the United States and buttressed there with millions of dollars in aid during the first years of his regime. We think that since the United States now has unbuttressed him, it should go a little further and pull him down. Only the United States can do it” (ibid.). As early as 1954, George Humphrey, secretary of the US Treasury, advised Eisenhower that the United States “should...stop talking so much about democracy and make it clear that we are quite willing to support dictatorships of the right if their policies are pro-American” (Streeter, 2000, p. 172).

During the Cold War, US support of Haiti, articulated through the ideology of Pan-Americanism, attempted to curb the spread of communism and to pacify assaults on North American influence in Haitian affairs. However Duvalier was able to use the discourse of Pan-Americanism against the United States as a means to challenge US economic dominance

and to bolster his power as president. Duvalier deployed this strategy in order to foster more equitable trade agreements, to request reforms in loan agreements with the United States, and to aid the republic in weathering the storm of declining coffee prices. For example, echoing demands made at the Punta del Este conference in Uruguay in August 1961, which petitioned for the “stabilization of . . . prices of basic products in the Latin American economy,” Duvalier stated to President John F. Kennedy that it was “essential that efforts be made to prevent the hemispheric philosophy of coexistence through economic and social mutual assistance . . . from being jeopardized” (Duvalier, 1961). Although the Kennedy administration pumped \$20 billion in economic aid to Caribbean and Latin American states through its ambitious Alliance for Progress program in 1961, Haiti and Uruguay were the only two countries in the region that endured substantial decreases in their per capita gross national products (Smith, 2000, p. 153).

For an elite few in the African American community and black press, the grave predicament of Haitian economic and political affairs, and the extent and nature of assistance provided by non-black nations, were subjects of considerable debate. Just a few months after Duvalier’s election, for example, Eural Grant Jackson, an African American employee of the New York Public Schools, argued that Haiti’s political and economic woes since 1934 were not indicative of Haiti’s incompetence or “incapability of economic rehabilitation, but that probably we [the United States] failed to perform our supposed mission adequately while we were there.” The author shifted the responsibility of Haiti’s instability to the United States, but argued that US aid and technical assistance could prove beneficial if administered “in the true spirit of Pan-Americanism and equality.” Jackson trusted that the United States, as a leading developed nation, could effectively support ailing nations in the Americas. However, he warned that US blacks were “wary of US help” considering its legacy of paternalism and imperialism in the Americas. To Jackson, Haiti’s problems tested Washington’s theories and practices of Pan-Americanism. He defended the position that the United States should not aid Haiti “in the sense of the outmoded ‘white man’s burden’” – only advantageous to US

foreign policy – but in the spirit of “objective reciprocity” (1957, p. 31). Thus, he offered a black Pan-Americanist perspective that sought to empower a nation rich in symbolic significance in the African American imagination, as well as to contest the idea that Haiti’s declining state of affairs could be attributed to a racialized ineptitude rather than being partly rooted in US imperialism during the Wilson and Harding administrations.

The African American press reported Haiti’s dissatisfaction with the United States’ total aid package in 1961, which amounted to \$14 million. Three years later, in April 1964, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), a multilateral financing institution in which the United States wields the most capital and voting power, credited nearly \$3 million to Haiti to develop its water systems. This loan signified a move away from the hard line under Kennedy and the “resumption of foreign assistance” to Haiti in order to encourage Haitian resistance to Cuba’s socialist regime (*Chicago Daily Defender*, 1964, p. 15). The *Chicago Defender* printed a critical response to the IDB’s loan, calling it a “straw in the wind” and openly challenging President Lyndon B. Johnson’s “War on Poverty” program. “Haiti should come within the purview of this crusade,” argued the *Defender* (*Chicago Defender*, 1964). Under the 1964 US Economic Opportunity Act, some government-sponsored organizations, such as Head Start, the Community Action Program, and Job Corps, promoted rights and opportunities on the behalf of the poor. In a clear example of transnational racial solidarity, the *Defender* advocated on the behalf of Haitians and included them into their national and racial boundaries. Further, the paper challenged the United States on how it allocated funds to thwart the spread of communism, centering its critique firmly on the issues of race, inter-American relations, and global communism:

[North] American critics of the Caribbean republic seem to enjoy pointing to Haiti’s poverty as conclusive evidence of her inability to be a self-sustaining nation. But Uncle Sam hasn’t been as generous to Haiti as he has been to other countries far removed from this Western Hemisphere. The United States has poured close to five billion dollars into Asia and continues

to pour money into Laos at the rate of a million dollars a day. These vast sums are expended in what appears to be a futile attempt to halt the onward march of Communism in East Asia. It would be far more profitable for the United States to relieve an economically depressed country right on its door-step and keep it from being transformed into another Cuba than to fight Communism in far Laos. . . . Uncle Sam can afford it. Why wait? (ibid.)

While many African Americans showed support for US efforts against communism, they nevertheless questioned the US government's financial and ideological dedication to the development and security of the Americas. Some even questioned the putative evil of communism, arguing that state rights proved more detrimental to African Americans and the modern United States than did communism (Pelnar, 1964). While African American views were varied, what remained consistent in the period of the civil rights movement, anti-colonial struggles, and Cold War suppression was an economic and racial solidarity within the vein of black Pan-Americanism that challenged US hegemony and advocated for US monetary support for developing black nations.

The *Defender's* support for substantial US aid to Haiti should not therefore be conflated with defending Duvalier. After 1961, African American support for Duvalier weakened due to his administration's well-known exploits. The dilemma they faced was how to reconcile the need for assistance and international collaboration with Haitians, with publicly denouncing a black head of state who was piloting a historically symbolic nation of the African diaspora. A few African Americans vehemently argued that the "US government can ill afford to associate itself with any regime that comes to power by foul [means] . . . or suppresses the civil rights of the people under the guise of national security" (*Chicago Defender*, 1961, p. 11). However, the black press typically avoided making direct indictments.

In comparison, the mainstream white American press and television media deliberately drew attention to Haiti's poverty and the authoritarianism and violence of Duvalier's regime. Often reports on Haiti's affairs lacked historical context, and

linked the republic with racist propaganda about voodoo rituals. In 1963, NBC broadcast journalist David Brinkley interviewed Duvalier, along with some former government aides and several Haitian exiles, on his television program "David Brinkley's Journal." Oddly, it was Duvalier's publicity director, Herbert Morrison, a white man and a former Hollywood press agent, who took center stage in the two-part television segment. Morrison claimed that Duvalier's office contained a "voodoo altar" that featured two dolls, one of former president Eisenhower "in effigy" and another of ex-secretary of state John Foster Dulles. Eisenhower's voodoo doll had its heart area "circled in pins" and Dulles's "pins" were arranged around his pancreas, Morrison said (Haiti 1963, 1993). Duvalier's reputation took another blow when the US State Department's Office of Medical Services completed a second-hand psychiatric evaluation of the Haitian president, arguing that he suffered from a "paranoid personality" that "approached psychotic proportions at times." According to the report, a rational North American "observer," in contrast to a *vodou*-influenced national, would find Duvalier "sicker" than most heads of state. The unpublished evaluation argued that Haitians in general were a "paranoid" group because of the ubiquitous "animism" on the island, asserting that even the "vener of education does not necessarily change such a core belief pattern" (US State Department, 1967). Although the State Department's medical evaluation was only circulated among members of executive and military circles, its influence was indirectly felt by the general public. The report's characterizations of Haitians and their government reveal a sordid legacy rooted in the ideology of nineteenth-century scientific racism and the post-Haitian Revolutionary period.

Indeed such sensationalism has continued to affect interpretations of Duvalier's 14-year long rule, making it difficult to clearly ascertain Duvalier's impact on the Haitian nation-state, its diasporic citizens, and the African American population that has played a pivotal role in Haitian autonomy since the US military occupation in 1915. This is not to say that the terrible accounts of government repression and violence under the Duvalier regime lack validity or truth, but that the pervasive reports of magic, darkness, oppressive activity, and lunacy

have contributed to a misguided and short-sighted perception of the Haitian realpolitik. As Francophone literature scholar J. Michael Dash asserts, “the belief that Haiti had simply lapsed into savagery in the 1960s...acquired great currency” (Dash, 1997, p. 106). Graham Greene’s popular novel *The Comedians* (1966), a fictional account of Haiti under Duvalier rule, reduces Haiti to a land of obscurity, barbarity, and vodou drumming. Following in the literary tradition of Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, in which the African continent symbolized a stagnant and primitive world as well as an entryway to the fundamental nature of humankind, *The Comedians* embodied Greene’s and Conrad’s notions of “primitive” Africa. As Dash argues, “Haiti, like Africa, had been fixed ‘textually’ since the nineteenth century as a literary ‘sign,’ inexhaustively suggestive of mystery and carnality” (ibid., p. 105).

Popular interpretations and mainstream news reports of Duvalier’s Haiti directly challenged black Pan-American notions of uplift and development. In this context, African American print media and intellectual circles began to deemphasize the prominent role that references to Haiti had typically played in discussions of black self-government and the potential for blacks to shape their economic and political destinies. In contrast with earlier decades, fewer US blacks visited Haiti and reported news concerning Haitian politics during the late 1950s and 1960s. The reduced number of reports on Haitian affairs in the black press and the minimal critique of Duvalierism offered by US blacks indicate a shift in their international political focus and a failure among African American intellectuals to address human rights issues when faced with intra-racial violence abroad.

However, Claude Barnett, editor of the Associated Negro Press, sought to counteract the prevailing images of Haitian affairs as incompetent, anti-democratic, or backward during the early years of Duvalier’s presidency. Barnett, who attended Ghanaian President Kwame Nkrumah’s inauguration in March 1957, understood that the growth of continental Pan-Africanism was connected to the need to boost people’s knowledge and appreciation of the “Africa of the West,” Haiti. In a letter to Duvalier, Barnett asserted that the black masses of the United States knew “too little about the Pearl of the Antilles” and that

more “colored people” needed to visit Haiti as a “country where the races can mix with ease and where Negroes can feel really free” (Barnett, 1957b). During the Duvalier regime, Barnett continued to encourage tourism, even proposing to Haitian groups that Vice President Richard Nixon should be invited to visit the island. “The spotlight of publicity would follow him,” wrote Barnett, adding that Nixon’s visit “would be one of the greatest possible stimulants to encourage other people to go” (Barnett, 1957a).

In tandem with a few reports in the *Baltimore Afro-American* and the *Amsterdam (NY) News*, and one letter from Emmanuel Racine, an Associated Negro Press Haitian correspondent, Barnett vigorously worked to create an alternative narrative that disrupted longstanding assumptions of Haitian authoritarianism and violence (Pamphile, 2001, pp. 168–69). Barnett pressed for better communication between the two groups and asserted African American loyalty to Haitians. On May 2, 1963, Barnett noted:

The newspaper stories appearing in the United States’ papers are certainly not to Haiti’s advantage . . . I think one error which the Haitian Administration has made is that they have not paid attention to the Negro newspapers. These papers representing Negro people would naturally be partial to Haiti but they get no information from the Haitian government. (Barnett, 1961)

Barnett’s claims that the Haitian government should purposefully utilize the African American print media coupled with his assertion that it would “naturally be partial to Haiti” typified a commitment by the Associated Negro Press to advocate for Haiti’s progress and development. It signified an inter-American solidarity where race, during the politically charged moment of civil rights, black nationalism, and continental Pan-Africanism, was being pushed more to the center of African American/Haitian relations. Yet due to the lack of communication between the Haitian government and the ANP, Barnett admitted that his influence was limited. It remains unclear why communication between Duvalier’s administration and members of the US black press, particularly Barnett, an influential member of

the press corps, never materialized. Although there were some minor exceptions, such as Lancelot Evans, Duvalier never utilized the North American black press as had past Haitian presidents (Diederich, 2008). For the most part, Duvalier addressed the African American experience, particularly racial segregation, only when it proved to be in the state's interest or if the Haitian government was in a "fight with US administrations" (ibid.).

Like other African American journalists such as Lancelot O. Evans, Barnett seemed to give Duvalier's leadership the benefit of the doubt. Despite the negative reports, Barnett preferred to communicate directly with Duvalier rather than print second hand information. On May 9, 1964, the same year Duvalier declared himself President for Life, Barnett wrote to the Haitian president claiming that the ANP possessed a number of Haitian citizens as "friends...but the view from the United States makes it difficult to know which of our friends may be enjoying your favor." In an attempt to obtain firsthand information he stated: "There have been times when your image in the minds of people in this country and especially in the regard of Negro Americans might have been greatly changed, but we have not known the truth of various reports" (Barnett, 1964). Barnett remains an important figure in the transnational politics of the African diaspora. His continued efforts to support Haiti and Duvalier stemmed from his deep sense of racial solidarity and his belief that Haiti could survive and thrive with the leadership of a black president. Yet Barnett missed a real opportunity to complicate and critique Haitian leadership and its relationship to the United States because he failed to reconcile black despotic rule with a program of transnational racial uplift.

The Nadir of US-Haitian Relations, 1964–71

The period launched with Duvalier's self-proclamation as President for Life in 1964 through to his death in 1971 should be considered the nadir of African American and Haitian relations. When he declared himself dictator, the black press in the United States barely issued a critique. On the one hand, this might be attributed to reluctance to criticize a black leader in

Haiti, the symbolic heart of black liberation in the Americas. On the other hand, it reflected African American frustrations at Haitian authoritarianism and the limitations of black Pan-Americanism during the height of the civil rights struggle and continental Pan-Africanism. Where once Haiti had been a subject of some discussion within African American political, media, and business circles, it was now met with a notable silence. With the exception of Duvalier's book honoring the life of Martin Luther King Jr. after his death in 1968, the four days of national mourning after King's assassination and the naming of a Port-au-Prince street after the civil rights leader, African American discussions on Haitian politics were minimal. Duvalier's commemoration of King proved to be an empty gesture given the Haitian leader's record on human rights, the continued indigence of the peasantry, and his use of the tragedy as an opportunity to advance noiriste politics (Nicholls, 1979, p. 235). Initially, African Americans supported Duvalier because of the history of racial solidarity with the country and the perception of Duvalier as a champion of the peasantry. During the moment of anti-imperialist struggles and civil rights conflicts, domestic and abroad, racial unity served as a practical political program and affirmed the US black presence in racial progress. The invasion of Haitian exiles and the elitism that they historically demonstrated in Haiti factored into African American perceptions. Although some US blacks, such as writer Rosa Guy, noted their satisfaction with Haitian expatriates' education and Haiti's ability to send them to developing countries in Africa, on the whole the Haitian exiles were characterized as power hungry and serving as obstacles to true democracy (Guy, 1964, pp. 415–16). Additionally, the escalation of the southern civil rights movement and Cold War threats refocused African Americans' attention on national issues of racial discrimination and racial violence. The Cold War period stifled many of the more revolutionary constituents of the US civil rights movement who maintained ideological bonds with African, Latin American, and Caribbean anti-imperialist and anticolonialist movements. As Penny Von Eschen asserts, "although civil rights leaders such as Martin Luther King and Bayard Rustin were personally interested in anticolonialism, it was not a

programmatic part of the civil rights movement” (Von Eschen, 1997, p. 186). The intensification of the southern civil rights movement and the undermining of radical, anti-imperialist, socialist thought during the Cold War surely impacted and refocused African Americans’ international agenda. This shift should not be taken to mean that more radical US blacks forgot or were oblivious to African diasporic politics—the protests against the CIA-sponsored murder of Patrice Lumumba and support of Fidel Castro’s regime prove otherwise—but it suggests that they were forced to negotiate and at times stifle their political affiliations and beliefs at specific moments. Duvalier’s repression and antidemocratic politics lost out to the more positive stories of African independence in the North American black press. Energized by the crumbling of the walls of empire in Africa during the late 1950s and early 1960s, African American capitalists such as Evans and Barnett assumed the “vocabulary of modernization with no critique of power relations...” (ibid., p. 164). Since Haiti possessed a long history of autonomy and a rich network of relations with US blacks, the projects of economic investment and promoting business and structural development opportunities often eclipsed critiques of internal Haitian political and financial decisions, especially when it came to making critical assessments of Duvalier’s regime. After Duvalier’s death in 1971, momentum built up again between the two groups. African American politicians and ambassadors such as Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm and Andrew Young condemned the human-rights violations by Duvalier’s successor, his 19-year-old son Jean-Claude (Baby Doc) Duvalier (Pamphile, 2001, pp. 171–73). Advancements in the US civil rights movement, fuller understandings of postcolonial Africa and of the problems/limitations of African leadership, and the anti-Vietnam War ethos in the United States proved to be among the factors that provided a space in which to critique Haitian leadership. However, African American and Haitian cooperation would not be the same for years to come.

Notes

1. I use the term “African Americans” here in a narrow sense to refer to black North Americans (rather than the broader sense of all peoples of

- African descent in the Americas). The term is used interchangeably in this chapter with “US blacks.”
2. Hereafter the François Duvalier Letters will be abbreviated to FDL and the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture abbreviated to SCRBC. For more on Camille Lhérisson, see the Papers of Frances R. Grant Collection, box 43, folder 44, Haiti: Haitian Study Group Figolé and Lhérisson and box 44, folder 3–4, Haiti: Personalities-Dr. Camille Lhérisson, 1957–1966, Special Collections and University Archives, Archibald Stevens Alexander Library, Rutgers University Libraries, New Brunswick, NJ.
 3. Several scholars maintain similar arguments regarding the legacy of authoritarian regimes in Haiti after 1804. See Nicholls (1979); Dupuy (1988); and Fatton, Jr. (2002).
 4. Unidentified newspaper clipping, June 8, 1958, Claude Barnett Papers, Box 204, Haiti General Correspondence 1958–1964, Chicago Historical Society. Hereafter Barnett papers will be abbreviated to “CBP.”
 5. Duvalier advocated an elitist ideology that embraced Western civilization but also stressed the importance of African cultural retentions in the Haitian peasantry. See also Duvalier’s personal works: *Oeuvres Essentielles, Element d’une Doctrine* (Port-au-Prince: Presses Nationale d’Haïti, 1966a); *Oeuvres Essentielles, La Marche à la Présidence* (Port-au-Prince: Presses Nationale d’Haïti, 1966b); and *Bréviare d’une Révolution* (Port-au-Prince: Presses Nationale d’Haïti, 1967).
 6. Pan American Day, celebrated April 14, marks the date when the Pan American Union, now the Organization of American States, was established in 1890.
 7. On L’Ouverture’s plantation reforms, see James (1989) and Dubois (2005), pp. 238–40.
 8. The François Duvalier Letters collection at the Schomburg Center holds several of these “liberty bonds.”

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Chapter 6

Haitian Exceptionalism: The Caribbean's Great Morality Play

Anthony P. Maingot

There can be little argument with the fact that the Haitian war of liberation, which eventually led to the establishment of the Republic of Haiti, was one of the epic moments of Western Hemisphere history. It shattered more than just the richest plantation economy at the time; it shook the very foundations of racism—that gigantic economic-philosophical idea that justified slavery. It focused for the first time on a basic component of that system, the slave, as an agent of social change. Haiti gave the African his first positive role on the New World's stage. This might well have been summarized by Jean-Jacques Dessalines in 1804 when he claimed, "I have avenged America." In so doing, it placed an enormous historical burden on the newly liberated Haitians by engendering one of the great morality plays that generations of intellectuals, politicians, and development experts have interpreted for their own purposes.

As deeply ennobling as this was for humans who were characterized and inventorized as part of the plantation chattel,¹ the interpretations of this heroic event by outsiders also put a profoundly unjust burden on the Haitian; it put him and her on a pedestal of heroism difficult for any single group and nation to live up to. Events everywhere the black man was enslaved were to be judged against the great feats of the Haitian Revolution. The very process of Caribbean decolonization was often said to have started with the Haitian Revolution. C. L. R. James gave this version of history a tremendous impulse with his new

Appendix to the 1963 edition of his 1937 classic, *The Black Jacobins*:

What took place in French San Domingo in 1792–1804 appeared in Cuba in 1958. . . . The people who made them, the problems and the attempts to solve them, are peculiarly West Indian, the products of a peculiar origin and a peculiar history. . . . Whatever its ultimate fate, the Cuban Revolution marks the ultimate stage of a Caribbean quest for national identity. (James, 1963, p. 391)

This widely adopted theory of Caribbean history was, to say the least, a peculiar interpretation. It is true that Haiti, being one of three independent “black” countries in the early twentieth century (along with Ethiopia and Liberia), often came up for discussion. That said, none of the West Indian leaders described by James in the essay (Marcus Garvey, George Padmore, Aimé Césaire, Arthur Cipriani) ever integrated the Haitian Revolution into their political careers. Cipriani was a white Trinidadian Fabian socialist; Garvey was a “back-to-Africa” black nationalist who mobilized blacks in the United States and visited English-speaking West Indian diasporas in Cuba, Costa Rica, Panama, and Jamaica but not Haiti. Padmore turned to Africa once he broke with the Soviet COMINTERN, which he had long served. C. L. R. James’s Trotskyite involvements made him keep his distance from the pro-Soviet communist parties, which predominated in the Caribbean, including Haiti. His classic book *The Black Jacobins* was a product of admirable archival research. While Aimé Césaire did visit Haiti, his formulation of the philosophy of negritude was born in Parisian circles, which included a Senegalese (Leopold Senghor) and a French Guyanese (Leon Damas). Each of these ideological camps had its own interpretation of Caribbean and world history and probable future. As Patrick Taylor notes regarding negritude: “Negritude helped heal the intellectual, but it also distorted the history of the Caribbean coupling a racialized interpretation of human beings with false universalism” (1989, p. 229).

Similarly, James’s assertion that “West Indian national identity” was best glimpsed through their novels might well be true

in varied and complex ways, but it is difficult to find Haitian themes in most of the novelists he mentions (such as V. S. Naipaul, V. S. Reid, and Wilson Harris).² George Lamming is an exception. His early work *Season of Adventure* (1960) did incorporate scenes from a voodoo ceremony he had witnessed in Haiti; however, Haiti does not feature in his later and most celebrated novel *In the Castle of My Skin* (1970).

None of these caveats, however, deter those whose periodization of Caribbean history has the Haitian and Cuban “revolutions” as watersheds. Note the similarity with James in the interpretation of another distinguished Caribbeanist, Gordon K. Lewis: “The Cuban affair, in sum, has done for twentieth century Caribbean society what the Haitian revolt did for its nineteenth century predecessor: it has struck a new note so urgent and compelling that hence forward progress and development will be judged in terms of the challenge that it has thrown down” (1963, p. 509).

The theme of Haiti’s Pan-Caribbean significance has become standard fare for those promoting a radical reading of Caribbean history. This tendency is exemplified by the splendidly written and exceptionally well-researched book by Matthew J. Smith on race and ideology in Haiti. The author claims that the political experience of radicalism in Haiti from 1934–57, with its expansion of historical struggles and tensions, “foreshadowed developments elsewhere in the Caribbean and may therefore be regarded as an important chapter in the history of Caribbean resistance” (2009, p. 2).³ It is difficult to know what the author means by “foreshadowed.” If he means anything more than that the Haitian case was one of many, one has to take strong exception. There is no evidence that either the Haitian “black” (negritude) or the “red” (Marxism) had any influence on what was happening politically in the rest of the Caribbean.⁴

Far from being a purely historiographical-academic myth-making exercise, this Haitian morality play is called upon by outsiders to incentivize Haitians to great deeds, even as they are individually and collectively crushed by the most intractable economic conditions and repeatedly struck by cruel natural phenomena. Appeals to the heroic past are constantly invoked. Even Amy Wilentz, who in her interesting book on Haiti repeatedly

describes Haitian political culture since the Revolution of 1804 as characterized by “groupuscule allegiances, cults of personality and a reliance on spoils and revenge” (1989, pp. 206–7), leads the reader to believe that Jean-Bertrand Aristide would change all that. She held on to this belief for many years. Note how she describes the return of former president Aristide to Haiti in March 2011:

Say the name Jean-Bertrand Aristide in Haiti this week, and it is as if the revolutionary slave leaders Toussaint L’Ouverture and Jean-Jacques Dessalines were still riding over the plains and mountains here astride Delacroix-worthy steeds, making their descent with sabers drawn upon the cast plantations of the French masters. (Wilentz, 2011)

And yet, this is the same man she had described as having developed “the highly-tuned, constant, high-level paranoia...not uncommon among Haitian politicians.” She describes Aristide as afraid of venturing out of the palatial house he built for himself in Tabarre, “the place Aristide has retreated to while Haiti has fallen apart” (2000, p. 5).

The same call to heroic action came from the former prime minister of Jamaica, now special representative of the Heads of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), P. J. Patterson, after a visit to a devastated Port au Prince: “everything must be done to ensure that the Government of Haiti has the capacity to sustain what has been achieved so that we can look back and say that the disaster was a turning point to return Haiti to the forefront of achieving countries, a point it had attained in 1804 when it liberated itself from slavery” (Patterson, 2010).

What are we to make, then, of this myth, of this great morality play? What happens when a truly comparative and historically grounded approach to Caribbean decolonization reveals that it has been (and continues to be) a *process* not an event? What conclusions do we reach when we learn that in Suriname the equally “African” community of the Maroons traces the decolonization and independence of their country to the treaties of the 1760s by which the Dutch granted them autonomy?

(Oostindie, 2005, p. 111). What is to be understood by the even more heretical claims of Barbados's most celebrated political leader, Errol Barrow, that his island's decolonization process began with the 1651 Charter of Barbados through which the white colonists resisted Cromwell's attempt to impose his rule on the island, and that his island had little to do with being African? Barrow, as was his style, did not pull his punches:

...one cannot really go on with that nebulous affinity [to Africa] in order to prove that we have a common [Caribbean] destiny...The pattern of jurisprudence...of constitutional institutions which we have followed all along has been the pattern which has been given to us by the government of the United Kingdom. (cited in Holder, 2007, p. 56)⁵

There are also great differences among Caribbean statesmen on the issues of independence, nationalism, development, and social welfare. David Nicholls describes late nineteenth-century Haitian Louis Joseph Janvier as an ultranationalist, a most forceful and outspoken writer on the subject of national independence. Janvier maintained that political independence is the first goal that should be pursued by Haitian governments, and that there are certain economic preconditions for the achievement and maintenance of such independence. He argued that "Political liberty is an asset inferior to national independence. Nations will easily sacrifice the first for the second. They rightly prefer a national dictatorship, no matter if it is tyrannical and unintelligent, to foreign domination, even if this were the most gentle in the world, the most likely to enrich" (cited in Nicholls, 1985, p. 112).

Haitians must recognize, Janvier contended, that economic domination by a foreign power will inevitably lead to the loss of national independence. No part of the Haitian territory must therefore be alienated to foreigners. Note the similarity with the philosophy of Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah: "We prefer self-government with danger than servitude in tranquility....seek ye first the political Kingdom and all things else shall be added unto you" (1957, pp. 162-63).

This contrasts sharply with the position of Puerto Rico's Luís Muñoz Marín. He argued persuasively enough so as to keep winning elections that "nationalism" is not synonymous with an independent state. It is, he said, a reasonable and freely arrived at sentiment of people who judge it in terms of individual freedom, and material and spiritual well-being: "I learned that among the simple people the nationalist concept does not exist, because in its place there is a deep understanding of freedom. I learned that in their wisdom they prefer if they have to choose one who governs respectfully from a distance to one who governs despotically from nearby" (1953, p. 2).

What, then, is to be made of all this? What is to be done when you discover that decolonization in the Caribbean has been a process with varying historical watersheds that cannot be fitted into a "from Columbus to Castro" or "from Toussaint to Castro" time frame? The work of David Nicholls on the Caribbean points us in the right direction.

The David Nicholls Approach to Caribbean History

The singularly most compelling theme in David Nicholls's 1979 book, *From Dessalines to Duvalier: Race, Colour and National Independence in Haiti*, is his profound understanding of Haitian historical consciousness where the study of the past and the practice of politics in the present "are hopelessly interwoven" (1979, p. 205).⁶ It is this that turns the "past" into operating ideologies. Based on this understanding, Nicholls could unravel the elaborate competing legends that have functioned as both explanations and justification of past and current political platforms. In Haiti, history is not simply a matter of punctilious academic discourse and debate. It has always been, said Nicholls, citing Michael Oakeshott, "living ideological historiography"; a case where "our predominant interest is not in 'history' but only in retrospective politics. And the past is now more than ever a field in which we exercise our moral and political opinions." (Oakeshott, 1962, p. 165). It is the profound knowledge of this process in Haiti that led Nicholls to argue strongly that it is part of the historian's work "to question these stylized accounts and, where appropriate, to demolish them"

(Nicholls, 1978, p. 47), a stance of which Popper would have fully approved. Nicholls demolished two fundamental myths and in so doing highlights the real differences between Haiti and most of the rest of the Caribbean. First, the idea/myth that dictatorships such as those of François (Papa Doc) Duvalier were aberrations. They were, in fact, very much results of significant continuities in the Haitian authoritarian political culture. Second, the idea/myth that keeping the foreigner (the *blanc*) at bay was invariably a steely determination of Haitian leaders, especially *noir* leaders. He notes two situations when this was not the case: (a) when the geopolitical exigencies of Haiti, a small, vulnerable country, called for a need to play one great power against the other and when this could only be done by offering incentives such as trade/tariff concessions and even land for potential bases and (b) the many occasions when sitting elites invited foreign to outmaneuver their opponents. Nicholls demonstrated how President Lysius Salomon (1879–88), a central figure in the *noirist* myth of the unconditionally nationalist *noir* (as distinct from the allegedly *mulâtre apatriédes*), more than once had recourse to such strategies. It was a clear case of what they say in geopolitics: kiss the hand you cannot bite. Here we see an important aspect of Nicholls's historical analysis: not to confuse what is presumed with what is known.⁷ He held consistently to this critical approach when in 1985 he decided that it was appropriate to put Haiti in a Caribbean context.

Haiti and the Caribbean

It should be evident that Nicholls's approach in placing Haiti in a Caribbean context is not strictly comparative since both the original Haitian study and the various Caribbean case studies were done separately as discrete research projects and at different points in time. The approach, rather, is to draw *relevant* conclusions from the systematic application of analogies. "I believe," he said, "that much of the experience of Haiti from the time of the revolution to the present is indeed of *relevance* to the rest of the Caribbean region" (1985, p. 3, my emphasis). This was so, he continued, because Haiti "is part of the Caribbean and, indeed . . . much of her post-colonial experience . . . applies also

to the anglophone islands” (ibid., p. 5). He cites the following aspects of Haitian history for which analogies can be found in the rest of the Anglophone Caribbean: the complex relationship between ethnicity and the economy; ideas about the proper role of the state, of foreign capital, and foreign ownership of land; the dominant role of the United States in “determining” development in the affairs of these countries; the central role of religion; the structure of political domination and the historical frequency of revolts; and the ongoing role of migration. Nicholls also describes the role of working class women and gives a truly magisterial study of the comparative role of Levantines throughout the Caribbean (Nicholls, 1985).

The purpose here is neither to quarrel with the cases Nicholls selected nor to quibble with his use of analogies. That said, one has to be careful with what historians call “seductive” and “captivating” analogies. As Neustadt and May put it: “Seductive analogies should be examined and re-examined for those reasons and one more: to gain some protection against supposing that a problem is what it used to be when, in reality, conditions have changed” (1986, p. 66).

Hence Neustadt and May recommend that in making analogies one has to explicitly identify the *likenesses* and the *differences* between the cases. In order to pursue both the likenesses and the differences in Nicholls’s study of Haiti and the rest of the Caribbean, I will reduce my area of analysis to include only two topics he developed: the treatment of race, ethnicity, and nation-building, and the role of the state in development. I will then expand Nicholls’s analogies to a new set of case studies from the Greater Caribbean, which illustrates the differences.

Race, Ethnicity, and Nation-Building: Venezuela, Mexico, and Cuba

The roles that race and ethnicity played in the creation of the nation in Venezuela, Mexico, and Cuba appear to be quite analogous to the role they played in the Haitian case.⁸ They represent, however, highly seductive analogies since, in fact, these cases illustrate not the likenesses but the differences with the

Haitian case. Rather than serving as a positive example, the Haitian case contributed mightily to engendering and amplifying the determination of the elites of these countries to highlight the differences, to stop their states from becoming “another Haiti.” The reasons for these reactions have much more to do with the perceptions of the elites in these countries than what actually was occurring in Haiti. The phenomenon is called “displacement,” which leads to overgeneralization on the basis of presumed similarities (Allport, 1954, pp. 343–59). The following proposition on “displacement aggression” seems to fit the case of the Caribbean and, indeed, the world’s reaction to the Haitian Revolution: “When the actual barrier is physically, psychologically, or socially invulnerable to attack, aggression may be displaced to an innocent but more vulnerable bystander” (Berelson and Steiner, 1964, p. 267). With each victory of the Haitian rebels (especially against European armies), the more generalized the displacement aggression, the more Haiti became a negative (that is, different) case from the rest of the Caribbean. Contrary to the thesis that the decolonization process began in Haiti, a case can be made that the decolonization process was delayed because of the way Haiti was displaced and over-generalized in the minds of colonial and native white elites (Maingot, 1996b, pp. 53–80; Drescher, 2001, pp. 10–14).

*Venezuela—The Panic about Haiti:
The International Context*

Nowhere in the Caribbean did the Haitian case and the eventual emancipation of the slaves fundamentally change the racial stratification system. If anything, it was reinforced by two quite powerful forces: the racism of most of the metropolitan ideologues and the specter of another Haiti, which scared metropolitan and white Creoles alike. This was aggressive displacement writ large. Local whites used metropolitan whites, who held ultimate power over the fates of these minute colonies, as reference groups. Colonial ideologies everywhere were racist. The “white man’s burden” thus combined racism with paternalism, the latter deemed essential to avoiding another Haiti. As Thomas Carlyle warned after observing the results

of emancipation in the mid-nineteenth century, "Let him, by his ugliness, idleness, rebellion, banish all white men from the West Indies, and make it all one Haiti... a tropical dog-kennel and pestiferous jungle" (Carlyle, 1849). Similar opinions came from Oxford historian James Anthony Froude.

If this was so among Europeans, how about native *criollos*? Did the great precursors, Miranda and Bolívar, who, like so many other leaders of Gran Colombia, had found refuge in Haiti, understand and sympathize with the causes of the Haitian Revolution? Not at all. Despite his friendship with the Haitian leader Petión, Bolívar shared the generalized dim view of the isolated island. Haiti was Africa, the Dark Continent, the great unknown with all the preconceptions, which conjured up images of social revolution and disorder. This is evident in his warning to Vice President Santander on December 23, 1822, that the coasts of Colombia were threatened not only by the neighboring European colonies but also by "the Africans of Haiti, whose power is greater than the primitive fire." Haiti, he says in the same letter, is "so complex and so horrible that no matter how you consider it, it doesn't present other than horrors and misfortunes." Again, on March 11, 1825, Bolívar wrote to Santander that the Haitian Revolution could serve as a model in certain respects "but not in the horrible area of destruction which they adopted" (Bolívar in Bierck Jr., 1951, vol. 1, p. 50). Bolívar's fear was ultimately the fear of *pardocracia* rule or, better said, anarchy, led by nonwhites. This would appear repeatedly in Bolívar's writing and had roots in his social class origins and in his ceaseless efforts to find legitimation in European eyes. It is crucial to understand, therefore, that Bolívar like Miranda not only perceived that the Great Powers shared his social values and views on Haiti and on nonwhites generally, but he also believed that they would somehow reward him and his cause for adhering to those commonly held prejudices.

It is not a trivial fact that both the writer of the memo citing Bolívar's rejection of inviting Haiti to the Panama Congress, José Rafael Ravenga, and the chief recipient and chief delegate to the Panamá Congress, Dr. Pedro Gual, had once found refuge in Haiti. Like Miranda and Bolívar, these gentlemen held

opinions that were not even faintly generous to the Haitians. The antagonism of the Great Powers toward Haiti, thus, while a powerful enough reason for prudence, also provided a convenient and comfortable support for the existing anti-Haitian attitudes of the Latin American elites.⁹

While necessity forced Bolívar to recruit nonwhites as officers, the white elite of Colombia felt no necessity to agree with these choices. Their fear of pardocracia was even more intense than Bolívar's. In fact, this was a major reason for their opposition to his rule. As an important spokesman for this group explained: "In his last years, when he became a dictator, Bolívar represented these three things: the arbitrariness of the sword, the insolence of the Venezuelans who were regarded as intruders, and the rebellion of the mixed bloods" (Caballero Calderón, 1960, p. 67).

Similarly, José María Samper, an influential contemporary, in referring to the high status civilian group to which he himself belonged, revealed their value system when he noted that "it is they who guide the revolution and are the source of its philosophy. The other races or castes do nothing more than obey the impulses of those who have the prestige and intelligence, the audacity and even the superiority of the white race" (Samper, 1861, p. 186). The fear and disdain for Haiti was part of the broader fear and disdain of nonwhites. Existing social norms had been relaxed in the military area because of the necessity and exigencies of war. Traditional social norms, however, had not disappeared.

Mexico

In many ways Nicholls's description of the racial and ethnic dynamics in Haiti sharpens one's understanding of rebellion and nation-building in Mexico. While Haiti did not figure at all, there were many similar issues, but they ran historically parallel, not sequentially in a causal way: the betrayal of the white creole elite—including the Catholic Church—which welcomed the occupying French forces sent by Louis Bonaparte (1864–67), the preoccupation with land ownership and with foreign capital, and similarities in the search for a national identity. One

perceives this Mexico-Haiti similarity in the words of Mexico's most celebrated philosopher and Nobel Prize winner Octavio Paz in his *The Labyrinth of Solitude*:

The history of Mexico is the history of a man seeking his parentage, his origins. He has been influenced at one time or another by France, Spain, the United States and the militant indigenists of his own country. . . . He wants to go back beyond the catastrophe he suffered: he wants to be a sun again, to return to the center of that life from which he was separated one day. Our solitude has the same roots as religious feelings. . . . It is a form of orphanhood, an obscure awareness that we have been torn from the All, and an ardent search: a flight and a return, an effort to re-establish the bonds that unite us with the universe. (1961, p. 20)

In Mexico, this search for "origins" had much to work with the rich Aztec and Maya civilizations, which, much reduced by Spanish colonization, still had a living presence especially in Southern Mexico. Mexico had much with which to build national historical myths and a national identity. With the Mexican Revolution, the ideology of *indigenismo* took firm roots. It became the national myth and while much of it involved the romanticization of the pre-Columbian cultures, as distinct from Haitian *négritude*, it covered all Mexicans, not just Indians. It was, at least at the level of national myth, an all-inclusive concept. Every Mexican, regardless of ethnicity, pays homage to this past even as they all pursue policies of modernizing the nation through education and foreign investments. The explanation is evident. "*El Indio Juarez*" might be Mexico's single most venerated hero, but the national holiday—*Cinco de Mayo*—celebrates his and Mexico's victory over the occupying French and their allies, the white criollo elite. That group would no longer dominate the construction of the national myth and sense of national identity. Juarez even invited them to adopt it. Juarez was no Dessalines perhaps because, as a highly educated man, he did not share the desperate circumstances or suffer from the destructive stereotypes the latter had to contend with.

Despite this myth of the inclusiveness of the Mexican national, the numerically small group of Mexican blacks were an ignored and much discriminated against minority. Only one significant military-political leader of the early nineteenth century was a mulatto—Vicente Guerrero, after whom the state of Guerrero, significantly on the Pacific coast, is named. In 1829, without any known influence from Haiti, he declared slavery abolished during the few months he was president. Soon thereafter he was executed, not for liberating the slaves but simply for being on the losing side in one of the many civil wars that were unleashed by independence.

Despite the fact that blacks and mulattoes in Mexico suffered severe discrimination,¹⁰ unable to meet the *prueba de limpieza de sangre* (proof of purity of blood), either legally or informally implemented, they were not a rebellious group. Race-based rebellion in Mexico invariably originated in the white criollo-hating Indian communities, especially among some Maya groups in Yucatán. The so-called *guerra de castas* (caste war) of Yucatán of 1848–53 reduced the population by 30 to 40 percent. The peace treaties signed by the state with these *indios bravos* (literally, “fierce Indians”) as they were called, show great similarity with those signed by the Dutch with the “*Bosnegers*” of Suriname and the British peace treaty with the Maroons of Jamaica (Reed, 1964). This is quite a different pattern from the all-out war of the Haitian Revolution.

While Mexico showed many of the social-racial dynamics Nicholls describes for Haiti, there is no evidence of a Haitian influence much less a direct revolutionary connection. The same cannot be said for Cuba, which, after the Dominican Republic, was arguably the territory most negatively affected by the Haitian Revolution.

The Cuban Reaction

Foreign visitors to Cuba in the early nineteenth century were quick to observe that island’s obsession with race, the mutual aversion between the castas and the role the Haitian Revolution played in Cuban concerns. So it was with the scientist Alexander von Humboldt, who wrote: “The disturbances in Santo Domingo in 1790 and those in Jamaica in 1794 had

caused such great dismay among the *hacendados* of the island of Cuba that a *junta económica* passionately debated options for peacekeeping on the island” (2001 pp. 258, 262).

Indeed, the fear of an independent Cuba becoming another Haiti so extensively and uniformly pervaded Cuban social thinking that even Afro-Cuban intellectuals themselves could not avoid it. Even those who claimed “their rightful share” of the rewards of the wars of independence could not avoid the debate that was framed as “white civilization” versus “barbarian Africanization” (Helg, 1995, p. 51). At all stages of the nineteenth century efforts at independence from Spain, an influential segment of the criollo elite believed that even as they favored independence they preferred to remain Spanish than to open African influences. While elites wanted at once to enlist blacks into the wars of liberation (over 70 percent of the *mambises* were black), they were at the same time determined to prevent them from dominating the island. This, in many ways, replicated the situation in Gran Colombia discussed above. Hugh Thomas cites a little-known letter of Bolivar’s explaining why he did not want to liberate Cuba: “I believe our league can maintain itself perfectly well without embracing the extremes of the South . . . and without creating another Republic of Haiti [in Cuba].” (Thomas, 1971, fn. 47, p. 105).

Charles Chapman noted that throughout the nineteenth century Cubans were obsessed with the issue of the racial balance. The whites, he said, were “in terror lest Cuba become ‘another Haiti’” (Chapman, 1927, p. 31). According to Chapman, Cubans believed that there were too many negroes in Cuba for the people to be willing to risk emancipation (ibid., p. 31).¹¹ There certainly were some grounds for apprehension. In 1812, José Antonio Aponte led a black rebellion, which had Haiti as a model, and, according to Levi Marrero, entertained contacts with a Haitian general (Marrero, vol. 9, p. 34). Between 1841 and 1843, there were several minor slave rebellions; however, the 1844 rebellion of “La Escalera” provoked “*el gran susto*.” Again, it was said that Haiti was the model for the Cuban blacks. As Jorge and Isabel Castellanos noted, it was the fear that the Cuban blacks would make contact with blacks in Jamaica and Haiti that gave rise to a “collective hysteria.”

What followed were years that Cuban history knows as those of the “*Gran Terror*” and the “*Gran Miedo*.” Haiti was central to these fears. Virtually every major Cuban thinker in the nineteenth century favored a reduction of the black population citing the Haitian example as the reason. The Castellanos put it succinctly: “The great preoccupation could be summed up in one simple question: what will happen if Haiti repeats itself in Cuba? Otherwise enlightened thinkers such as José Antonio Saco looked at the Caribbean islands and said: ‘Who does not tremble upon realizing that the population of African origin which surrounds Cuba amounts to more than five million?’” (Castellanos and Castellanos, 1988, Vol. 1, p. 251). Whether it was Father Félix Varela, Domingo Delmonte, José de la Luz y Caballero, Francisco Arango y Parreño, or Saco, they all perceived black slaves as irreconcilable enemies and Haiti as the place from which the leadership would come. Their abolitionist fervor was, as Leonardo Griñan Peralta put it, “*hijo del temor, no del amor*” (the child of fear, not of love) (Zea, 1963, p. 260).

The fear of “Haitianization” thus hung over Cuban life like a sword of Damocles. It came into play again in the early twentieth century as Cuba began its independent life. At this point, as Nancy Leys Stepan has documented, US racist views on eugenics and racial purity fell on receptive ears. Racial fears even permeated the debate around the introduction of universal suffrage, for as *The New York Times* on August 7, 1899, headlined: “Cuba may be another Haiti; results of universal suffrage would be a black republic” (cited in Fermoselle, 1974, p. 30). Be that as it may, de la Fuente does record the fact that despite strong American pressure to deny Cuban blacks the vote—fearing that it “would turn Cuba into a second Haiti”—the Cuban political elite did sanction universal male suffrage in 1901. However, during the first municipal elections held under the US occupation in 1900, the US and Cuban authorities did everything to exclude blacks from the political process. This, it was said, would prevent “a second edition of Haiti or Santo Domingo in the future” (De la Fuente, 2001, p. 57). Aline Helg is masterful in explaining what she calls three “efficient icons of fear” among white Cubans: first and foremost, fear of the Haitian Revolution influencing black uprisings; second, fear of African

religions and culture; and third, fear of Afro-Cuban sexuality, male and female (Helg, 1995, pp. 17–18). These fears combined in the reaction to the black rebellion in 1912 protesting the blatant discrimination in job placements and claiming, as Helg puts it, “their rightful share.” Predictably, *The New York Times* headlined: “Haitian negroes aid Cuban rebels” (May 22, 1912). The possibility, as Rafael Fermoselle theorizes, that the many Haitian (and Jamaican) blacks working in the Cuban sugar industry had merely got caught in the middle of the Cuban warfare never occurred to these observers obsessed with fears of Haiti. The retribution meted out in 1912 to the 4,000 black rebels was ferocious. Chapman relates how President Gómez took note of the “feeling of panic,” which the “ferocious savagery” of the blacks had caused among the whites in Havana, and vowed to “make short work of them” (Chapman, 1927, pp. 311–13). Over 3,000 blacks were killed.

The “terrified consciousness” of white Cubans was even deepened by novels such as Alejo Carpentier’s 1949 tale of horror and superstition under King Henri Christophe, *El Reino de este Mundo*. It is the opinion of virtually all serious scholars of Cuban independence that the “race question” poisoned Cuban society and its political process. Quite contrary to the situation in Haiti, Cuban blacks were stymied at every turn from asserting any racial identity. Even José Martí, whose fervent opposition to racism is beyond reproach, once noted: “The black man who proclaims his race, even if incorrectly as a way to proclaim spiritual identity with all races, justifies and provokes white racism” (cited in Pérez Jr., 1999, p. 91). As Pérez notes, “The image of savage spirits loomed large in the Creole imagination . . . always in the form of slave uprisings and race war” (ibid., p. 90). Alejandro de la Fuente explains the detrimental consequences of this fear of a separate black identity very clearly: “National unity was to be achieved at the expense of racial identities. . . . Afro-Cubans would have to choose between being black . . . or being Cuban, members of an allegedly raceless nationalist force. Any possibility for blacks to voice their specific grievances and discontent was therefore explicitly rejected as un-Cuban and unpatriotic” (De la Fuente, 1998, p. 4; 2001, p. 44).

Despite credible efforts by leaders such as José Martí to curb racism, national identity—*cubanidad*—was framed in terms of “white civilization” versus “African barbarity,” and Haiti was the living and proximate example of the latter.¹² Cuban aggressive displacement insured that Cuba’s development was different from that of Haiti. This racial identity has been so deep that even five decades of revolution have not been able to eradicate the salience of race in Cuban life.

The Role of the State in Development

It is Nicholls’s central thesis that in conjunction with the conflicts of race, language, and religion lay conflicts over ownership of land (Nicholls, 1979, pp. 7–8, 102–3; 1985, pp. 85–90). The idea of land ownership was virtually sacred to the free Haitian, which explains why from the declaration of independence right up to the US occupation ownership was denied to whites. This was accompanied by certain ancillary ideas of the political culture, especially among those of the *négritude* persuasion. There was among many writers of the 1930s and 1940s in Haiti a conviction that the “African mentality” of the people required strong political leadership or even dictatorship. Nicholls relates how Carl Brouard believed that democracy was inappropriate for a backward country, that K. Georges Jacob referred to democratic and republican institutions as window-dressing designed to mislead the masses, and that Jean Price-Mars was quoted by Diaquoi to the effect that the democratic formulae enshrined in Haitian legal and constitutional documents were devoid of sense. Since they were out of harmony with the customs of the people, they only served to justify the exploitation of the masses by the elite. Diaquoi himself, says Nicholls, referred to such institutions as freedom of the press, free elections, a constitutional opposition, and democracy itself as “sordid tinsel,” while René Piquion maintained that Haiti needed a strong dictatorship reinforced by a mystique of authority that can sanctify force even in the eyes of those it crushes (Nicholls, 1996, p. 172).

Except for the past 50 years of dictatorship in Cuba and the Trujillo years in the Dominican Republic, there is nothing similar to this authoritarian bent in the rest of the Caribbean.

This philosophy, rather, is much like that of two major Latin American advocates of a populist ideology of authoritarianism: Venezuelan Laureano Vallenilla Lanz, the *eminence grise* behind dictator Laureano Gómez, and Dominican Joaquín Balaguer, Trujillo's loyal intellectual. Balaguer, let it be said, was racist and anti-Haitian to the core, blaming much of the ailments of his country on the "pernicious" presence of its neighbor (Vallenilla Lanz, 1961; Balaguer, 1983).

So what does Nicholls suggest will be necessary to get around this Haitian political culture favoring authoritarian rule? He suggests that there are two "necessary" conditions for the securing and maintenance of what he calls "an *effective* independence": first, the development of an "indigenous culture" and, second, "the formation of a national economy" (1985, p. 81). These two points are more fully developed in the conclusion to his *Haiti in Caribbean Context* where he spells out his specific recommendations. First, Haiti should decentralize to the provinces and revive what used to be—and to a certain extent still is—a "lively civic tradition," a "tradition of self-help, for the masses have no reason to expect help from the government." Second, Haiti should disregard the "modernizing" recommendations of the international experts, which invariably have to be administered by the central government. "The departmental and other regional loyalties which certainly still exist in Haiti need to be strengthened, with an effective system of local government." Finally, and in the face of the multiple academic studies speaking of a Caribbean radicalism or a revolutionary working class, Nicholls's last sentence has a Burkean twist to it: "Only by recognizing the force and indeed the value of tradition will constructive change occur" (*ibid.*, pp. 237–38).

This is where I part company with Nicholls. Nicholls's call for a return to local centers of authority and their traditions clashes dramatically with his whole analysis of the authoritarian roots of these rural centers. His studies demonstrate that since colonial times, the rural chieftain sought to arm civil militias (the *cacos* and the *piquets*) to compete with the regular army and the *chefs de section*, especially during turbulent times. Duvalier merely continued this tradition, recruiting slum residents into his personal henchmen, the Torton-Macoutes, and, then, at

a much larger scale, the *Volontaires de la Sécurité Nationale* (VSN), a veritable counter force to the military, which he did not trust.¹³ Quite evidently, these local *caciques* and *caudillos* have done little to encourage local development; they have been simply “*petit dictateurs*.”

Perhaps a much more persuasive argument against this call for decentralization without “foreign” assistance are the findings of a major study carried out by Columbia University in the early 1980s (Downs, 1988) and of my own field research in Haiti (see Maingot, 1992; 1995). In the early 1980s a number of US universities did extensive comparative studies on regionalization and decentralization. Columbia University examined Nicaragua and Haiti. The reforms worked adequately in the former (except on the Mosquito Coast) but failed miserably in Haiti. Charles Downs, who conducted the study, cites five reasons for this failure. First, and most importantly, the destruction of local leadership wrought over the years meant that there was no one to “decentralise” to. Second, the fact that virtually the only regional services were being provided were by foreign NGOs. This in turn had two consequences: (a) resentment on the part of the central elites unwilling, therefore, to strengthen the NGOs’ hands and (b) suspicion by the NGOs that greater government involvement meant greater corruption and bureaucratic meddling. They preferred a weaker, hands-off state—hardly a formula for national development. Thirdly, the reforms were resisted at all levels of the bureaucracy in Port au Prince for fear of loss of prerogatives and fear of being relocated to “the interior.” A further reason was that the scheme resurrected the old canard that “regionalism” was a threat to “national unity.” Finally, the not unrealistic fear that corruption would spread to local officials (Downs, 1988).

Conclusion

There are real benefits to be derived from comparing the Haitian case with other cases in the Caribbean and Latin America. Sadly, such comparisons tend to show, first, that Haiti has been so insularly nationalistic that it has learned little from its neighbors and, second, despite the generosity of leaders such

as Petión who opened Haiti's doors to those fleeing slavery and oppression, the very racism of most of its neighbors persisted and continued, through the mechanism of aggression displacement, to interpret events in Haiti as threats to their existing social structures. In that sense, the Haitian Revolution had a negative impact on most of its neighbors, delaying in many cases the decolonization processes.

Such has been Haiti's persistent failure to develop, even as most of its neighbors (and especially its bordering neighbor) moved slowly but surely out of state and economic failure, that there has been a recurring theme in studies on Haiti: analyses that point to the inability of the nation to break out of its long-lasting cycle of poverty, followed by pious expressions of faith in the Haitian people and their eventual development, if only so-and-so policies were followed. In one of the most important studies of Haiti (with a very unfortunate title), Robert Rotberg lists the many studies that follow that recurring sequence and how none has succeeded (Rotberg, 1971). A recent case exemplifying this epistemological reality is Paul Collier's much admired book, *The Bottom Billion*, which lists four "traps" that make countries "fail": the conflict trap, the resource curse (quite surely not the Haitian case), being landlocked with bad neighbors, and suffering from bad governance in a small state especially characterized by rampant corruption (Collier, 2007). Even a superficial analysis of Collier's findings leads one to include Haiti's underdevelopment as resulting from several of these traps. And, yet, appointed by the United Nations (UN) to undertake the report for the Bill Clinton initiative, Collier concludes: "In stark contrast to other current entanglements with fragile states Haiti offers the American and Canadian governments a rare opportunity to demonstrate that their support can lift a society decisively out of fragility" (2009).

There is no evidence that external support alone has ever "lifted" a "failed" state out of poverty. Note that Collier now calls Haiti a "fragile" state. The fundamental changes have to come from within or, failing that, by giving the external actors a virtual *carte blanche* to make structural changes.

Since nothing indicates either can occur, there has to be a combination of internal and external drivers. The first internal

change has to come from a demonstration of local political will, reforming the 1987 supernationalist constitution in three fundamental areas. First, modify Article 15 prohibiting dual nationality. It is unrealistic to continue ignoring the enormous resources available in the Haitian diaspora, including the \$1,100 million remitted in 2005 (Inter-American Dialogue, 2007, p. 5). To continue depending on their remittances and asking for their help in lobbying foreign governments without granting them the same rights that Mexicans, Costa Ricans, Trinidadians, the British, and so on enjoy in their respective countries is not only unfair, but it is also wasteful. Second, modify Article 55, which allows foreign land tenancy only “for the needs of their ‘sojourn in the country’” but not beyond that. Allowing foreign ownership of land for productive functions such as agriculture and tourism is done virtually everywhere in the Caribbean for the simple reason that it provides an incentive and a protection (in law and in politics) to the investor. Finally, modify Articles 21 and 263 prohibiting the presence of foreign troops in the national territory. It is not just that foreign troops were rushed to the island following the calamitous earthquake in January 2010; it is also that even the most nationalist of recent Haitian presidents, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, made use of them. In fact, Aristide contracted additional foreign security: the Steele Foundation, a private San Francisco-based security firm, provided numerous bodyguards to Aristide and his family. As Alex Dupuy correctly notes, it was “the first time a Haitian president has sought such services” (2007, p. 155).

In the final analysis, the recommendation that an internal-external effort will be necessary to pull Haiti out of the traps, which keep it underdeveloped, finds new support in some significant changes in the international arena. A major project by The Inter-American Dialogue on the need to go beyond the traditional definitions of state-centered sovereignty to now focus on people-centered sovereignty came to two fundamental conclusions. First, external actors can contribute to the defense and enhancement of democracy—even to the extent of UN-approved military intervention and, second, tolerance for such external actions had increased dramatically in

the international community (and the hemisphere) (Maingot, 1996a, pp. 189–212).

The singular contribution of David Nicholls's work on Haiti and the Caribbean is to caution us against perpetuating romantic myths about the island's exceptionalism by repeatedly reinforcing a "history as ideology" based on the heroics of the independence years. The morality play has to give way to a new reality play. As admirable as the independence heroics were, there is a dire need for the kind of analysis David Nicholls did: to study and analyze which foundations, myths, and acts have historically acted as obstacles to a people-centered process of development.

Notes

1. Slavery under Roman Catholic regimes might have legislated that the slave was a "*persona*" but this did not change the actual managerial-economic system under which he or she lived and worked.
2. Haiti is not even mentioned in Kenneth Ramchand's review of West Indian literature, *The West Indian Novel and its Background* (1970).
3. Smith's book won the Gordon K. Lewis Book Award in 2010. The jury called Haiti "the quintessentially Caribbean country."
4. A major 1942 region-wide survey of the situation of the working class in the Caribbean described Haiti as something quite different from the problems of the rest of the region. See Williams (1942).
5. A Barrow biographer, Peter Morgan, in *The Life and Times of Errol Barron*, claims that Barrow often traced the island's independence to 1651 when its General Assembly, in protest against the Navigation Laws, issued a Declaration of Independence.
6. Anthony P. Maingot develops this theme at greater depth in his monograph, *Race, Class and Pluralism in David Nicholls' Caribbean* (2003).
7. It is interesting to note how the Haitian common folk are instinctively skeptical of grandiloquent claims. A popular saying is "*Tout sa ou we, se pa sa!*" (Everything you think you see, that's not it!).
8. This section draws heavily on my earlier essay, "Social Structure, Social Status and Civil-Military Conflict in Urban Colombia, 1810–1858" (1969).
9. For a full discussion of this see Paul Verna, *Petion y Bolivar* (Caracas: Ministerio de Educación, 1970), Appendix.
10. Even when freed, blacks and mulattoes were subjected to the payment of tribute; mestizos were not because of colonial "*gracias*" given to the Indians and their descendants.

11. See also Domínguez (1980), p. 250.
12. José Martí's many references to the racism he so detested and his complaints about the "constant references to the colour of men" testify to the ingrained nature of color prejudice in Cuba. On Martí's many writings on the topic see González and Schulman, 1961.
13. There exists no better authority on this than Heintz and Heintz (1978), pp. 606–12. Robert Heintz was Commandant of the Marine Corps Training Mission in the early years of the Duvalier dictatorship (1959–63). He was expelled by Duvalier in 1963.

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Chapter 7

Haiti and France: Settling the Debts of the Past

Charles Forsdick

Haiti has never really been a French colony, but we have effectively enjoyed, for a long time, friendly relations with Haiti in that most notably we share the use of the same language.

Jacques Chirac, March 10, 2000,
cited by Dorigny, 2005, p. 47.¹

France's relations with Zimbabwe, Cuba or Burma are a matter of foreign policy. Our relations with Haiti are more sensitive, more emotional and more hidden because, in an often obscure way, they bring into play France's relations with itself.

Debray, 2004, pp. 16–17

The rapid expansion of Haitian historiography over the past decade, especially in the work of French and North American scholars, has progressively and convincingly challenged the process that Michel-Rolph Trouillot—as recently as 1995—dubbed “silencing the past” (Trouillot, 1995). New histories of Haiti and its revolution have reasserted the global significance of the decade-long struggle led by Toussaint Louverture and to this work has been added important original studies of subjects, periods, and other interconnections hitherto largely unexplored.² At the same time, Haiti has achieved a prominence in popular culture similar to that it last enjoyed in the interwar period following the Harlem Renaissance and the first US occupation, with Madison Smartt Bell’s substantial trilogy of novels of the revolution (themselves translated into French) complemented

by the music of Wyclef Jean and by Danny Glover's soon to be completed biopic of Toussaint.³ At the same time, this scholarly and cultural interest has been supplemented by the persistence of Haiti in the international media. This presence has been evident in particular since the aborted celebrations of its bicentenary of independence, as a result not only of Aristide's ousting from power in February 2004 but also of a series of subsequent events including the natural disasters of the devastating tropical storms of 2004 and 2008, and, most notably, the earthquake of January 12, 2010. As Haiti has been engaged in the long process of reconstruction, the presidential elections of 2010–11—in which René Préval was ultimately replaced by Michel Martelly—have also been the subject of close international attention, coverage intensified not only by the potential (yet ultimately rejected) candidature of Wyclef Jean but also by the unexpected return of both Jean-Claude Duvalier and Aristide.

Interest in Haiti has been particularly intensive in France, most notably in the media, where some of the most detailed reporting of the country's contemporary sociopolitical issues has appeared. Haiti has also been prominent in literary and popular culture, especially as a result of the heightened visibility of Francophone Haitian authors and intellectuals. Attention to the latter has been accentuated as a result of the association of the earthquake in the public imagination with the annual "Etonnants Voyageurs" literary festival, a satellite version of which was due to be held in Port-au-Prince the week the disaster struck; the main 2010 festival, held as usual in Saint Malo, was instead devoted to Haiti, and the presence of numerous Haitian authors made this a prominent national event. A series of important novels had already appeared in French at around the time of the bicentenaries of Toussaint Louverture's death and of national independence,⁴ and Raoul Peck's recent *Molloch tropical*, filmed primarily on location in Henri-Christophe's citadel at Sans-Souci, provides an allegorical indictment of Aristide, in which contemporary Haiti is closely interwoven with a past presented as ever present. Peck's film adopts the apparatus of tragedy to chart the "macoutisation" of politics, and the rapid decline of a leader subject to progressive corruption and

brutalization. The plot also contains a play within a play, as the downfall of the protagonist occurs against the backcloth of a US production company's efforts to film a costume drama of the revolutionary period. The reasons for the inclusion of this narrative are unclear, although Peck seems, on the one hand, to be suggesting the spectral presence of the revolutionary past in the postcolonial and neocolonial present, whilst, on the other, he appears to warn against any romanticization of that past that impedes engagement with the complexities of the present.

Although the emphasis in the film is on North American involvement in contemporary Haiti, similar observations about the spectrality of the past, as well as the failure to connect the historical with the contemporary (and vice versa), could be made about the various axes that link France with Haiti. In a now often cited moment of historical amnesia, Jacques Chirac claimed during a March 2000 press conference in Guadeloupe (quoted as the epigraph to this chapter): "Haiti has never really been a French colony." The motivations for the then president of the Republic's sleight of memory remain uncertain, but whether the comment was deliberately obfuscatory or the result of genuine ignorance, Chirac's comment may be read as evidence of the "silencing" of Haiti in French memory, a process made particularly apparent in critiques of the singularized and profoundly national narratives of the French Revolution propagated during the bicentenary of that event in 1989 (Benot, 2004; Trouillot, 1995). The Haitian artist Edouard Duval-Carrié was one of those recruited to "tropicalise" the celebrations in that year through his contribution to the exhibition at the Musée des Arts Africains et Océaniens, "La Révolution française sous les Tropiques," but efforts by Jean Rouch to radicalize such a project further in a film commissioned by the Commission du Bicentenaire were cut short when *Liberté, égalité, fraternité, et puis après* was refused distribution.

Rouch's film focuses on the connections between the French and Haitian Revolutions, suggesting grassroots solidarity amongst those on either side of the Atlantic who sought from the outset a literal understanding of France's tripartite national motto present in the work's title, the origins of which are to be found in the revolutionary and prerevolutionary periods. Rouch

suggests that instead of incarcerating the Abbé Gregoire in the Panthéon to mark the French bicentenary, the celebrations of 1989 should have been opened out more globally and identified more actively with the revolutionary prelate's advocacy of racial equality and his early commitment to abolitionism.⁵ The film ends with the unification of Napoléon Bonaparte and Toussaint Louverture in a *vodou* ceremony on the steps of the Invalides, a clear assertion of the role of the Haitian Revolution in its French metropolitan counterpart, and a reminder that at certain points in the 1790s the hub of revolutionary activity lay squarely on the other side of the Atlantic (see Conklin, 2000, pp. 215–38; Garrigus, 2000, pp. 259–75). Rouch's intervention was a rare attempt not only to underline the centrality of Haiti to French history but also to emphasize the radical attempt of the Caribbean events of 1791–1803 to carry through, to logical limits arguably unimaginable in France, the project usually reduced to a French national revolution. Laurent Dubois has, along these lines, described the unspoken place of Haiti in French historiography, linking the evident anxieties over issues of ethnicity in contemporary France to unfinished debates regarding “*liberté*” and “*égalité*” triggered over two centuries ago by the Haitian Revolution itself (Dubois, 2000, pp. 15–34). Dubois actively avoids the postcolonial confluences challenged by colonial historians such as Frederick Cooper, who indicts the tendency to “leapfrog legacies” in order to expose a historiography of convenience that fails to unpack the often profoundly complex presence of the colonial in postcolonial situations and debates (Cooper, 2005, pp. 17–18). The opening quotation above from Chirac nevertheless betokens a long-standing disavowal of the constitutive role of Haiti in French republican modernity and is evidence of a process of amnesia that exists in a clear historiographic context linked to the volatility and variability of the French colonial empire. The “loss” of Saint-Domingue in 1804 is linked closely to the more general demise of the Ancien Régime Empire in the postrevolutionary period; the rapid reconstruction of a Republican colonial empire in the period following the beginning of the conquest of Algeria in 1830 is characterized by a lingering sense of nostalgia and regret associated with those territories—most notably also India and North

America—no longer under French sway.⁶ In the context of such lamented loss, Haiti inevitably plays a key role as its attempted re-colonization by Leclerc's expedition in 1802–3 was part of Napoleonic endeavors to reassert a French presence in North America. Haitian independence in 1804 frustrated any such ambitions, as was made apparent by the Louisiana Purchase granted in the previous year.⁷

It nevertheless took the French state a further 21 years to acknowledge Haitian independence, and the period until 1825 witnessed continued lobbying, particularly by prominent planters, for the reintegration of Saint-Domingue into the French Caribbean islands, possessions reduced by then to Guadeloupe and Martinique (both of which were held by the British for varying periods during the two decades following 1794). Although the British agreement at the Congress of Vienna in 1814 that a French reinvasion of Haiti would not be opposed was accompanied by short-lived French plans under the first Restoration to enact such a re-colonization, informal recognition of independence by France began shortly after this date when French traders and ship owners were permitted to trade with the former colony as long as they employed foreign vessels or gave the appearance of sailing under a foreign flag. In this context, François Blancpain highlights the general historiographic confusion over the eventual French recognition of independence, making it clear that the seven years of negotiations over political rapprochement that began in 1814 were followed by a further four years of discussions that eventually led to the agreement of an initial level of indemnity. According to Blancpain, an additional 13 years were required to settle in 1838 the definitive sum demanded by the French, after which payments—as a result of disruption caused by political upheaval in Haiti—took another 45 years and were not completed until 1883 (Blancpain, 2003, pp. 221–30).⁸ Formal recognition was only granted by Charles X in return for considerable reparations and the agreement of privileges in trade to France. This debt served as the most significant of a number of impediments that disrupted the establishment of the newly founded nation-state; these repayments—which absorbed around 15 percent of national income over a period of six decades—depleted national reserves and

contributed to the depreciation of the Haitian currency, the gourde; they also locked Haiti more firmly into commerce with France, a commerce that was in certain sectors, most notably coffee export, almost exclusive.

The original decree, dated April 17, 1825, stated that the indemnity accepted by the Haitian president Boyer at a level of 150 million francs was to be reimbursed in five annual installments. (The sum was calculated as the equivalent of one year's annual income before the Revolution; Haiti's annual state budget at this stage was no more than 15 million francs per year, meaning that initial repayment depended on international loans from France, meaning in effect a double indebtedness.) Constant delays in payment turned the debt into the defining element of Haiti's relationship to its former colonizer for much of the rest of the nineteenth century, and the legacy of the indemnity and its perceived impact continue to be reflected in debates about Franco-Haitian relations into the twenty-first century. The principle of the debt was not universally accepted in France, especially among those who still hoped that the French re-colonization of Haiti was a possibility, although its eventual acceptance in return for recognition of independence indicates not only the persistent sway of the former planters and their supporters, many of whom were among the most powerful families in France, but also the neocolonial influence of the metropolis on the oligarchical government of Boyer, which itself sought through the concession both diplomatic legitimization and a consolidation of internal power against the predominantly Francophobic north of the country. (Henri-Christophe had categorically refused the principle of indemnity, which was suggested for the first time by Pétion during the civil war in Haiti.) It is also important to note that a significant minority of former colonists resisted the payment since they saw its agreement as an abandonment of any potential re-colonization.

By 1825, however, spreading independence in Latin America and the rising importance of Haiti in trade with the United States meant that recognition of the Haitian state was logical for the French in both strategic and pragmatic terms. Even after the royal decree setting the indemnity, disputes continued, however, over the level of compensation, with certain

former planters demanding more significant reparations than those originally offered. Not surprisingly, in Haiti itself, the debt was also deeply unpopular amongst the population, across the social classes, and the payments to France were blamed for constant inflation in prices and the associated devaluation of the local currency. The level of the indemnity was also considerably higher than Boyer had originally anticipated, and payment was not made to schedule, even being interrupted by a suspension of reimbursement under the leadership (initially as president and subsequently as emperor) of Faustin-Élie Soulouque, between 1847 and 1859. By that stage, the July Monarchy of Louis-Philippe had already lowered the remaining balance from 120 to 60 million francs (plus an additional 30 million francs of loans), payable further in 30 installments.⁹

Over a period of three quarters of a century, Haiti therefore paid a debt of 120 million francs (consisting of 92 million francs in indemnities, and of the balance in loans and other related costs) in return for recognition of its independence. The neocolonial overtones of the arrangement, evident not least in the refusal on the part of the French to use any other name for their former colony than that of “Saint-Domingue,” immediately compromised Haitian independence, and the French envoy who announced the deal to Boyer, Baron de Mackau, described Haiti’s status after the agreement as that of a “French province, contributing much and costing nothing” (cited in Joachim, 1975, p. 396). As Benoît Joachim notes, the impact on Haiti was firmly that of a net loss: whereas the government believed it was gaining in trade and security, it was in fact losing considerably more in prestige and in its ability to construct the firm foundations of a national infrastructure and autonomy (*ibid.*, p. 396). For the French, the nineteenth century is associated with the French acquisition of a new colonial empire, located in north and sub-Saharan Africa as well as in the Pacific and Indochina; but the agreement of 1825 permitted continued control over Haiti, in both financial and diplomatic terms, evidence of a postcolonial influence that would last for a century after independence and would only be challenged by the rise of influence of the United States in the period following the Spanish-American War of 1898. It was the so-called Banana

Wars of the first three decades of the twentieth century that saw the rapid and muscular imposition of United States authority in Central America and the Caribbean, not least in Haiti itself, subject to US occupation between 1915 and 1934 (see Langley, 1983; Renda, 2001; Schmidt, 1995). Although this series of occupations and interventions ended with the withdrawal of troops from Haiti in 1934, Franklin D. Roosevelt's "Good Neighbour" Policy of the same year was nevertheless established in the wake of major political and constitutional change in the country, reflected not least in the destruction of the oppositional Cacos movement and the ending of the previously sacrosanct ban on land ownership by non-Haitians that had lasted over a century since independence.

The absorption of Haiti into a US sphere of influence and the increasing need for attention to colonial situations elsewhere meant that formal French engagement with this former colony declined over the first half of the twentieth century. The United States asserted itself as Haiti's principal trading partner in terms of both exports and imports and also became the most important source of foreign aid. The United States emerged additionally as the primary destination of Haitian emigrants. At the same time, with departmentalization in 1946 and the further absorption of the French Caribbean territories into metropolitan France that this entailed, Haiti's radical otherness and unassimilability in a French context became increasingly marked (Caroit, 2003).¹⁰ Renewed French attention to the history of Franco-Haitian relations rapidly reemerged, however, only three years after Chirac's intervention at Pointe-à-Pitre. In a speech on April 7, 2003, delivered to mark the bicentenary of Toussaint Louverture's death in a French prison at Joux, President Jean-Bertrand Aristide made an open call for return of the historical reparations paid by Haiti to France. Although many Haitian intellectuals saw the move as a populist smoke-screen designed to deflect attention away from domestic difficulties, and the French Foreign Ministry stressed that no formal request for reparations had been made, the appointment of Régis Debray to lead a commission of enquiry into Franco-Haitian relations and report to the then French foreign secretary Dominique de Villepin suggests clearly that Aristide

had caught a raw diplomatic nerve.¹¹ Even though the president's critics questioned the use to which the money requested would be put and ridiculed the precision of the sum demanded (calculated to be the equivalent of a current \$21,685,135,571.48, a figure often repeated in anti-French protests by members of Aristide's Lavalas party), the call is one of the few examples of a clearly quantifiable request for post-slavery reparations.

Debray delivered his final and largely noncommittal report to de Villepin in January 2004, at almost exactly the same time as France was preparing to support US-led efforts to oust Aristide (see Hallward, 2010). The document—published for public use in March 2004 as *Haiti et la France: Rapport à Dominique de Villepin, ministre des Affaires étrangères* by La Table Ronde—draws on interviews with 150 specialists (including Aristide himself, whom Debray met twice in late 2003). Its rhetorical maneuvers have been studied in detail by Chris Bongie, who sees in the report an exoticization of Haiti in terms of language, history, and politics (Bongie, 2008, pp. 153–84). In the light of French amnesia regarding the country, it is nevertheless difficult to criticize Debray's emphasis on the need for a French “duty of memory” toward Haiti, a process focused on the bicentenary of the country's independence, and there is clear recognition, seen in the second epigraph to this chapter, of the unique relationship between the two countries. The document reveals at the same time, however, a failure to address directly the matter of Aristide's call for restitution of the nineteenth-century debt and to explore its clear legacies in the intervening 170 years. Debray's alternative course of action is to contextualize the French demands—for example, the self-determination of peoples did not exist in 1838—and to blame the victims by underlining the complicit role of the Haitians themselves in the events leading up to the recognition of independence.

Increasing French attention to Haiti in the period leading to and surrounding the 2004 bicentenary of independence was accompanied by a marked hostility toward Aristide in the French press, a tendency equally evident in Debray's report. At the same time, French participation in the coup that removed the president from power challenged the myth of any benign and distant association with contemporary Haiti and signaled

instead the persistence of links between “francophone” memory, neocolonial intervention, and strategic self-positioning. This was a nexus of intertwined issues that regained prominence six years later, in the context of the earthquake 2010. Whereas the Haitians had to wait 21 years, and suffer the imposed status of neocolonial financial vassals, in order to receive French recognition of their independence, it would be a further 180 years before they would have the first French presidential visit, an event that almost certainly would not have occurred had the devastating earthquake not struck the country on January 12, 2010. Nicolas Sarkozy’s visit to Haiti the following month (on February 17) lasted four hours, much of which he spent surveying earthquake damage from a helicopter with the then Haitian president René Prével. Although this brief tour will consequently be recognized as a historical event of some significance, in the immediate aftermath of the January earthquake, media attention to the president’s activity was cursory, and any detailed commentary on Sarkozy’s speech was eclipsed in favor of continued concern for the urgent and at times controversial international relief effort. In diplomatic terms, the French presidential presence was nevertheless of marked symbolic and strategic importance, not least since it served as a reminder—as the president made very clear in his speech—that France had been “the first on the ground after the catastrophe” (Sarkozy, 2010). Although the Dominican Republic would have a firm claim to being the first external government to provide post-disaster relief, Sarkozy’s comment seems to refer to major international support from outside the Caribbean and seeks accordingly to reinforce the sense of a persistently special Franco-Haitian relationship in the context of what Alain Joyandet, secretary of state for Overseas Cooperation, had described the previous month as a US “occupation” (Nougayrède, 2010). According to a spokesperson in the Elysée, the purpose of the presidential visit was two-fold: “the chance to show that France is devoting its energies to giving the Haitians control of their own fate, but also to settle the debts of the past [solder les comptes du passé]” (Leparmentier, 2010). In this official statement of intent in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake, the privileging of Haitian agency in the ongoing processes of rebuilding was

complemented by an acknowledgement of the need to address unresolved historical legacies—although it is important to note that the surprising choice of a financial metaphor relating to the settling of accounts would acquire a resonance that was undoubtedly unanticipated at the time it was uttered.

France's visit to Haiti occurred—as has been noted above—in the context of the increasingly strained relationship to Haiti that had developed under Chirac's presidency. Jacques Chirac's historical amnesia during the March 2000 speech in Guadeloupe had been rapidly corrected by Jean-Bertrand Aristide's demands made three years later in 2003. Having addressed the immediate relief effort, Sarkozy's speech in February 2010 conflated these recent diplomatic events with a longer history of troubled relations, both colonial and postcolonial, to which Sarkozy alluded euphemistically: "France will be equal to its responsibilities, regarding its shared history and friendship with history." Acknowledging the historical significance of the visit, the French president proceeded to develop this idea of a shared history only cursorily and obliquely: "Our presence here did not only leave good memories. The wounds of colonization and, perhaps worse still, the conditions of separation, have left traces which are still alive in Haitian memory" (Sarkozy, 2010). Sarkozy's comments in the speech are characterized not only by a resort to euphemism—his mention of "a painful history" clearly alludes to slavery; the reference to "the conditions of separation" refers to the war of independence, as well as to the subsequent imposition of reparations—but also by a continued reluctance to address the dynamics of the sharing to which he alludes. This reluctance reveals in particular an unwillingness to accept that Haiti, despite the clear foregrounding of memory as a key element of the afterlife of slavery and empire, might (or might not) form part of French memory.¹² Sarkozy endeavored instead to foreground the importance of France in "freeing the Haitians progressively from dependence on the international aid which has stifled the initiative and activity of a people whose creativity and dynamism is nevertheless celebrated around the world" (*ibid.*) that is, in encouraging, in post-disaster Haiti, independence and autonomy, two qualities whose development two centuries of external intervention, in particular that of the

French and USA, had served significantly and consistently to impede.

Although more allusive than his previous interventions on slavery and colonial history, Sarkozy's Port-au-Prince speech nevertheless echoed with a series of other pronouncements on these subjects and follows the logic of his continued refusal to address the implications of colonial history for a postcolonial France (see Manceron, 2008, pp. 148–51). While still minister of the Interior, he oversaw the passing of the “loi du 23 février 2005,” a bill which attempted, in its deeply controversial (and subsequently revoked) fourth clause, imposition of instruction regarding “the positive role of the French presence overseas” in French schools, and was clearly aligned with the then future president's conviction that approaches to colonial history and postcolonial memory should be characterized by a firm rejection of what the essayist Pascal Bruckner has dubbed “penitence” (Bruckner, 2006). Sarkozy's stated aspiration in his preelection campaign to be “the president of reconciliation” was linked to a clear refusal to endorse the importance of growing attention to the colonial past in the work of scholars associated with groups such as ACHAC (Association pour la connaissance de l'Histoire de l'Afrique contemporaine). In a speech in Caen in March 2005, he claimed: “France has never exterminated a people, it has never committed a crime against humanity or genocide. The Republic has always struggled for the past 200 years for the liberty, equality and fraternity of all people” (cited in Manceron, 2008, pp. 148–49), an analysis he claimed to have attenuated—in particular in relation to links between colonialism and slavery—after the cancellation of his visit to Martinique in late 2005, when the controversy regarding the February 23 law was at its height and Aimé Césaire refused to meet the minister in his usually open surgery at the town hall in Fort de France. Sarkozy then stated: “My own thought on this delicate question has evolved—a question that I previously approached from the undoubtedly too distant perspective of those who believe that the past is ‘past’” (cited in Mesnard, 2008, p. 76).

Such a conciliatory tone was absent, however, in July 2007 at the beginning of his presidency, when Sarkozy used a strikingly

reductive and essentialist speech at the University of Dakar—known subsequently as the “*discours de Dakar*”—to repeat nineteenth-century ideas about the dislocation of sub-Saharan Africa from global history (“Africans have not sufficiently entered history”) and again to deny the agency of colonialism in the contemporary problems that beset the continent. Although there was public recognition of the slave trade (“The slave trade existed; slavery existed”), the obfuscatory rhetoric adopted focused again on an unproblematized “common history” shared by France and Senegal and attempted to dilute and generalize the impact of the Atlantic trade (“This suffering of the Black man is the suffering of all people”) (see Ba Konaré, 2008, pp. 343–55 for full text of the Sarkozy speech). The reaction to Sarkozy’s speech was swift and vocal, with one Haitian commentator, the novelist Kettly Mars, identifying transatlantic resonances and asking “if Nicolas Sarkozy would have spoken in the same way had he been talking to young Haitians today” (Mars, 2008, p. 254).

Mars focused on Sarkozy’s one overt reference to Haiti in his numerous comments on the history of slavery and colonization: a call in April 2007 for the remains of Toussaint Louverture to be transferred to the French Pantheon. Rejecting the suggestion that the Haitian revolutionary leader should be buried “beneath the marble floor of a mausoleum in a country where he would never have chosen to die,” she asks instead:

Why doesn’t France’s first citizen come to pay his respects to Toussaint Louverture, here, with us in Haiti, in our National Pantheon? We would not ask him to come and talk about repentance or to feel our scars and sufferings. But instead to acknowledge that our nationalism is not an empty word, that it is a practical motor for our progress. (ibid., p. 259)

Sarkozy’s 2010 speech in Port-au-Prince did not respond to Mars’s invitation. It opened instead with a rhetorical statement of solidarity on behalf of the French people (“we feel like citizens of Haiti”), ignoring the extent to which such a claim represented a striking act of historical revisionism given the role played by Toussaint Louverture in revealing the limits of

French republican ideology, especially in relation to those still relevant questions of ethnic inclusion and exclusion discussed most notably by Laurent Dubois (Dubois, 2000, pp. 15–34). Sarkozy's efforts during the visit to speak to Haitian victims of the disaster in French were met with incomprehension as his interlocutors invariably replied in Creole. The historian Christophe Wargny acerbically situated the event in relation to “two hundred years of ignorance,” expressing skepticism that this gulf of understanding would in any way be erased by the flying presidential visit (cited in Barthet, 2010). The event nevertheless permitted media attention to be directed to the wider sociohistorical context of the Haitian disaster. Claude Ribbe, the French antiracist campaigner who had previously come to public prominence by denouncing aspects of Napoleon's colonial policy as a form of genocide and also by attempting to have the historian of slavery, Olivier Pétré-Grenouilleau, tried for historical revisionism regarding the Atlantic trade, published a series of challenges to the president the day before his visit was due to take place. Ribbe's article was a concise history lesson in Franco-Haitian relations, detailing the slave trade, plantation slavery itself, the violence of the attempts to reimpose slavery in 1802–3, and what he dubbed the “fraudulent extortion of an indemnity from the Haitians in 1825”; to this historical catalog, he added more recent aspects of the relationship, including the granting of asylum to Jean-Claude Duvalier in 1986, French involvement in the coup d'état that removed Aristide in 2004, continued policing of movement of Haitians in the Caribbean itself, and the naming of French Guyana's main airport at Cayenne after Rochambeau, the French general who had been particularly brutal in his campaign against the Haitians immediately before independence in 1802–3. “Today it is the responsibility of France,” concluded Ribbe, “to change direction and to break with four centuries of shameful intrigues” (Ribbe, 2010).

Ribbe's article appeared in *Le Monde*, but the international media largely ignored the anti-French protests that accompanied Sarkozy's visit, during which demonstrators resuscitated Aristide's demands for reparations. A similar reaction emerged in an open letter published in *Libération*, in which a group

of French intellectuals, including Etienne Balibar and Edgar Morin, called for repayment by France of the postindependence reparations: “The return of these funds could constitute a substantial supplement to the policies of reconstruction and development of Haiti” (*Libération*, 2010). The open letter had little tangible impact, although in the aftermath of the earthquake the controversy around the indemnity refused to subside. A Bastille Day hoax launched by hackers on the Quai d’Orsay website in 2010, announcing that France would reimburse with interest the debt paid in return for the recognition of independence, was met by threats of legal proceedings should the perpetrators be identified (Caroit, 2010). This prank served primarily to highlight the fact that the majority of government promises to Haiti made immediately after the January earthquake had not been honored; it also led to the publication of a second and more prominent open letter of support for those responsible, the *Groupe du Soutien au Comité pour le Remboursement Immédiat des Milliards Envoyés d’Haiti*, signed by numerous authors, politicians, and intellectuals including Alain Badiou, Etienne Balibar, Noam Chomsky, Eva Joly, Jacques Rancière, and Cornel West (*Libération*, 2010). Presenting the case for French repayment of the 1825 debt as “morally, economically and legally unassailable,” the letter set out clear connections between historical and contemporary contexts of indebtedness and dependency.

Sarkozy’s ultimately clumsy attempts to use the backcloth of the Haitian earthquake to draw a line under history—or to “clear past debts”—have revealed once more the risks in the Franco-Haitian context of any approach to the colonial past that refuses to acknowledge its connections with the not-yet postcolonial present. Although the call for reimbursement of reparations is likely to remain unanswered, the continued official French irritation at these demands suggests that they are not seen as totally groundless, and that their force is strongly symbolic even if not overtly economic. The first French presidential visit to Haiti was intended to reassert, in the face of continued visibility of US power, the strategic role of France in the region and to present French republican values as an alternative set of guiding principles in contemporary international

relations. Haiti has yet again refused such political instrumentalization, forcing recognition of unresolved aspects of colonial history, and highlighting the persistence of these aspects in the asymmetries of power that characterize the contemporary Atlantic world.

Notes

1. Chirac was speaking at a press conference at Pointe-à-Pitre, Guadeloupe, March 10, 2000. All translations are my own.
2. See, for example, Matthew Clavin, *Toussaint Louverture and the American Civil War: The Promise and Peril of a Second Haitian Revolution* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010); Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004); Sibylle Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed: Haiti and the Cultures of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2004); David Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press 2002); Deborah Jenson, *Beyond the Slave Narrative: Politics, Sex, and Manuscripts in the Haitian Revolution* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011); and Matthew Smith, *Red & Black in Haiti: Radicalism, Conflict, and Political Change, 1934–1957* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).
3. See Madison Smartt Bell, *All Souls' Rising* (New York: Vintage, 2004 [1995]); *Master of the Crossroads* (New York: Pantheon, 2004 [2000]); and *The Stone the Builder Refused* (New York: Pantheon, 2004).
4. See, for example, Jean-Claude Fignolé, *Moi, Toussaint Louverture* (Montréal: Plume & Encre, 2004); Jean Métellus, *Toussaint Louverture, le précurseur* (Pantin: Le Temps des Cerises, 2004); and Fabienne Pasquet, *La Deuxième Vie de Toussaint Louverture* (Arles: Actes Sud, 2001).
5. On Grégoire, see Alyssa Goldstein Sepinwall, *The Abbé Grégoire and the French Revolution: The Making of Modern Universalism* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005).
6. On the place of “loss” in French colonial history, see Kate Marsh and Nicki Frith (eds.), *Loss, Nostalgia, and la fracture coloniale: Contextualizing l’Inde perdue* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010).
7. On this subject, see Laurent Dubois, “The Haitian Revolution and the Sale of Louisiana; or, Thomas Jefferson’s (unpaid) Debt to Jean-Jacques Dessalines,” in Peter J. Kastor and François Weil (eds.), *Empires of the Imagination: Transatlantic Histories of the Louisiana Purchase* (Charlottesville, VA and London: University of Virginia Press, 2009), pp. 93–116.

8. Other key sources on the debt include Gusti Klara Gaillard-Pourchet, "Aspects politiques et commerciaux de l'indemnisation haïtienne," in Y. Benot and M. Dorigny (eds.), *Rétablissement de l'esclavage dans les colonies françaises, 1802* (Paris: Maisonneuve Larose, 2003).
9. Discussion of the indemnity in this section of the chapter draws primarily on the sources outlined in the note above. These sources do not corroborate the often repeated claim that the debt was not fully reimbursed until the 1940s, although an accumulation of debts was triggered in 1825 with loans to pay off the initial installments of the indemnity payment, meaning that the question of precisely how one measures when the indemnity and associated amounts were fully paid off remains moot.
10. All articles from *Le Monde* and *Libération* consulted online at www.lemonde.fr and www.liberation.fr.
11. Régis Debray (born 1940) is a French intellectual, journalist, and academic. He first came to public prominence when he fought with Che Guevara in Bolivia in 1967; he was captured and imprisoned until 1970. He served under François Mitterrand in the 1980s as an adviser on foreign affairs, taking a particular interest in France's relations with its former colonies and has subsequently held a number of official government positions.
12. On the place of Haiti in French republican memory, see Dorigny, "Aux origines."

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Chapter 8

Haiti and the Regional and International Communities since January 12, 2010

Reginald Dumas

This chapter is the text of Reginald Dumas' keynote address delivered at the international conference on "From Duvalier to Préval: Haiti Today, Yesterday and Tomorrow" held at the Institute for the Study of the Americas, University of London, 21–22 June 2010. Dumas' address provided the closing keynote on 22 June 2010 and is reproduced here in an abridged version. Reginald Dumas was Special Advisor on Haiti to United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan in 2004.

The Earthquake

The earthquake that struck Haiti shortly before 5 pm on January 12, 2010, was described as “the most powerful... to hit the country in 200 years... Overall damage and losses... are estimated to be USD 7.9 billion, which is just over 120 per cent of the country's GDP in 2009” (Action Plan for Recovery and Development of Haiti, 2010). Every sector of the country's socioeconomic activity was severely affected and up to 300,000 persons are estimated to have been killed. Assistance has flowed in from a multiplicity of sources—international and regional institutions, individual governments, civil society groups, school children, and so on—and a number of meetings have been held, culminating in a major conference in New York on March 31, 2010. That conference received pledges of nearly \$10 billion in aid, of which \$5.5 billion was earmarked for 2010 and 2011. Reflecting the Haitian government's focus on the four

areas of territorial, economic, social, and institutional rebuilding, the conference said that this help would “support (the government’s) vision and Action Plan (and would) be delivered in a manner that (strengthened) the authority of the State.” The concept of decentralization was supported and women’s leadership and participation were recognized as critical. Emphasis was placed *inter alia* on protection of the most vulnerable, the promotion of human rights and gender equality, and an enabling environment for the private sector. An Interim Haiti Recovery Commission (IHRC) was established, to be cochaired by the then Haitian prime minister, Jean-Max Bellerive, and the United Nations Secretary-General’s Special Envoy to Haiti, former US president Bill Clinton. President René Préval would have the final say on proposals from the commission, which would be replaced after 18 months by a Haitian Development Authority. Also set up was a Haiti Reconstruction Fund for which the World Bank would act as Fiscal Agent (International Donors’ Conference Towards a New Future for Haiti: Statement by Co-hosts and Co-chairs, 2010).

Considerations

What are some of the considerations that need to be taken into account in the relationship between Haiti and the regional and international states and communities? The first consideration is consultation and inclusion. The Action Plan for National Recovery and Development of Haiti that was presented at the New York conference of March 31, 2010, states that it “is not exclusively a state, government or Parliament plan. It is a plan for all sectors of Haitian society where everyone is called upon to play a role in searching for the collective interest that is ultimately the best guarantee of individual interests in an inclusive society.” Elsewhere, the plan avers that “key sectors of Haitian society were consulted” in its formulation. But if these sectors were indeed consulted, it is surprising that 26 NGOs, some of them of major importance within Haiti, could on March 18 issue a statement regretting that the plan was being “presented to donors first, without first having exhausted a broad process of consultation with Haitian civil society” (Statement by 26

NGOs, 2010). Perhaps the simple explanation is that those who wrote the plan did not consider the NGOs in question as being among the “key sectors of Haitian society.” Yet the March 31 conference in New York “highlighted the importance of holding outreach consultations with a large number of key communities, including the Haitian people, civil society, NGOs, local governments, the private sector, the Haitian diaspora and MINUSTAH¹ stakeholders” (Action Plan for Recovery and Development of Haiti, 2010). One has to ask: How is the word “key” defined? Who defines it?

The issue of non-consultation is neither new nor specifically applicable to Haiti. It stems essentially from the belief of governments that, once elected, they are suddenly imbued with wisdom beyond the understanding of those who elected them, and that they must therefore think and act on behalf of those electors, now seen as intellectually much less endowed than they. That is when they start speaking about “strong leadership” and “leading from the front” and so on. Against that background, consultation is often viewed as weakness or, if perhaps the country’s constitution or an Action Plan requires it, as a pro forma exercise that does not have either to be wholly inclusive or to end in mutual agreement. What therefore will the regional and international communities do to encourage genuine consultation of the Haitian people? How will they both seek and take into account the serious input of the Haitian people in the plans for, and process of, the development of what is after all *their* country? What also of the nature and quality of consultation? To what end, for what purpose, is there to be consultation? What beneficial conditions will it create? Is it a continuing process or, as so often happens, a one-off activity?

A second consideration is the blemished perception too many people have of Haiti. Generally, there are three attitudes. First, the dismissive one that it is “the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere.” Second, the fearful one commercialized by Hollywood, that it is the diabolical land of *Vodou*, where people cast deadly spells and have epileptic-like seizures and munch on chicken heads. Third, the weary one, very prevalent in international circles, where donors groan in fatigue: “Haiti again?” A good example of the dismissive was a remark in the *Guardian*

Weekly in 2004. “The unpalatable truth,” it said, “is that Haiti just does not matter much” (Guardian, 2004). I make no comment; none seems necessary.

For many, too many, Haiti’s problems result from what they describe as its un-Christian past. The Reverend Pat Robertson is certain that the country is “cursed” because of the “pact” it made “with the devil” before the revolt against the French began in the 1790s. As evidence that there is nothing necessarily racist in that assessment, a black pastor in my own country, Trinidad and Tobago, declared after the earthquake that Haiti “is one of the nations dedicated to Satan . . . They are cursed.” “That,” he added, demonstrating a certainty I normally associate only with politicians, elected or not, “is common knowledge.” There was no hint of sympathy for the traumatized Haitians. Yet I had always believed that a core element of Christianity was compassion, even for the gravely sinful. I have even been told that Haiti’s problems may stem from its name, or at least the English pronunciation of its name, because the word “hate” is part of that pronunciation, and hate is an evil emotion. Once I had recovered my breath, I had to point out, as quietly as I could, that “Hay-ti” is not the way Haitians pronounce the name of their country.

I wish I could tell you that the tragedy of January 12 has brought a more welcoming opinion. But I cannot. Yes, there has been a massive outpouring of donations and assistance from ordinary people everywhere and expressions of sympathy galore. But side by side with these actions and sentiments remains an attitude of exclusion: I will help you, but don’t come too close. Thus, despite President Barack Obama’s declared commitment to President René Préval to stay the course with Haiti, his government has granted Haitians Temporary Protected Status (TPS)² for only one and a half years, from January 21, 2010, to July 22, 2011. Contrast that with Honduras and Nicaragua, whose TPS was first granted in early January 1999 and in theory expires in early January 2012. I say “in theory,” because I fully expect that the 2012 deadline will be extended. I can only hope that Haitians benefit from the same generosity.

The American actor, Sean Penn, who portrays himself as a good friend of Haiti, has recently displayed a similar position

of unevenness. In testimony before the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee on May 19, 2010, he paid tribute to the efforts of President Préval and his administration, then added: “But to demand of them, or encourage their demand of, a fractured society’s independence prematurely, will be murder by another name” (Penn, 2010). Imagine, the *premature* independence of Haiti! We might even call it “Temporary Protectorate Status.” I will no doubt be told that Mr. Penn meant well. All I can say in reply is that the road to a certain place is paved with good intentions.

I regret to say that this ambivalence of approach is seen even in CARICOM, my own regional organization, of which Haiti has been a member since July 2002. As a matter of policy, boat people from Haiti are immediately sent back home by the Bahamas and Jamaica. The earthquake caused a temporary reprieve in the implementation of this policy, but that period of grace is now over. In May 2010, for instance, the president of the Haiti-Jamaica Society, Myrtha Désulmé, protested to Jamaican prime minister Bruce Golding over what she saw as the hasty repatriation of Haitians who had arrived just days before. She reminded Mr. Golding of his government’s early pledge that “no Haitians (would) be turned away (because) they would constitute a humanitarian cause to which we are obliged to respond appropriately.” She wondered about what she called his “volte-face” and surmised that there had to be “political factors at play” (Désulmé, 2010).

But can we blame the Bahamas and Jamaica? Do they have the means to look after thousands of refugees, at a time when their economies are hardly in the best possible shape? Has the international community offered to meet any part of the expenses involved? What of the social implications in terms of, say, prostitution, human trafficking, the drug trade, and increased gang violence? It would be wrong to conclude that CARICOM has been indifferent to Haiti over the years, even during the klepto-parasitic seigniorship of Duvalier the Younger. However, the organization is still widely perceived, especially within the CARICOM region itself, as not having done enough for its most recent member, even taking into account its limited resources. In the last several years, wrote Andy Johnson

in the daily *Express* of Trinidad and Tobago on February 4, 2011, “CARICOM’s involvement in Haiti has remained less than impressive” (*Trinidad Express*, 2011). He was referring to governments. By contrast, CARICOM civil society, certain misguided pastors notwithstanding, has been showing governments the way.

And what to make of the offer from the president of Sénégal, Abdoulaye Wade, to provide, depending on numbers, housing or small tracts of land, or even a region, for Haitians wishing to settle in his country? He calls it “voluntary repatriation,” which means they would have to find their own way there. I wonder how they would do that? By boat, probably. Quite apart from that, a Senegalese official who visited Haiti in May 2010 made it clear that the offer gives priority to students and professionals—in other words, precisely the sort of people who should be *staying* in Haiti to participate in its growth and development, not leaving for Africa or elsewhere. In any event, your average Haitian emigrant has his or her eyes fixed on North America, not West Africa.

A third consideration is the nature and use of aid. The understandable focus of the Western providers of assistance is on institutional strengthening; particular attention is always paid to the reform of the judiciary, the penal system, the police, the Public Service, and elections. Much froth is generated over the issues of transparency and accountability and corruption. These are all very important matters. But what impact do they have on the day-to-day life of the average Haitian? What does the average Haitian, or the average anyone for that matter, want on a daily basis? Food, water, shelter, access to good health care and education, a good job—that kind of thing. To what extent do aid programs generally, not only in Haiti, serve these needs? What is the recipient’s absorptive capacity? What role does the politics of ideology play? Does increased growth automatically lead to increased development and an improved quality of life? What correlations are there between micro- and macro-projects? How is the work of NGOs monitored (and as you no doubt know, Haiti is widely regarded as the NGO Republic)? Is it monitored at all? Is the corruption we blithely attribute to Haitian *governments* in fact a more salient characteristic of Haitian *NGOs*?

How powerful, in practice, is the Haitian state? Are the Haitian authorities really in the driver's seat? Is it true that some NGOs are now entrusted with the processing and issuing of loans for such activities as the creation and expansion of small and medium enterprises? If they have been given this responsibility by the very donors who solemnly proclaim that the Haitian *authorities* must be in charge of development and reconstruction, what violence is done to the principles of consistency and good management? To what extent, if at all, is the culture of the aid recipient taken into account, or does the template of the one-size-fits-all of the neoliberal Washington consensus always prevail?

And yet, culture is pivotal. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon wrote: "A national culture is the whole body of efforts made by a people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify and praise the action through which that people has created itself and keeps itself in existence" (Fanon, 1967). With culture goes race, a subject we usually tiptoe around. I shall do some tiptoeing myself today, but only because we don't have the time to discuss the matter. Let us not deceive ourselves, however: for good or ill, race is a central element in the world's perception of Haiti. History too, especially where France is concerned. I can only hope that the recent first visit of a French head of state to Haiti after 206 years of the latter's independence will begin the process of eliminating the Napoleonic superciliousness that the Dominique de Villepin era so perfectly typified.

With their resolutions and declarations and communiqués, the regional and international communities have no time for such subtleties, as they might see them; they simply present us with agendas forged in the developed world as the panacea for all our ills. One size does *not*, however, fit all.

But what of coordination of aid? We saw the disorder in the aftermath of the earthquake with charges and countercharges being flung about like confetti. We have seen the profusion of meetings and conferences. We have come face-to-face with the flowering of the NGO community. The Action Plan for Haiti makes approving allusions to the principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, endorsed by developed and developing countries in March 2005. The declaration was

followed by the Accra Agenda for Action in September 2008. In essence, the declaration focused on efforts to harmonize, align, and manage aid. Donor countries undertook to coordinate their actions, simplify their procedures, and share information in order to avoid duplication. They even set targets for 2010. Alas, both donors and recipients have fallen well short. You would not believe that we are now in 2010.

That there should have been need at all for a Declaration on Aid Effectiveness tells you of the confusion that has existed for decades in the field of aid, with donor countries and agencies doing their damndest to upstage one another, to play local officials off against one another (and, not infrequently, to pay them off), and, in general, to mismanage the assistance meant to lift the less privileged and raise the country's quality of life. There is also the issue of coordination within donor agencies and countries. A flood, a *lavalas*, of new Haitian legislation has been inundating the US Congress. To what extent, in the formulation of these measures, are the senators and congresspersons consulting with one another and harmonizing their proposals?

We also speak glibly about corruption in the aid chain, meaning illicit and illegal financial transactions between and among persons and bodies. We ignore the Transparency International definition of corruption, which is "the misuse of entrusted power for private benefit." That goes well beyond *financial* transactions, but we also forget that the person who *offers* a bribe has no ethical superiority to the person who *accepts* a bribe. Both are equally guilty. So uncoordination continues, but whether or not it does, another issue arises. Given the current global economic difficulties, will countries that pledged help to Haiti be able to fulfill those pledges? We know that there is usually a gap between promise and delivery, but have matters deteriorated in recent times?

For instance, the total EU pledge to Haiti is \$1.667 billion. Of that amount, Ireland offered 17.5 million, Italy 54.5 million, and Spain the somewhat staggering sum of 467 million. (Poor Greece pledged nothing; these days the Greeks do not bear gifts, only the heavy burden of seemingly endless debt.) Will these countries be able to meet their assumed obligations?

If so, over what period of time and with what impact on Haiti? If not, what then? And to which Haiti would aid be going? To the Haiti of the sweatshop owners and, increasingly, the business allies of the cruise ship sector? Or to the people who genuinely need it? I shall come back to this matter of the economy.

Lastly, is there any substance to the charge that in sending troops to Haiti after the earthquake the US government was militarizing what on the surface was humanitarian aid? Were US control of Port-au-Prince airport, and the diversion of supplies from that airport to the Dominican Republic allegedly because of congestion (leading to considerable delays in the provision of help to affected Haitians), tantamount to a US military occupation of the country?

My fourth consideration has to do with the socioeconomic development of Haiti. According to the Action Plan, President Préval has “defined (Haiti’s) long-term vision for development...” (is this really only Préval’s vision?). Consistent with this vision, the framework for the country’s reconstruction is, as indicated in my opening remarks, to embrace four main areas: territorial rebuilding, economic rebuilding, social rebuilding, and institutional rebuilding.

Among other things, economic rebuilding “will aim to modernise the various components of the agricultural sector, providing an export potential in terms of fruits and tubers, livestock farming and fishing, in the interest of food security” (Action Plan for Recovery and Development of Haiti, 2010). It strikes me that food security for the Haitian people must come *before* the pursuit of export potential, whereas the above wording suggests, strangely, that export crops will advance the goal of food security. We have been this way before. In the 1980s, under international persuasion, Haiti lowered tariffs on food imports, “leading,” as Beverly Bell writes, “to a flood of cheap food with which Haitian farmers could not compete. At the same time, USAID and others pressured (the country) to orient its production toward export, leaving farmers vulnerable to shifting costs of sugar and coffee on the world market” (Bell, 2010). Production of Haitian rice was virtually destroyed, and the coup de grâce was given in the mid-1990s by President Bill Clinton, who apparently exacted further liberalization of the

market as a price for restoring Jean-Bertrand Aristide to the Haitian presidency. On March 10, 2010, Clinton, in an appearance before the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, took the blame for the damage he had visited on Haiti. He said that the traditional US policy that “we rich countries that produce a lot of food should sell it to poor countries and relieve them of the burden of producing their own food so, thank goodness, they can leap directly into the industrial era . . . has not worked. It may have been good for some of my farmers in Arkansas, but it has not worked. It was a mistake . . . that I was party to” (Clinton, 2010). If he had gone into details, he might have said that perhaps the biggest beneficiary of this policy was the firm of Riceland Foods, which had sales of \$1.3 billion in the last fiscal year and which just happens to be based in his home state of Arkansas.³

It was not only rice. Creole pigs were found to have African swine fever and had to be slaughtered. Their delicate North American replacements, unable to withstand Haitian conditions, did not last long enough to be slaughtered; they died early natural deaths. And harsh phytosanitary requirements often kept Haitian mangoes out of the US market. This sustained assault on the Haitian agriculture sector hastened rural to urban movement, leading to massive overcrowding of Port-au-Prince and to the horrible toll taken by the earthquake.

Ironically, a current fear among many Haitian farmers is that the 475 tons of hybrid corn and vegetable seeds donated by Monsanto will finish off what is left of Haitian agriculture. If that fear is realized, even in part, then the auspices, as my old Latin master used to say, would not look favorable.

In January 2009 Professor Paul Collier of Oxford University produced for UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon a report titled *Haiti: From Natural Catastrophe to Economic Security*. Collier was writing in the wake of global economic shocks and the four hurricanes that had struck Haiti in rapid succession that year. Haiti, he says in Section 4.2 of his report, “has two opportunities for the mass creation of productive jobs: the reconstruction of infrastructure and the expansion of export zones” (Collier, 2009, 4.2). The report has largely been overtaken by events—largely, but not completely, for the notion of export zones is still

with us. “Labour costs in Haiti are competitive with China and labour quality is good,” Collier writes. “The only issue appears to be the current difficulties facing multi-shift working” (ibid.). But that is by no means the “only issue.” Far more important is the issue of worker exploitation and the violation of the ILO (International Labour Organization) principle of “decent work.” Those who have been driven from agricultural work in the countryside by policies over which they have no control are easy fodder for mistreatment in the capital.

In his book *Clinton in Haiti: The 1994 US Invasion of Haiti* Philippe Girard tells us that “(on) an hourly basis, workers producing Pocahontas pyjamas for the Walt Disney Co. earned 325,000 times less than Disney CEO Michael Eisner” (Girard, 2004, p. 156; my emphasis). I doubt very much if that income gap caused any grief to Mr. Eisner’s conscience—assuming, of course, that he had a conscience. This international obsession with sweatshops as the path to economic bliss is to be found also in legislation passed by the US Congress: the Haiti Economic Recovery Opportunity (HERO) Act of 2004 and the Haitian Hemispheric Opportunity through Partnership Encouragement (HOPE) Act of 2006, which was extended by HOPE II in 2008. This year’s Haiti Economic Lift Program (HELP) Act, designed to assist post-earthquake Haiti, maintains the same emphasis on textiles and apparel, and therefore runs the risk of accentuating the very rural-urban migration that has led to the ballooning of Port-au-Prince, with the terrible consequences we all know so well. Yet one of the principal aims of the Préval administration, supported by the regional and international communities, is deconcentration and decentralization *away from* the capital, and the creation of new development centers in various parts of the country. How is this apparent contradiction to be resolved?

Préval’s concern about food security seems not to be totally consonant with his simultaneous comments on food production for export. (Clinton, by the way, having offered his regrets on rice, then slid seamlessly into speaking about export crops such as coffee, mangoes, avocados, etc. But why should a country be growing fruit and vegetables and flowers for markets in developed countries when it cannot properly feed itself? How,

for instance, does producing roses in Kenya for sale in Europe help the nutritional health of an undernourished Masai child? What on earth does “food security” really mean?)

Others in Haiti also have concerns about food security. The groups of NGOs that protested against what was seen as the large-scale exclusion of Haitian civil society from the discussions leading up to the March 31 meeting in New York issued a statement, which called for a break with economic dependence and the establishment of an economic model, which “encourages domestic production, with emphasis on agriculture and agro-industry *turned first to the satisfaction of our food needs.*” This would mean, the statement continued, abandoning “the current destructive land ownership policies . . . (and) conducting comprehensive agrarian reform . . .” (Statement by 26 NGOs, 2010). Incidentally, land ownership is now posing a major problem for the Haitian government where relocation and decentralization are concerned and is a core reason for the botched process of shifting people from the flimsy tent cities of the capital to open spaces outside. The state controls very little land and even less money, so how are the big landowners to be persuaded to relinquish or even loosen their grip to allow for new population and development centers? What will the regional and international communities do to encourage the wealthy to act in Haiti’s interest and not exclusively in theirs?

The reference to land at once raises the issue of the environment. Haiti has only 2 percent forest cover left, a fact that exacerbates the effects of the hurricanes to which it is so subject. In 2004 I tried, unsuccessfully, to persuade a large firm in my country to provide fast-growing seedlings, not only for binding the soil but also for provision of food. I failed. But the need remains, as does the need to find and popularize sources of fuel alternative to charcoal. What are the regional and international communities doing about this?

I come now to social rebuilding. The Action Plan rightly places emphasis on education and health, and no one could disagree. We must however deal with the realities. Neither of these sectors was in the best possible shape before the earthquake. And that catastrophe caused a massive human resource loss in what was already inadequate: teachers and students were killed,

along with crucial medical personnel. To erect a building is one thing; to train a doctor or a university professor is a different thing altogether.

Where health is concerned, I spoke earlier in this chapter about the considerable and dedicated support that Cuba has been giving to Haiti and proposes to give. Where education is concerned, I have already indicated that the University of the West Indies has agreed to provide assistance at the tertiary level by taking Haitian students at its campuses in Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago. It is insufficient, of course, but it is a start. The education and administrative systems must also be revamped, with more emphasis placed on Kreyol. Most Haitians do not speak or read French, and the creation of an appropriate education system was an issue that much engaged the attention of the late Pierre Vernet of the Faculty of Applied Linguistics of the State University of Haiti, who was among those killed in the earthquake.

Speaking in March on the “War of Words: Haiti’s Battle Over Language,” Professor Valerie Youssef of the University of the West Indies said this:

Children learn better in their mother tongues. Ethnicity, language and culture are deeply intertwined, and it has been demonstrated that children acquire language to belong to a community, to fit in with its norms. When they are encouraged to acquire literacy in this first language they develop well, but when literacy is taught in a second language against which their own is devalorised, a condition known as subtractive bilingualism develops, whereby the child ceases to progress in both languages. (Youssef, 2010, p. 12)

French must, however, continue to be taught, and access to it expanded.

Consideration number five is the role of the Haitian diaspora. As indicated earlier in this chapter, this group has over the years been the largest single source of aid to Haiti: IDB figures show a 2009 total of \$1.64 billion in remittances to the country (iadb.org/mif/remesas_map.cfm). In May 2010 the minister with responsibility for Haitians living abroad, Edwin Paraison,

visited Europe and spoke in glowing terms of what he called the “massive, spontaneous and generous” assistance provided by the diaspora following the earthquake. He called on them to return to Haiti to help in the reconstruction process. Seeing that it is estimated that over 80 percent of all Haitian professionals live outside Haiti, his call was understandable. But matters are not as simple as that. In general, very few migrants who have started and settled into a new life in another country want to dislocate themselves and their families to try to settle back in the country they may have left 20 or 30 or 40 years before. In addition, their families, particularly their children, usually have no desire whatsoever to go to live in the birthplace of parents and grandparents. Why would they? Why would they want to learn a different culture, a different way of life? To what end?, they argue. A visit out of curiosity, perhaps. But why else? And their reactions are more jaundiced in the case of Haiti, given the continuing negatives with which that country is associated.

So the migrants will certainly send assistance, and many are prepared to go to Haiti on a short-term basis, but permanent settlement, especially in a place as shattered as today’s Haiti, does not strike me as a viable option. And there is a related factor. The returning emigrant, full of hope and goodwill and expectation, frequently finds that those he left behind are equally fully ready to take his help and at the same time regard him with suspicion and envy. This is not a Haitian issue; it is a human reaction. Minister Paraison recognizes the problem, but then says that those who come back would have to be given certain benefits and incentives. I appreciate his point, but I also appreciate that such special treatment would only heighten tensions between “them” and “us.”

The ambivalence in the relationship between the two groups is noticeable in the composition of the Interim Haiti Reconstruction Commission (IHRC) proposed in the Haitian government’s Action Plan. There is indeed to be a representative of the diaspora on the commission—one only—but that person would have no voting rights. It is not surprising that many members of the diaspora are reported to be confused and disappointed.

Many years ago the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) set up a mechanism called TOKTEN, or Transfer

of Know-how Through Expatriate Nationals. The scheme aimed at bringing back such persons to their countries of birth as consultants for a period of time to share their accumulated skills and experience and to perform tasks that might otherwise be carried out by international consultants. Unfortunately, it seems to have lost momentum, but could it be revisited in the case of Haiti?

My sixth consideration is the question of geopolitics. The often confrontational relationship between Haiti and its immediate neighbor, the Dominican Republic is, I think, too well-known for me to say anything more now than to mention that I recommend the 1999 book on the subject by Michele Wucker, called *Why the Cocks Fight*. There are also the interests of Brazil, Canada, Chile, France, and the United States. Brazil is the lead country in MINUSTAH, the UN force in Haiti, and was the first country to contribute to the Donors' Fund set up on March 31. The government of Canada, whose governor general is a Haitian, is always conscious of the power of the Haitian vote, and acts accordingly, whatever the fundamental kindness of the Canadian nature. As for the United States, I would expect that the State Department is keeping a very watchful eye on the involvement of Cuba and Venezuela in Haiti. Both countries have provided and are providing a tremendous amount of assistance. Hugo Chávez, for one, is constantly mindful of the debt owed by his country's founder, Simón Bolívar, to the support he received from the newly independent Haiti. And what would happen if Aristide, whose long shadow still covers Haiti, were to return? Is he not constitutionally entitled to return? Are presidential elections not due later this year? And is Aristide not constitutionally entitled to offer himself as a candidate, even if his Lavalas party has been banned by Préval's minions? Is Préval himself, despite his denial, still quietly looking to extend his stay in office? Would such an extension not raise at once the question of the government's legitimacy? Would that question not have a negative impact on regional and international pledges of assistance?

France has now entered the ring. Sulking for 200 years at her expulsion from Haiti by Jean-Jacques Dessalines, for whose victory Toussaint L'Ouverture had paved the way, she has now, in

the wake of President Sarkozy's visit, put forward an impressively detailed list of measures to assist Haiti (Communiqué issued by the Presidency of the Republic, Paris, 2010). The proposals cover, inter alia, finance, security, administration, education, and—a quintessentially French touch—the cultural heritage. Is France seeking once again to incorporate Haiti into her sphere of influence? But given the continuing calls for restitution and reparations for the damage she inflicted on Haiti's economy in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, what might be the fate of such a quest?

Will Africa, especially francophone Africa, play a larger part in Haiti's welfare? Senegal has offered qualified help, as has Liberia; South Africa and other countries, even indigent Benin, have pledged aid; an "Africa for Haiti Campaign" has been started; the Chair of the African Union Commission, Jean Ping, is on record as stating that the union considers Haiti "the sixth region of Africa." What does this all mean?

Nor must we forget religion, which, like race, has a geopolitical dimension of its own. If Haiti is cursed, according to religious pulpiteers of a certain kind, then logically one must attempt to save it. Thus, children are kidnapped in the name of versions of God deemed authoritative, even infallible, and taken elsewhere to have enlightenment and salvation thrust upon them. And God knows what else. All is not kidnappings, of course. "Religious organizations," says the US Heritage Foundation, "have long played a critical role in keeping Haiti afloat through generous cash and food donations as well as mission visits to help build and run Haitian schools and clinics. *Faith-based assistance often has more lasting long-term effects than official development assistance, and no doubt this will prove to be the case in Haiti*" (Waber and Roberts, 2010; my emphasis.) And, of course, when these faith-based groupings, whether in the United States or in the Middle East, forge links with, or help create, political movements, the implications become even more interesting.

My seventh and last consideration is the role and functioning of the United Nations in Haiti. During my time as Kofi Annan's special adviser on Haiti in 2004, I argued strongly, and with some success, for focus to be placed on *peacebuilding*

as distinct from *peacekeeping*. Peacekeeping suggests a country at civil war, where sides must be kept apart. But Haiti had not descended into that. To be sure, there was civil unrest, but a massive military and police operation, with a strong, even lopsided, emphasis on troops, did not seem to me the answer to the questions posed by the country's shortfall in calm.

My success was however more generalized than Haiti-specific. The UN did set up a Peacebuilding Commission in December 2005, but at the same time, to my astonishment, decreed that a country could be included on the Commission's agenda *only if it requested advice*. The commission would deal "only with countries emerging from conflict, once a peace accord has been concluded and a minimum degree of security exists" (un.org/peace/peacebuilding/pcbagenda.shtml). While such criteria would appear to exclude Haiti, I note that the commission, in its report on its Third Session in September last year, records that monies from the Peacebuilding Fund were allocated for projects in Haiti. Such allocation is to be welcomed, but to my mind the UN's emphasis is still too heavy on the side of militarization as opposed to development. I said in my final report to Annan that "I continue to be firmly of the view that the concept of MINUSTAH as it now exists is unsound, and largely irrelevant to the people of Haiti, whose welfare has to be of paramount importance. The civilian side of MINUSTAH must, if it is to be at all valid, overwhelmingly comprise developmental aspects . . . (which) would supplement, not replace, the work of agencies and indigenous organisations already operating in Haiti" (Dumas 2004).

Little seems to have changed in the nearly six years since I wrote those words—indeed, the earthquake has made things worse and has only strengthened Préval in his conviction that MINUSTAH in its current form must remain in Haiti, at least through his tenure in office. MINUSTAH force levels have been increased from 2009 figures of 6,940 troops and up to 2,211 police to 8,940 troops and up to 3,711 police. The approved 2009/2010 budget was \$638.7 million (\$611.7 million was only for the maintenance of the mission). Now the Secretary-General has made a request for what he calls "commitment authority" for \$380.4 million, only for the period July

1 to December 31, 2010, which gives an annualized figure of nearly \$761 million (UN General Assembly 2010). (The \$380.4 million includes an amount of \$804,100 for the financing—for only six months, remember—of the office of Special Envoy Bill Clinton.⁴ How do all these monies compare with what is being made available to the Haitian people?) Of the \$638.7 million originally approved for the 2009–2010 fiscal year, \$140.2 million was to meet the costs of civilian personnel; there was an additional \$286.6 million for military and police personnel. But for the quick-impact projects for which I had pressed in 2004, which would provide needy Haitians with jobs and income and a measure of hope, and enhance the physical condition of communities, a mere \$3 million was allocated, or 0.47 percent of the budgeted amount. It may be difficult to believe, but that is a considerable improvement on 2004–5, the first year of MINUSTAH, when a miniscule 0.22 percent of the overall budget was reserved for such projects.

I shall be silent on the sum that the World Food Programme is said to be paying to rent a ship moored in the Port-au-Prince harbor for accommodation of UN personnel, except to say that I am advised that the rental cost for three months (\$6.5 million) is exactly what the UN proposes should be spent on quick-impact projects and community violence reduction programs in the period from July 1 to December 31, 2010. There is a possibility, who knows, that a slight imbalance might exist somewhere in that scenario. The issue of coordination rears its head here too: especially given the upheaval caused by the earthquake, what effective mechanisms of coordination are there between MINUSTAH and all the other actors and actresses on the ground? Do such mechanisms exist, indeed, even *within* the UN body, including MINUSTAH?

Some Proposals

Excellent proposals for the country's development have come from some NGOs, for instance, the group of 47 Haitian and international bodies that met in mid-March. In essence, the Haitian participants in that meeting suggested a number of different paradigms for development, among them a break with

excessive centralization of power and with current land ownership policies, the participation of traditionally excluded social forces such as women and farmers, and emphasis on agriculture and agro-industry, which would first satisfy *Haitian* needs—in other words, a de-emphasis on agriculture for export. A focus on the domestic agriculture sector is also the recommendation of the Lambi Fund, a not-for-profit organization that works for, among other things, sustainable development.

Robert Maguire, who is associate professor of International Affairs at Trinity Washington University in Washington, DC, has also put forward thoughtful ideas. In his testimony on February 4, 2010, before a Subcommittee of the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, he suggested the formation of a civic service corps that could help mobilize unemployed youth,⁵ the strengthening of public institutions (the Haitian state was weak before the earthquake and has only regressed since), and the freeing-up of what he called “dead capital,” that is, capital “principally in the hands of poor people in the form of property, land and goods (which) cannot be used to leverage further capital for investment and growth” (Maguire, 2010). Maguire also supported the idea of decentralized communities.

I should like to add only two points. The first flows directly from Maguire’s observation on dead capital. In 1986 Kari Polanyi-Levitt, now emerita professor of Economics at McGill University in Montreal, and a colleague, evaluated the quality of Haiti’s national income estimates. What they found was that “the value of agricultural production was 50 per cent higher than indicated by national accounts estimates, and that total Gross National Product...had been underestimated by some 20 per cent at that time.” They wondered whether “donor agencies might not have an institutional vested interest in the poverty of very poor countries, including Haiti...because this enhances the role of (such) agencies in the domestic politics in aid-giving countries and their leverage in shaping the economic life of aid-receiving countries.” Was their concern valid? And in a remarkable forecast of what would later predominate, they said that

exposure of domestic food production to competition from subsidized imports would, in our view, destroy the most valuable

asset of the country, which is the culture of independence, initiative, dignity and cooperation of its working people. *Decades of experience of economic development have proved that it is not poverty but dependence which has destroyed the capacity of societies to provide an improving standard of living for the masses of the population.* (Polanyi-Levitt, 1991; my emphasis)

Do the issues of dead capital and undervalued agricultural production not further marginalize many Haitians in their own country, so that they become virtual nonpersons with no identity of their own that is recognized by the very state that has over the centuries failed them on this score?

My second point is the continuing imperative of dialogue and reconciliation in Haiti. I do not need to tell you about the country's socioeconomic and racial divisions. Six years ago I sought to involve the Open Society Institute of George Soros and the International Center for Transitional Justice, which was so instrumental in the success of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Both agreed in principle, but, so far as I am aware, nothing happened. That there is still urgent need for such dialogue is recognized by the June 2 Declaration of the Summit of Punta Cana, Dominican Republic, which "called upon all political sectors of Haiti to prioritize dialogue as a mechanism for reaching agreements to ensure a climate of peace and stability" (World Summit 2010). This is yet another area, and a core factor of social calm, in which the regional and international communities could play a vital role.

Conclusion

I have deliberately concentrated in these remarks on the role that the regional and international communities could play in their approach to Haiti. I have done so because we hear ad nauseam about what Haiti is, or is not, about the range of historical injustices to which she has been subject to, about her current travail and her grinding poverty, about the resilience of her people, about what action she should or should not take, and, in general, about a whole range of negatives, many of them said to be self-created, which allegedly afflict her on a

continuing basis. By contrast, we hear constantly about the patient generosity of Western donors; it is as if their beneficence springs eternal.

It doesn't, of course; we all have our interests we wish to promote. Haiti herself bears a heavy responsibility, and her apologists too often slip into explanations and rationalizations and defenses based on victimhood. Whatever our emotional attachment to the country, we must always bear in mind that emotion is not a particularly useful negotiating tool for sustained success. Neither is an obsession with the grievances of the past.

What we must do—if, as we always say, we want a better world—is elevate action over the rhetoric and hand-wringing to which we often seem addicted. We must work conscientiously and clearheadedly together to the extent possible, in the spirit of the words of the United Nations Charter that commit the peoples of the United Nations to “employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples.”

If my remarks this evening have moved us even one millimeter closer to the achievement of that goal, I would consider myself fortunate to have been able to do that little bit for the advancement of international understanding and of the welfare of the people of Haiti.

A little more than five months later, I must again extend to that beleaguered country, and to MINUSTAH, my deepest sympathy and condolences on the grievous losses they both suffered on January 12. I think I speak for us all in expressing the hope that Haiti—less quickly than MINUSTAH, to be sure—will rise before too long from the rubble of its adversity.

Notes

1. MINUSTAH: The United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti.
2. Temporary Protected Status is a temporary immigration benefit that allows qualified individuals from designated countries (or parts of those countries) who are in the United States to stay (there) for a limited time period.
3. Clinton's capitulation to pressures from US banana conglomerates in Latin America set in motion the long, slow demise of the Eastern Caribbean banana industry.

4. On June 1 the Clinton Foundation pledged \$2 million for Haiti's recovery efforts. \$1 million is to go each to the IHRC and to disaster preparedness.
5. Article 52–53 of the Haitian Constitution makes provision for compulsory civic service.

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Postscript

Paul Sutton

The Address to the London conference given by Reginald Dumas came at a time when there was much hope and commitment invested in Haiti. The earthquake was still recent and the international community had apparently stepped up to the plate with pledges just short of USD 10 billion in aid for relief and reconstruction. While this was clearly welcome, there were a number of concerns voiced at the conference by NGOs actively engaged in Haiti as to whether it would really be different this time. While these were heard the dominant mood of participants was nevertheless one of hopeful, if measured, caution, which allowed the majority of participants to look to the future in Haiti with some optimism.

Alas, that optimism has dimmed or been extinguished altogether in the two years since June 2010. Some of it was caught in an address given 16 months later by Dumas to the Annual Conference of the Haitian Studies Association in November 2011. He spoke of unfulfilled pledges of aid, challenges within Haiti to the roles of MINUSTAH (United Nations Stabilisation Mission in Haiti) and the IHRC (Interim Haiti Recovery Mission), shortfalls in the commitment of many CARICOM (Caribbean Community) countries to recovery in Haiti, serious problems in housing and health, and questions about the development trajectory of Haiti envisaged by foreign donors but extensively criticized by Haitian NGOs in their March 2011 statement (Dumas, 2011).

These concerns and others have been echoed in the criticisms of the Haiti Support Group (HSG), one of the NGO participants in the London conference. In their quarterly newsletters issued since June 2010, they raise issues about the work of the

IHRC (Haiti Briefing No. 65, September 2010; Haiti Briefing No. 69, January 2012), about the operations of MINUSTAH and the outbreak of cholera attributed to it (Haiti Briefing No. 68, November 2011; Haiti Briefing No. 70, April 2012), the continuing housing crisis in which it is estimated some 595,000 Haitians were still living in makeshift displacement camps in late 2011 (Haiti Briefing No. 67, June 2011; Haiti Briefing No. 68, November 2011), and the failures of the Haitian government and of the many NGOs in Haiti to put an effective plan for relief and reconstruction in place (Haiti Briefing No. 65, September 2010; Haiti Briefing No. 66, January 2011). Phillip Wearne, a consultant with the HSG, pithily summed the experience as follows:

It all demonstrates the abiding truths about Haiti are the same post-earthquake as they were before it. The disaster was what doctors call “acute on chronic.” In other words, the pre-existing condition – a desperate lack of housing, sanitation, healthcare, education, all made much worse by the earthquake – has now, post-relief, to be confronted if not treated. Haiti is, in one UN official’s words, “a humanitarian problem for which there are only development solutions”. The issue is what kind of development: by whom, for whom, with whom. (Wearne, 2012)

The term “acute-on-chronic” is borrowed from Paul Farmer’s recent book titled *Haiti after the Earthquake* (2011). Farmer, a medical anthropologist and physician with more than 25 years engagement with Haiti, uses it as “a central metaphor” (ibid., p. 3) in organizing his book, which details some of his recent experiences in Haiti, including a long personal account of his involvement at the center of events immediately before and after the earthquake (in 2009 he was appointed UN Deputy Special Envoy to Haiti and worked closely with Bill Clinton who had been named as the UN Special Envoy to Haiti). In deploying the concept, Farmer asserts the importance of history in setting the scene, claiming “the decades preceding the quake set the stage not only for what occurred during the acute event but also for the challenge of reconstruction” (ibid., pp. 3–4). Farmer also criticizes “the Republic of NGOs” in Haiti (he was

closely involved in one of the most successful one, Partners in Health) seeing the NGOs not as the solution but as part of the problem by creating a “dysfunctional system of humanitarian aid that, good intentions aside, had become another obstacle to Haiti’s recovery and sovereignty” (ibid., p. 4). Others criticized by Farmer include the US government, the IMF, and the neoliberal structural reforms imposed on the country in recent years, which have promoted privatization and the wrong “engines of growth” (tourism and assembly industries in special zones). The solutions he favors, accordingly, are more local and include the development of agriculture and the creation of a strong national government and public institutions, financed by an effective national taxation system working alongside foreign aid that builds Haitian capacity, not undermines it. The experience of Haiti to date suggests that this is not impossible, although it will be very difficult to achieve and will require a fundamental departure from the way that politics is both conceived and practiced in Haiti.

Just how much so is set out in Schuller and Morales (eds.), *Tectonic Shifts: Haiti Since the Earthquake* (2012). In agreement with Farmer, the authors argue that “understanding the disaster means understanding not only the tectonic fault lines running beneath Haiti but also the deep economic, political and social cleavages within and surrounding the country” (ibid., p. 1). However, they depart from Farmer by focusing on a variety of Haitian views, most very critical of events before and since the earthquake. These cover “geopolitical structures” such as vulnerability to disasters, foreign domination, and the delivery of aid by the NGOs; the lived experiences of the earthquake and its aftermath in respect of long-standing social exclusion, internal displacement, rights to housing and public health, and the multiple risks faced by women; and political restructuring in Haiti, both from “above” as exemplified by the elections of 2010 and 2011 and from “below” as seen in the various grassroots and social movements, which have proliferated before and especially since the earthquake. The book concludes with a couple of contributions that emphasize the need for solidarity in Haiti and from the diaspora (it is thought some 1.5 million Haitians live in the United States). The key here is “to change how Haiti

is talked about, thought about and written about” (ibid., p. 240). It needs “new narratives now more than ever” (Ulysse, 2012, pp. 240–45) and a commitment to “re-foundation,”¹ which is more than a simple rhetorical device created by the Haitian government and adopted by the international agencies (Deshommes, 2012, p. 246) in the period immediately after the earthquake. This last point is a crucial one. As Deshommes reminds us there was a previous re-foundation in Haiti in 1986 when the people overthrew the Haitian dictatorship of Jean-Claude Duvalier. The various groups then active (farmers’ associations; trade unions; student, professional, political, civic, and women’s organizations; neighborhood committees) came together with a common motto “change the state,” which demanded “a thorough overhaul of the state and nation, one that addressed the country’s structural problems and the proposed solutions in the interests of the entire nation and its citizens” (ibid., p. 247). The 1987 constitution, whatever its faults, was an expression of this new vision for Haiti. It did not last, however, and the trajectory of development was soon captured by those who had no interest in “any genuine re-foundation,” including leading agents in the international community, the Haitian government, and the local oligarchy (ibid., p. 250).

The actors Deshommes identifies here are those with whom Nicholls was more than familiar. They demonstrate what we have termed in the Introduction as a “double dialectical development in which there are twin forces at work in Haitian history: the internal dialectic of mulatto and black and the external dialectic of foreign intervention and withdrawal, which are at one and the same time both independent of each other but also at times very closely interlinked” (Introduction, p. 10). The current time is one of close interlinking with a combination of external forces (the UN missions and some NGOs) and the Haitian government (with most of the elite), on one side, and some external forces (critical NGOs) and the semi-organized masses (especially in Port-au-Prince), on the other. The former make a case for a UN semi-protectorate and the latter for a program of more or less rapid disengagement by the external forces coupled with a new project for a new state. A plausible case can be made for both but the inevitable result on the

ground is a form of “structural stalemate” in which reconstruction is slowed, development delayed, and the future laced with uncertainties.

The conclusion must be that in all essentials this is fundamentally a political crisis. President Martelly and his government have shown themselves to be inadequate to the task. He has found it difficult to assert his authority and has had to bear the ignominy of a rejection by the Haitian parliament (dominated by his opponents) of two of his candidates for prime minister and the resignation of a third, Gary Conille, after just four months in office (when his appointment had itself been delayed for five months because of the difficulty of securing parliamentary approval). The opposition in Haiti, including those grouped around Aristide, is divided, and Aristide himself is barred constitutionally for standing for president for a third term. The UN has found itself subject to mounting criticism for its refusal to accept responsibility (and so offer compensation) for a cholera outbreak that has killed more than 7,000 and sickened more than 500,000. The IHRC, which acted as a virtual government after the earthquake in prioritizing and channeling international assistance, was beset with criticisms on its performance and closed its operations in October 2011 with very few calls for an extended mandate being made. Figures released by the UN in Haiti show that only 53 percent of the nearly USD 4.5 billion pledged for reconstruction efforts have been delivered as of the end of December 2011, with the two biggest donors, Venezuela and the United States, having disbursed just 24 percent and 30 percent respectively and some sectors, such as agriculture, receiving scarcely any funding (*The Guardian*, 2012). This “donor shortfall” combined with the resurfacing of the phrase “Haiti fatigue” in the international development agencies suggests the beginning of a withdrawal, already signaled by the UN in its commitment to reduce the size of MINUSTAH by around a third to 10,500 by the end of 2012. The involvement of the Haitian diaspora has been recognized in a proposed new constitution that permits dual nationality and their right to own land in Haiti, but the majority of the educated remain in the diaspora and have little incentive to return, despite their massive and continuing assistance through

the provision of remittances. The problems, in short, are massive and the actors, individually and collectively, so far incapable of asserting any real change, not least because of their different and conflicting agendas.

The claim by Schuller and Morales that “the earthquake permanently changed Haiti” has thus yet to be proven (2012, p. 1). The status quo and the past appear to have as much traction as the future. In the past, the army would have intervened to impose an authoritarian “solution” in such a situation, but since it was dissolved by Aristide in 1995 that option is no longer available.² In these circumstances there is some hope that a nonauthoritarian solution to the political crisis will be found, although the history and political culture of Haiti as set out by Nicholls would caution against any conclusion that authoritarianism will be easy to overcome. A solution to the multiple problems of Haiti is still not within grasp and if it is to be found a necessary starting point will be the political. That is the conclusion which emerges so forcefully from Nicholls’s work on Haiti and which the experience of Haiti since the earthquake continues to validate.

Notes

1. “Re-foundation” (*refondation*) was a word coined by the Haitian government shortly after the earthquake and adopted by the international agencies. It has no precise English translation but implies something more fundamental than reconstruction or rebuilding.
2. Martelly had spoken about reforming the army in the presidential election campaign and returned to the theme in early 2012 but has met with resistance.

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