GEOGRAPHIES OF SUFFERING: THE LITERATURE OF CATASTROPHE IN THE FRANCOPHONE CARIBBEAN

BY

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

In the context of climate change and increasing vulnerability to catastrophe across the globe, this dissertation investigates the political, historical, and cultural stakes of disasters in Martinique, Guadeloupe, and Haiti from the nineteenth century to the present. In so doing, it examines how Caribbean writers respond to the political and social challenges that disasters pose using methodologies from literary criticism, cultural studies, and historical analysis.

Attending closely to representation, textuality, and shifting historical contexts, this study analyzes major works by French, Martinican, Guadeloupean, and Haitian writers including Voltaire, Victor Schœlcher, Aimé Césaire, Maryse Condé, and Yanick Lahens alongside other primary sources like travelogues and administrative reports. Developed across four chapters, it makes three significant contributions to Caribbean studies while illuminating theoretical discussions in postcolonial studies, ecocriticism, and disaster studies. First, it underscores the role that the continual risk of natural catastrophe has played in Caribbean history and thought. Second, this project demonstrates how Francophone writing since the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804) has refashioned catastrophe into a valuable critical framework for reconsidering the Caribbean from within and without. Third, it reveals how this "literature of catastrophe" rethinks domination in the region and articulates new discourses on culture, memory, and identity.

Starting in the introduction, which outlines the theoretical and critical contexts for studying Caribbean discourses of catastrophe, this dissertation expands on the concern in trauma studies for the subject's loss of and return to the ordering logic of narrative to argue that representations of suffering also constitute "geographies of suffering" that re-situate the subject in space and geography with respect to world-systems like European colonialism and postmodern globalization. The ensuing four chapters and conclusion examine the contours of this

notion in Caribbean discourses on catastrophe at the global, regional, and insular levels. Chapters one and four engage with the cosmopolitan layers of writing about Caribbean catastrophe in which authors including the Guadeloupean novelist Daniel Maximin and the Haitian writer Dany Laferrière among others use worldwide experiences of catastrophe to create new forms of global solidarities. Conversely, chapters two and three focus on the regional and local ripples of catastrophe across the Caribbean as well as in twentieth- and twenty-first-century Martinican literature. In this way, chapter two interrogates cross-island reflections on nineteenth-century earthquakes and ruins in Haiti and Guadeloupe while chapter three explores the place of the 1902 volcanic disaster with regards to shifting discourses on ethnic identity in the work of Aimé Césaire, Édouard Glissant, Patrick Chamoiseau, and Suzanne Dracius. The conclusion, which highlights a burgeoning corpus of West Indian science fiction texts, builds on these previous reflections to demonstrate how Caribbean literature is also critically invested in exploring the possibilities of looming global ecological catastrophes.

While the effects of climate change and the strains of capitalism augment global vulnerability to catastrophe, the varied responses by intellectuals and writers to catastrophes in this dissertation bespeak Caribbean resiliency against such disruptions and highlight these moments as critical points of departure for rethinking the region's relations to Northern centers of power. Ultimately, this dissertation argues that reading this literature of catastrophe constitutes a critical practice of destabilizing the very hierarchies of power, cultures, and capital that marginalize the Caribbean and its inhabitants.

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INTRODUCTION

The Literature of Catastrophe in the Francophone Caribbean

The history *of catastrophe … requires a* literature of catastrophe *to hold a broken mirror up to broken nature.*

- *Edward Kamau Braithwaite,* "Metaphors of Underdevelopment," 1985[1]

Two Earthquakes, Two Maps

On February 8, 1843, a shifting fault line somewhere between Antigua and Guadeloupe in the Lesser Antilles subduction zone where the North and South American plates are slowly sliding under the Caribbean plate produced an estimated 8.3 magnitude earthquake. Felt across the Lesser Antilles and even as far away as the northeastern United States, damage and destruction were the greatest in Guadeloupe. The earthquake leveled much of the French island colony's commercial capital Pointe-à-Pitre before a fire consumed the rest of the city including scores of people trapped under the debris. In the surrounding rural zones, human casualties were fewer despite the significant damage that the island's plantation infrastructure incurred, especially in Grande-Terre on the eastern part of Guadeloupe. Back in the city, Louis Marie Ambroise Dieudonné Cicéron, a member of the Colonial Council from nearby Martinique described the damage as a map, writing that, "Partout le sol offre aux regards des lignes courtes, longues, larges, étroites. Droites, tortueuses, innombrables, comme les délimitations d'une immense carte de géographie."[2] In this evocative image left largely undeveloped, Cicéron briefly

[1] Edward Kamau Brathwaite, "Metaphors of Underdevelopment: A Proem for Hernan Cortez," *New England Review and Bread Loaf Quarterly* 7 no. 4 (Summer 1985), 456, emphasis in original.
[2] Louis Marie Ambroise Dieudonné Cicéron, "Doc. 128:Tremblement de terre de la Guadeloupe" in *Sur les ruines de la Pointe-à-Pitre: Chronique du 8 février 1843, Hommage à l'Amiral Gourbeyre*, ed. Claude Thiébaut, vol. 2, (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2008), 149.

sees the lines – the upturned soil and telluric fissures – of a new map of the city. By highlighting overlapping narrative and spatial orders of the catastrophe via this cartographic metaphor, the Colonial Councilor's "disaster map" outlines in broad strokes the consequences of shifting representations of the real with which the literature of catastrophe in the Francophone Caribbean is concerned.

More than a century and a half later, the emerging field of digital humanitarianism provides a very different example of disaster mapping. Following the January 12, 2010 earthquake in Haiti, a team of graduate and undergraduate volunteers from Tufts University's Fletcher School with the help of members of the Haitian diaspora around the world began compiling a "Haiti Crisis Map" on the Ushahidi, Swahili for "witness" and "testimony," open-source mapping platform. As messages began pouring in, the volunteers discovered that half of Port-au-Prince was missing from Google Maps and proceeded to create the most detailed digital map to date of Haiti based on available satellite imagery using another open-source platform OpenStreetMap. In the following weeks, sifting through Twitter feeds, tips, and most notably ten thousand text messages sent to an SMS information number established by the cell phone company Digicel for people to report emergency needs at specific sites, the team behind the Haiti Crisis Map provided a real-time map of needs and locations that in many cases provided actionable information for humanitarian organizations. While the rise of digital humanitarianism shows much potential for more effectively deploying humanitarian resources and empowering local communities, it also poses important questions about access and use in light of the so-called digital divide and the involvement of large multinational companies (e.g. Google Crisis Response) alongside traditional humanitarian organizations. Although these issues remain unresolved, crisis mapping has nevertheless become an integral part of the new (digital)

humanitarian landscape as similar examples from natural disaster and conflict zones including the Libyan Revolution, the Fukushima nuclear disaster, and the 2010 earthquake in Chili attest.[3]

The examples of Cicéron's figural map of Pointe-à-Pitre and the digital map of Port-au-Prince illuminate attempts to bring order to the post-disaster city: the former for rhetorical effect to convey the destruction to readers far away in France and the latter to help organize the humanitarian response to the 2010 catastrophe. Both examples attempt to translate the catastrophe's effects on post-quake urban space in Guadeloupe and Haiti for their respective audiences through French prose and the computer code behind Ushahidi's open-source data mining software. In short, Cicéron's map and the Haiti Crisis Map project both uncover geographies of suffering that seek to represent the effects of these specific catastrophes in relation to the post-disaster urban landscape. In this way, both examples implicitly problematize the way that disasters transform the societies that they traverse through the creation of new "maps," one figural and one digital. The recourse to cartographic representations in both cases also provides a useful way for conceptualizing the literature of catastrophe that has emerged around these two disasters and others like them in the Francophone Caribbean that make up the corpus of this study.

While the maps in these two examples produce images that claim both to represent and order space, they actually register the tensions between representation and the real in the context of disaster: on the one hand, if maps put forth neat, stable orderings of space, catastrophe brings into focus the dis-ordering, or re-ordering, of the same space exemplified by the Haiti Crisis Map that evolved in real time, on the other hand. Similarly, the literature of catastrophe brings the

[3] Patrick Meier, "How Crisis Mapping Saved Lives in Haiti," *National Geographic Explorers Journal*, July 2, 2012, accessed August 15, 2014, http://newswatch.nationalgeographic.com/2012/07/02/crisis-mapping-haiti/. For a critical discussion of digital humanitarianism, see the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies' *World Disaster Report 2013: Focus on Technology and the Future of Humanitarian Action* (Lyon: Imprimerie Chirat, 2013).

ordering logic of narrative to the chaotic disorder of the real but falls short of imposing its order since it is, like all mimesis, only an incomplete representation. The force of the literature of catastrophe, which inhabits the interstices of the order-disorder dyad, is therefore not as much its attempts to establish via narrative any given ideological order as the critical reflection that it generates by re-presenting disaster, in other words by dis-articulating dominant discourses and ideologies. The literature of catastrophe, that is the writing and rewriting of catastrophe in fiction, poetry, and travel writing to name but a few of the genres it brings together, constitutes a neglected point of entry into the study of catastrophe. More importantly, it offers a critical way of parsing the many layers of disasters, which in the Francophone Caribbean and elsewhere represent "totalizing events" combining social, environmental, cultural, political, economic, physical and technological processes.[4]

The Study of Disaster

The United Nations defines disaster as "a serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society involving widespread human, material, economic, or environmental losses and impacts, which exceeds the ability of the affected community or society to cope using its own resources."[5] For its part, the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters, an affiliate of the World Health Organization, provides a definition of disaster similarly rooted in the disruption of "normalcy" but also meant to quantify such events. In order for any event to be considered a "disaster" and tabulated as such in its International Disaster Database there must be: at least ten reported deaths, "one hundred or more people affected," a "declaration of a state of

[4] Anthony Oliver-Smith, "Global Change and the Definition of Disaster," in *What is a Disaster?: Perspectives on the Question*, ed. E.L. Quarantelli (New York and London: Routledge, 1998), 178, 186.
[5] *2009 United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction Terminology on Disaster Reduction* (Geneva: UNISDR, 2009), 9.

emergency," and a "call for international assistance."[6] While these definitions characterize the 2010 Haiti earthquake, Hurricane Hugo in 1989, and the 1902 eruption of Mont Pelée in Martinique that are case studies in this dissertation, their parameters outline a series of questions that illuminate recent scholarship on disasters as well as the intersecting foci of the literature of catastrophe. In fact, these definitions bring into relief three principal relations – social, ecological, and discursive or narrative – that disasters actualize and that the literature of catastrophe deeply interrogates. First, both definitions call for reflection on the status of community in the context of disaster regarding the relations that bind members of the affected community to each other as well as those that enmesh them into broader regional, national, and transnational communities. The relation between disaster and community subtends, for instance, the regular fear of slave revolts that followed hurricanes in Jamaica and Barbados as well as the international humanitarian responses to the earthquakes in Guadeloupe in 1843 and Haiti in 2010 that both reveal stark socio-economic divisions while uncovering unexpected solidarities.

Second, it is important to note the lack of distinction in both definitions between "natural" and "human" catastrophes, a purposeful blurring of the borders between natural phenomena and social, or human-driven, processes that lead to catastrophe. In this way, catastrophe calls for reflection on what could be termed the ecological relation between human society and its physical environment. For instance, Jean-Jacques Rousseau's post-Lisbon earthquake comments blaming local building practices and population density for the devastating disaster, the erosion of wetlands and faulty levees in New Orleans, and the extreme

[6] EM-DAT, The International Disaster Data Base, CRED, "FAQ," accessed December 10, 2014, http://www.emdat.be/frequently-asked-questions.

overpopulation of Port-au-Prince where two million people live in a space designed for two hundred thousand exemplify some of the ecological relations of disaster.[7]

Third, both institutional definitions bring into relief the naming of disaster as a speech act that makes certain, but not all, disruptive, violent, and deadly events "disasters." A catastrophe therefore cannot be a catastrophe until the community names it as such. While this final aspect underlines the important role of human perception at both the individual and collective levels, it also reveals the role of language in relating and representing disaster in, for instance, TV reports and newspaper articles that transport distant viewers and readers respectively into the heart of the disaster zone. It anticipates the development of a narrative relation of catastrophe and the key role that the latter has played in Francophone Caribbean literature for rethinking identity, culture, and history in Haiti, Martinique, and Guadeloupe. At once articulating social, ecological, and narrative relations, the literature of catastrophe actualizes the Martinican philosopher Édouard Glissant's poetics of relation as it problematizes the links between the individual and the collective, these entities and the environment, and their literary inscription. Thus, the literature of catastrophe makes Caribbean ecology "un personnage du *drama* de la Relation…la dimension changeante et perdurable de tout changement et de tout échange."[8]

Modern scholarship on disasters has greatly elucidated the inextricable links between the first two types of relations – social and ecological – outlined in the above definitions. In recent decades, scholars have increasingly come to view catastrophes, natural or otherwise, as events that are deeply enmeshed in specific social, political, and environmental contexts. The semantic

[7] For Rousseau's comments, see "Lettre à Voltaire sur la Providence," in *Collection complète œuvres*, vol. 12 "Lettres sur divers sujets de philosophie, de morale, et de politique" (Genève, 1780-1789), 91-114.
[8] Édouard Glissant, *Introduction à une poétique du divers* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996), 25. For more on his poetics of relation, see Édouard Glissant, *Le discours antillais* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997 [1980]); *Poétique de la Relation* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990); and more recently *Traité du Tout-monde* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997). Glissant's use of "drama" has the advantage of referring both to the Greek term for action and the English term for the theatrical genre (in French *le drame*) and allows the writer to play on these etymological similarities in order to further emphasize to extent to which ecology is not only a full-fledged actor but also part of the action of the processes of relation.

drift of terms like "catastrophe" and "désastre" in French, along with their English equivalents catastrophe and disaster, that I use interchangeably charts the increasing purchase given to human agency vis-à-vis (natural) calamity that the French philosopher Jean-Pierre Dupuy calls "anthropodicée."[9] "Catastrophe," first appearing in French in Rabelais's *Quart Livre* (1552), initially designated the tragic twists and upheavals of a narrative's *dénouement*. Greek for "overturning," a "sudden turn" or "down-turn," the term catastrophe originally was limited to theater in general and tragedy in particular while other terms such as "fléau," "calamité," or "sinistre" were preferred by contemporaries to refer to "natural disasters."[10] For instance the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* (1694) defined "catastrophe" as "le dernier & principal événement d'une Tragédie."[11] However, "catastrophe" and "désastre" ("bad" or "ill-fated state" in Italian) began assuming over time more figurative usages in order to qualify the tragic and seemingly uncontrollable outcomes of natural events like earthquakes and floods.[12] Although vestiges of these uses might still subsist today ("calamité" is still synonymous with "catastrophe" and victims of catastrophe still referred to a "sinistre" in French are often called "sinistrés"), only in the mid-twentieth century did widespread usage of "catastrophe" and "désastre" in the sense of "natural" catastrophe and disaster become dominant.[13] Thus, it is telling that the most common term for the Holocaust in French is "la Shoah" (Hebrew for "calamity or "catastrophe"), which translates the desire to explain genocide and wide-scale destruction

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[9] Jean-Pierre Dupuy, *Petite métaphysique des tsunamis* (Paris: Seuil, 2005), 57.

[10] The tale of the old woman on the "isle des Papefigues" who tricked the Devil is telling when, for instance, after the Devil leaves in defeat she recounts her escape with her companions: "Entendens la catastrophe & fin de l'histoire, nous restirasme en nostre nauf." François Rabelais, *Le Quart Livre*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Mireille Huchon (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), 648. Early French dictionaries like the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* (1694) defined "catastrophe" as "le dernier & principal événement d'une Tragédie."

[11] See "Catastrophe," in "Dictionnaires d'autrefois." *The ARTFL Project*, accessed March 7, 2012, http://artfl-project.uchicago.edu/node/17.

[12] "Désastre," in "Dictionnaires d'autrefois." *The ARTFL Project*, accessed March 7, 2012, http://artfl-project.uchicago.edu/node/17. "Désastre" becomes a synonym of "catastrophe" in Littré's *Dictionnaire de la langue française* published between 1872 and 1877.

[13] The *Oxford English Dictionary* (2nd ed.) charts a similar trajectory for both "catastrophe" and "disaster" in English.

through the language of (natural) catastrophe.[14] Reflecting a larger shift in a Western *histoire des mentalités*, the transition from "fléau" to catastrophe or disaster bespeaks a long process of secularization as science and reason have increasingly displaced, but without replacing, divine explanations for the natural world.

Today scholars increasingly emphasize human involvement in the occurrence of catastrophe, even those previously considered "natural." "Natural disasters, rather than unanticipated and unique events, are seen to be much more explainable in terms of the 'normal' order of things, that is, the conditions of inequality and subordination in the society rather than the accidental geophysical features of a place."[15] Natural disaster is therefore increasingly approached from the perspective of a human ecology that interrogates, to quote the geographer Kenneth Hewitt, the "ongoing societal and man-environment relations that prefigure" catastrophe.[16] Building on Hewitt's insight, the anthropologist Anthony Oliver-Smith explains that what societies call disaster is "in reference to the physical operation of the material world."[17] His assertion raises two significant corollary points. The first highlights that hazards are an integral part of social life while the second, by focusing on the dialectic relationship between human beings and the environment, "provides a theoretical basis for asserting that we construct our own disasters insofar as disasters occur in the environments that we produce."[18] Therefore,

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[14] François Walter, *Catastrophes: Une histoire culturelle, XVIe-XXIe siècles* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2008), 18-20. A key moment in this semantic shift, for Walter, is the publication of Émile Littré's *Dictionnaire de la langue française* (1872-77) in which "catastrophe" as "renversement, grand malheur, fin deplorable" is listed as the first definition relegating the theatrical plot twists to second position. See "Catastrophe," in "Dictionnaires d'autrefois." *The ARTFL Project*.

[15] Gregory Button and Anthony Oliver-Smith, "Disaster, Displacement, and Employment: Distortion of Labor Markets During Post-Katrina Reconstruction," in *Capitalizing on Catastrophe*: Neoliberal Strategies in Disaster Reconstruction, ed. Nandini Gunewardena, Mark Schuller (Lanham: AltaMira Press, 2008), 125.

[16] Kenneth Hewitt, "The Idea of Calamity in a Technocratic Age," in *Interpretations of Calamity from the Viewpoint of Human Ecology*, ed. Kenneth Hewitt (Boston: Allen and Unwin Inc, 1983), 27.

[17] Anthony Oliver-Smith, "Theorizing Disasters: Nature, Power and Culture," in *Catastrophe and Culture: The Anthropology of Disaster*, ed. Susanna M. Hoffman and Anthony Oliver-Smith (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 2002), 39.

[18] Ibid., 43.

by situating disaster between social and ecological processes, or the first two "relations" outlined above, scholars now define disasters as the intersection of a hazard like earthquakes with vulnerabilities like population density or inadequate housing that often put marginalized populations the most at risk.[19] In this view, "natural" and "man-made," or technological, catastrophes reveal not only the degrees of risk embedded in human society in relation to its environment, but also the social and political production and management of said risk. Disasters render manifest, then, human tendencies to ignore risk, whether for profit or political gain, despite the fact that increasing global inequalities have only augmented the vulnerability of marginalized populations, and thus the potential for disaster when hazards confront these groups. In this way, thinkers like Mike Davis in the United States and Paul Virilio in France have argued that disasters expose the undersides of global modernity by throwing into stark relief social and economic inequalities, ecological hazards, and technological risks.[20]

The rise of the dominant paradigm for the study of disaster within the academy in which catastrophe is to some extent a social construction is both part and parcel of the larger "cultural" turn in the humanities and social sciences that emphasizes the manner in which people "construct" their world. In this way, culture is no longer a primordial essence subtending the Romantic mantra of "one nation, one language, one people," but rather, drawing on its usage in modern anthropology, a dynamic resource people use to explain the world.[21] But, according to the critic Mark Anderson, the cultural relation of disaster also assumes "more specific connotations as the discursive articulation and artistic products of [the] process" of making sense

[19] Susanna M. Hoffman and Anthony Oliver-Smith, "Why Anthropologists Should Study Disasters," in Hoffman and Oliver-Smith, *Culture and Catastrophe*, 4.
[20] Paul Virilio, *The Original Accident*, trans. Julie Rose (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2007) and *L'Université du désastre* (Paris: Édition Galilée, 2007); Mike Davis, *Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster* (New York: Metropolitan, 1998) and *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Niño and the Making of the Third World* (New York: Verso, 2001).
[21] Renato Rosaldo, *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993 [1989], 26.

of the world.[22] The role that culture in these two senses plays in Anthony Oliver-Smith and Susan Hoffman's definition is unmistakable then when they argue that disaster "exposes the way in which people [as a group] construct or 'frame' their peril (including the denial of it), the way they perceive their environment and their subsistence, and the ways they invent explanations."[23] What emerges is the "cultural scene of disaster," a concept that at once acknowledges the mediating role of narratives for assigning meaning to catastrophe as well as the way catastrophe circulates via representations in the media and popular culture. Indeed, recognizing the importance of the latter, most people in the West experience disaster in a vicarious manner through cable news, cinema, and literature.[24] It is here that the third relation to catastrophe, the discursive or in a broader sense the narrative, highlighted at the beginning of this section gains a significant place in the study of catastrophe. The cultural scene of disaster therefore delineates a site of competing representations that are both the product and reflection of contested relations of power implicating individuals, non-governmental organizations, and governments in the process of making sense of catastrophes.[25]

Indeed, as Marie-Hélène Huet writes of the post-Enlightenment West, "Our culture thinks *through* disaster. Implicitly, disasters mediate philosophical inquiry and shape our creative imagination."[26] Similarly, Caribbean cultures think through disasters as I argue in this study about Francophone Caribbean literature that disasters across the archipelago have inspired numerous literary texts and that these same texts contain important critical reflections on Caribbean identity, history, and culture. Thus, given the centrality of narrative and discourse

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[22] Mark D. Anderson, *Disaster Writing: The Cultural Politics of Catastrophe in Latin America* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011), 2.
[23] Susan M. Hoffman and Anthony Oliver-Smith, "Introduction: Why Anthropologists Should Study Disaster," in Hoffman and Oliver-Smith, *Catastrophe and Culture*, 6.
[24] Stephan R. Couch, "The Cultural Scene of Disasters: Conceptualizing the Field of Disasters and Popular Culture" *International Journal of Mass Emergencies* 18 no. 1 (2000), 21-37.
[25] Hoffman and Oliver-Smith, "Why Anthropologists Should Study Disaster," 11.
[26] Marie-Hélène Huet, *The Culture of Disaster* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 2.

from both the perspectives of survivors and distant spectators, cultural and literary studies both appear particularly well equipped to examine the representations that mediate and meditate on the experience of catastrophe. On the one hand, these narratives invite a cultural studies approach to literary texts that situates and assesses each text as an intervention in a broader discursive field regarding the varied resonances of catastrophe across Caribbean identity, history, and culture. In this way, this study foregrounds Caribbean cultural resiliency to the challenges that natural disasters poses as intellectuals in the region transform such disruptions into a critical concept for rethinking the archipelago's relation to Northern centers of power. On the other hand, this very same transformation of catastrophe from a subjective and collective phenomenological experience into a discursive mode of epistemic critique necessitates a literary approach to the texts in this corpus. To understand how representations of catastrophe interrogate Caribbean histories of racism, colonialism, and humanitarianism also requires critics to examine them as literary constructions, as signifying texts whose genres, styles, and poetics all inform their particular interventions in diverse cultural, theoretical, and historiographical debates from postcolonialism to creolization.[27]

Yet, by making the title of this dissertation "the *literature* of catastrophe" rather than "the *culture* of catastrophe," my intention is neither to oppose notions of "high" literary writing with "low," popular, or mass cultural products nor the related scholarly approaches to them that have developed over the last three decades in literary and cultural studies. Rather, the *literature* of catastrophe seeks to delineate a cultural space with a long tradition of thinking through catastrophe, to recall Huet's words above, in the Caribbean that overlaps with others types of

[27] In this approach, which straddles historical, cultural, and literary analysis, I draw on the examples of Doris Garraway in *The Libertine Colony: Creolization in the Early French Caribbean* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005) and Christopher Miller in *The French Atlantic Triangle: Literature and Culture of the Slave Trade* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

cultural production (e.g. musical and visual arts). What I call the literature of catastrophe in this dissertation is a set of discursive re-presentations, whether explicitly aestheticized or not, that combine the three layers of social, ecological, and narrative relations that have so far been the focus of this introduction. To put it another way and to bring the discussion back to the image of the map, the literature of catastrophe plots the interlocking coordinates of these three types of relations. To the extent that re-presentations of catastrophe strive to reproduce the world affected by catastrophe, they reflect, in the sense of mimesis, the social and ecological processes that created the disaster at the same time that they critically reflect on, or interrogate, these same elements. But as cartographic representations, even in the abstract sense of the term that I invoke here, the literature of catastrophe works to re-plot these coordinates into reconfigured subjectivities that place readers into relation with others, the environment, and competing representations of catastrophe. Harking back to the theatrical trope of the term's "literary" usage beginning with Rabelais, the literature of catastrophe offers a *mise-en-scène* of traumatic events, a discursive translation that makes, or attempts to make, catastrophe visible and readable. Providing a long-standing critical perspective on a pressing issue of global concern as a result of rising economic inequality, increased social and ecological vulnerability, climate change, and growing strain on natural resources, literary representations of catastrophe reveal the shifting place and symbolism that catastrophe holds in the collective imaginary. The literature of catastrophe thereby foregrounds collective responses to natural hazards and human-made risk. Taken in this way, literature is as essential to understanding human responses to disaster and the latter's important role in society as the study of public policy, NGOs, and ecological conditions.

The Literature of Catastrophe in the Francophone Caribbean

In his "Theses on the Philosophy of History" (1940), Walter Benjamin famously describes the angel in Klee's "Angelus Novus" as the "angel of history." Surveying the past, the angel "sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet."[28] Benjamin's view of history as an interminable pile of catastrophes is particularly illuminating for the Caribbean where the sort of political and social disasters to which he refers regularly intersect with devastating natural disasters. Indeed, from the days of European exploration and settlement with its flurry of travelogues and exhaustive descriptions of flora, fauna, inhabitants, and climatic events in Christopher Columbus's journals or the writings of missionaries like Père Labat to today's global media coverage, natural catastrophe has been an important mode for talking about the West Indies. Describing the contemporary state of affairs, Maryse Condé observes that the islands in the Caribbean make headlines "only when there is a hurricane, an earthquake, or other catastrophe."[29] In many ways, Haiti is the starkest example of this phenomenon. As Deborah Jenson has demonstrated, disaster discourse has long swirled around Haiti since it radically broke free from France following a violent, protracted revolution in 1804.[30] Indeed, if Haiti as the first "post-colonial" nation in Latin America constituted the epitome of colonial catastrophe in the nineteenth century when it forcefully overthrew slavery, the twentieth century saw Haiti transform into a humanitarian disaster exacerbated by the international community's response to the 2010 earthquake.[31] Today, despite its unofficial

[28] Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 257-58.
[29] Maryse Condé, "O Brave New World," *Research in African Literatures* 29, no. 3 (Autumn, 1998), 1.
[30] Deborah Jenson, "The Writing of Disaster in Haiti: Signifying Cataclysm from Slave Revolution to Earthquake" in *Haiti Rising: Haitian History, Culture, and the Earthquake of 2010*, ed. Martin Munro, (Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2010), 102-111.
[31] For detailed accounts of this process, see Jonathan M. Katz, *The Big Truck That Went By: How the World Came to Save Haiti and Left Behind a Disaster* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013) and *Assistance mortelle*, directed by Raoul Peck (Paris, France: Velvet Film, 2013), DVD.

moniker as the Republic of NGOs with reportedly the most international charitable organizations per capita, the country is still commonly referred to as the poorest in the Western hemisphere, offering proof, according to the analysis, of the dysfunction of humanitarian aid and the heartless efficacy of neo-liberal globalization.

Numerous studies have sought to illuminate the social and ecological relations of catastrophe throughout the Caribbean in recognition of the reality that "catastrophe [has] followed catastrophe" in a region beset with colonial genocide and several centuries of slavery in addition to periodic hurricanes, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions.[32] Among scholars, historians of the Caribbean have most actively explored the impact of catastrophe on life in the region. A number of these studies have focused on the impact of hurricanes on Puerto Rico, Cuba, and across the early modern British Caribbean.[33] In the Francophone Caribbean, the 2010 earthquake in Haiti is notable not only for attracting global attention, but also for serving as an important impetus to research on the topic – the present study included – and for yielding a number of articles, books, and special editions of scholarly journals on the event itself.[34] Since the earthquake, scholars have also looked back to the historical archive to analyze nineteenth-century earthquakes in Haiti and Martinique.[35] But this recent surge of interest in Caribbean disaster should not obscure earlier important studies of the impact of disaster in Antillean history

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[32] "The Visual Life of Catastrophe: A *Small Axe* Project Statement," *Small Axe* 34 (March 2011), 134.

[33] Stuart Schwartz, "The Hurricane of San Ciriaco: Disaster, Politics, and Society in Puerto Rico, 1899-1901," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 72 (November 1992), 303-34; Louis A. Pérez, *Winds of Change: Hurricanes and the Transformation of Nineteenth-Century Cuba* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Matthew Mulcahy, *Hurricanes and Society in the British Greater Caribbean, 1624-1783* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006).

[34] See for instance, Martin Munro, ed., *Haiti Rising*; Martin Munro, *Writing on the Fault Line: Haitian Literature and the Earthquake of 2010 (*Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015); Mark Schuller and Pablo Morales, eds., *Tectonic Shifts: Haiti Since the Earthquake* (Sterling: Stylus Publishing, 2012); and Garvey Lundy, ed., "The Haiti Earthquake of 2010: The Politics of a Natural Disaster," special issue, *Journal of Black Studies* 42, no. 2 (March 2011).

[35] Mathew J. Smith, "Une histoire sous les décombres: le tremblement de terre de 1842 en Haïti," *Revue de la Société haïtienne d'Histoire, de Géographie, et de Géologie* Nos. 241-44 (Janvier-Décembre 2011), 217-277.

and society. Focusing on significant historical and contemporary catastrophes such as the 1902 volcanic destruction of Saint-Pierre, Martinique, the 1843 earthquake in Guadeloupe, the destructive 1928 hurricane on the same island, and the 1976 volcanic crisis that saw the evacuation of Basse-Terre, Guadeloupe and its nearly seventy thousand inhabitants for three months, these studies by historians as well as sociologists and anthropologists have effectively elucidated the questions of the management of risk and cultural resiliency and have evaluated institutional and governmental responses.[36]

As if to illustrate the Barbadian poet and historian Edward Kamau Brathwaite's statement after Hurricane Katrina that "art must come out of catastrophe," representations of natural catastrophe have been important to attempts to grabble with social and political history as well as cultural identity in Caribbean literature.[37] The critic Kathleen Gyssels has observed, for instance, that many of Maryse Condé's novels including *La Migration des cœurs* (1995), *Célanire cou-coupé* (2000), and *La Belle Créole* (2001) employ the unruly Caribbean climate to launch the narrative and set the tone.[38] Nineteenth-century Caribbean disaster is also the backdrop for several French antislavery plays set during the 1839 earthquake in Martinique that explore the racial tensions of colonial society nearly a decade before the second French abolition of slavery.[39] For more than a century, writers including Jean Max, Aimé Césaire, Patrick Chamoiseau, Raphaël Confiant, and Suzanne Dracius among others have attempted to re-create

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[36] See for example the studies collected in *Les catastrophes naturelles aux Antilles: D'une Soufrière à une autre*, ed. Alain Yacou (Paris: Karthala, 1999) and *Les Antilles, terres à risque*, ed. GEODE Caraïbe (Paris: Karthala, 1999).
[37] Joyelle McSweeney, "Poetics, Revelations and Catastrophes: An Interview with Kamau Brathwaite" *Rain Taxi Review of Books* (Fall 2005), accessed August 29, 2012, http://www.raintaxi.com/online/2005fall/brathwaite.shtml.
[38] Kathleen Gyssels, "Prévisions et divagations batoutesques face aux dérélictions du tout-monde: Daniel Maximin et Édouard Glissant comme guerriers des (dés)astres antillais," in *The Caribbean Writer as Warrior of the Imaginary/L'écrivain caribéen, guerrier de l'imaginaire*, Kathleen Gyssels and Bénédicte Ledent (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008), 250.
[39] Barbara T. Cooper has edited two such plays produced in 1840 deal with the 1839 earthquake in Martinique, Charles Lafont and Charles Desnoyer, *Tremblement de terre de la Martinique: drame en cinq actes, suivi de documents inédits*, ed. Barbara T. Cooper (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2012) and Adolphe Dennery, *Tremblement de Terre de la Martinique*, ed. Barbara T. Cooper (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2014).

the disaster of 1902 and the instantaneous death of nearly thirty thousand people in Saint-Pierre. Since the Soufrière Hills volcano in nearby Montserrat became active once again in the late 1990s and significantly destroyed the small island's capital city Plymouth, a number of texts there have emerged to grapple with this trauma.[40] More recently, in Haiti a growing list of novels focusing on the 2010 earthquake from established writers like Évelyne Trouillot and Gary Victor as well as emerging authors including Marvin Victor and Makenzy Orcel has begun reflecting on the disaster's consequences on both the subjective individual and collective group levels.[41]

Beyond any single event, catastrophe represents a defining aspect of the Caribbean experience for writers like the Guadeloupean writer and editor Daniel Maximin, the Barbadian writer Edward Kamau Brathwaite, and the Cuban theorist and novelist Antonio Benítez-Rojo. Like a violent thread weaving together the archipelago's disparate islands and cultures to paraphrase Maximin in *Les fruits du cyclone* (2006), the experience of cataclysm is as important as the histories of slavery and creolization to articulating a collective Caribbean experience.[42] Brathwaite, slightly expanding the definition of disaster beyond the natural to include slavery, underdevelopment, and exploitation, places Caribbean subjects at "the centre of an explosion – a catastrophe – a cultural catastrophe which this region was/is the matrix (axle) of."[43] For his part, the Cuban post-modern theorist Benítez-Rojo shifts the discussion from the experience of catastrophe to the conceptualization or perception of catastrophe when he writes that "the Caribbean is not an apocalyptic world," one attached to the meta-narratives that he ascribes to

[40] See for example Howard Fergus, *Volcano Verses* (Leeds: Peepal Tree, 2003).
[41] Évelyne Trouillot's *Absences sans frontières* (Montpellier: Chèvre-feuille étoilée, 2013), Gary Victor, *Soro* (Montreal: Mémoire d'encrier, 2011), Makenzy Orcel's *Les Immortelles* (Montreal: Mémoire d'encrier, 2010) and *Les Latrines* (Montreal: Mémoire d'encrier, 2011), and Marvin Victor *Corps mêlés* (Paris: Gallimard, 2011).
[42] Daniel Maximin, *Les fruits du cyclone: une géopoétique de la Caraïbe* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2006), 81-108.
[43] Brathwaite, "Metaphors," 454.

the West.[44] Instead, Benítez-Rojo's Caribbean is "the realm of marine currents, of waves, of folds and double-folds, of fluidity and sinuosity" and "a chaos that returns, a detour without purpose, a continual flow of paradoxes."[45] Although Benítez-Rojo's recognition of this outlook dates back to his childhood experience of the Cuban Missile Crisis where he remembers observing two black women carrying on as if nothing had changed or would change, this disposition, he argues running the risk of essentialization, reflects a larger collective refusal of "choices of all or nothing, for or against, honor or blood [that all] have little to do with the culture of the Caribbean."[46] Whether as catastrophe or apocalypse, natural event or tragic political outcome, disaster is omnipresent in Caribbean thought and the impetus for many literary representations.

Given this omnipresence in Caribbean history and fiction, literary critics have often turned their attention to literary engagements with catastrophe. In Francophone Caribbean studies, critics have explored in limited fashion the relation between Negritude, creolization, and imagined communities in literary representations of catastrophe, most notably in Aimé Césaire's *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (1939) and Daniel Maximin's trio of novels *L'Isolé soleil* (1981), *Soufrières* (1987), and *L'Ile et une nuit* (1995).[47] As for the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, Mark Anderson foregrounds in his study the many links and transfers between literary representations of natural disasters and the political field throughout Latin America in the

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[44] Antonio Benítez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective*, trans. James E. Maraniss, 2nd ed. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 10. In this respect, Benítez-Rojo's treatment of apocalyptic thinking is similar to that of Jacques Derrida in *D'un ton apocalyptique adopté naguère en philosophie* (Paris: Galilée, 1983). In this way, both posit metanarratives as a type of apocalyptic discourse that announces, or reveals, the end of one paradigm and the beginning of a brand new order.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Chris Bongie, *Islands and Exiles: The Creole Identities of Post/colonial Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 348-401; H. Adlai Murdoch, *Creole Identity in the French Caribbean Novel* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001), 101-141; Celia Britton, *The Sense of Community in French Caribbean Fiction* (Liverpool: University of Liverpool Press, 2008), 111-130.

Dominican Republic, Mexico, and Honduras, for example. His study, one of the few monograph-length analyses on the topic, provides insight into the ways the "literary mediation of natural disasters informs political policy in Latin America" and functions in specific national imaginaries as well as into their co-optation by political nationalisms.[48] In the Anglophone Caribbean, Kathleen Donegan has recently demonstrated how "[c]atastrophe was more than a description of calamitous events" and functioned as "a discourse through which settlers witnessed themselves and registered their shock at unprecedented circumstances that they could neither absorb nor understand."[49] On the other end of the colonial encounter, that is to say for the colonized and their progeny, Brathwaite has focused on how catastrophe illuminates the experience of first the region's native populations and later the displaced Africans and Asians and the descendants of these two groups. His hybrid mix of poetry and literary criticism in "Metaphors of Underdevelopment" (1985) represents another important attempt to articulate a literary and critical response to catastrophe. In what he defines as a history of catastrophe, Brathwaite posits the necessity of a literature of catastrophe able "to hold a broken mirror up to broken nature" to begin grappling with "the effects of cultural catastrophe on the west indian [sic] mind."[50]

In 1985 when Brathwaite published "Metaphors of Underdevelopment," in which catastrophe signifies not only devastating natural events but the cultural and social upheavals of Caribbean history, he takes (Anglophone) Caribbean literature to task for largely failing "to see itself" or "to act itself out" as a literature of catastrophe.[51] Too focused on the individual, the autobiographical, or the place of the artist, Brathwaite suggests that Caribbean writers clasp too

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[48] Anderson, *Disaster Writing*, 2.
[49] Kathleen Donegan, *Seasons of Misery: Catastrophe and Settlement in Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 2-3.
[50] Brathwaite, "Metaphors," 459.
[51] Ibid., 457.

closely to fragments to see the whole save in the felicitous exceptions that he locates in the fiction of Wilson Harris and Orlando Patterson.[52] The three decades since Brathwaite's intervention have seen the rise of a number of Caribbean writers including Maryse Condé, Martinican creolists Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphaël Confiant, the Haitian American Edwidge Danticat, Haitian artist Frankétienne, Dominican American Junot Diaz, and Grenadian writer Merle Collins who have deeply engaged with the cultural and political catastrophes of their respective islands. My focus on "natural" catastrophe challenges Brathwaite's characterization of Caribbean literary history to demonstrate that a literature of catastrophe critical of colonial and post-colonial forms of domination has existed in the Francophone Caribbean since at least the early nineteenth century and has proved integral to articulating postcolonial identities throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first century.

My study of the literature of catastrophe seeks to synthesize and expand upon the methodological and theoretical approaches outlined above. While Anderson effectively develops the links connecting literature, politics, and nationalisms in a number of Latin American natural catastrophes, the causes and effects of catastrophe resonate beyond the unique frame of the nation. Daniel Maximin suggests, for instance, that catastrophe is always already a violent articulation of near and far, here and there as "tout grand séisme envoie ses ondes au-delà de l'épicentre, toute éruption notable est visible de l'île voisine à l'œil nu."[53] As a result, my examination of the literature of catastrophe demonstrates how different poetics of disaster contribute to the articulation of collective identities on the local level while also informing cosmopolitan subjectivities that look beyond the nation as their point of reference. Building on Brathwaite's almost Stendhalian formulation of the literature of catastrophe as a broken mirror

[52] Ibid., 458.
[53] Maximin, *Fruits*, 99.

held up to broken nature, I examine how the literature of catastrophe enacts a mode of epistemic upheaval. As in Stendhal's well-known definition of literary realism in *Le Rouge et le noir* (1830) as "un miroir qu'on promène sur une grande route," which the author posits in the novel as a mode of social critique, if not a critique of verisimilitude itself as Lawrence Schehr has argued, the broken shards of Brathwaite's mirror convey an overlapping process of refraction, redirection, and fragmentation that instantiate critical reflection on Caribbean disasters.[54] In this way, catastrophe is not a *deus ex machina* that resolves narrative tension like the hurricane in Marceline Desbordes-Valmore's *Sarah* (1821); rather it resembles Daniel Maximin's hurricane in *L'Ile et une nuit* or his volcano in *Soufrières,* both of which intervene in the narrative to overturn the way readers think about the ecological relations of catastrophe in anthropocentric Antillean historiography.

Reading the literature of catastrophe is, then, to recognize the extent to which Caribbean literature is *catastrophic*. I do not use this term pejoratively, but instead in its etymological sense. Like Glissant's *la pensée du tremblement* that "nous preserve des pensées de système et des systèmes de pensée," I evoke the sense of overturning embedded in catastrophe, which I argue resembles a process of dislocating or dis-ordering not only of the space to which it lays representational claim but also of the intellectual and cultural landscapes that it interrogates and re-orders.[55] In this way, the literature of catastrophe reveals the ambiguous relation between Caribbean societies and their built and natural environments to examine how volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, and hurricanes reveal the dialectics between society and nature. It also details how

[54] The rest of the quote from *Le rouge et le noir* reads: "Tantôt il [the novel/mirror] reflète à vos yeux l'azur des cieux, tantôt la fange des bourbiers de la route. Et l'homme qui porte le miroir dans sa hotte sera par vous accusé d'être immoral ! Son miroir montre la fange, et vous accusez le miroir ! Accusez bien plutôt le grand chemin où est le bourbier, et plus encore l'inspecteur des routes qui laisse l'eau croupir et le bourbier se former." Stendhal, *Le rouge et le noir* (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1854 [1830]), 354. See also For Lawrence R. Schehr, *Rendering French Realism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 43-44.
[55] Édouard Glissant, *La cohée du Lamentin* (Paris: Gallimard, 2005), 12.

such events lend themselves to literary appropriation as a critical idiom for refashioning identity in the work of figures like Aimé Césaire or Yanick Lahens for example. In the literature of catastrophe, the dis-locations of catastrophe and the re-orderings of disaster writing provide a privileged point of entry into Caribbean critiques of seminal episodes and phases of Western modernity including the Haitian Revolution, decolonization, and globalization. Going further, the inscription and echoes of such events in and throughout the literature of catastrophe do not situate Caribbean colonial and post-colonial history at the distant edges of the history of Western modernity; nor do they simple reflect on periodic intersections between Caribbean and Western history. Instead, building on Laurent Dubois' reconsideration of Caribbean revolutions during the Enlightenment, my reading of the literature of catastrophe reveals how Francophone Caribbean intellectuals critically situate their respective societies and islands within Western modernity to denounce its imperialist and exploitative undersides.[56]

As a region long subjected to the economic and political imperatives of distant foreign powers, the continuous epistemic overturnings that find voice in the literature of catastrophe constitute stark examples of the "contestation of colonial domination and the legacies of colonialism" that Ania Loomba defines as the hallmark of postcolonialism.[57] Although neither the question of catastrophe nor the burdens of postcoloniality are unique to this region, the Francophone Caribbean provides an illuminating case study of the literature of catastrophe because of the way it casts the problematics of postcolonial history, identity, and culture against

[56] See for example Laurent Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens: Revolution and Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean, 1787-1804* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004) and *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004).

[57] Ania Loomba, *Colonialism-Postcolonialism* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 12. For clarity, and following Loomba's distinction, in this dissertation, postcolonial, without the hyphen, refers to efforts to resist colonial regimes of domination both during and after the colonial period. Post-colonial, with the hyphen, refers to historical, cultural, and political events or phenomena that follow the chronological end of colonization. Neo-colonial refers, in my usage through this project, to attempts by former colonial powers or the local elite to perpetuate colonial forms of subjugation and rule in the post-colonial period.

the backdrop of a region which, for geological and meteorological reasons, is susceptible to annual cycles of hurricanes, periodic earthquakes, and occasional volcanic eruptions. It is this same confluence of the forces of history and geography that has also led scholars to re-situate the Caribbean as an important site of eco-critical thought as "there is probably no other region in the world that has been more radically altered in terms of human and botanic migration, transplantation, and settlement."[58] Moreover, while much of the world has been post-colonial, that is chronologically *after* colonialism, for nearly half a century now and scholars largely continue to assert the usefulness of the tools of postcolonial criticism for understanding the hierarchies of power and culture at play in the spread of global capitalism, the Francophone Caribbean provides a particularly long experience of postcoloniality.[59] The escalation of the Haitian Revolution into independence in 1804 effectively made Haiti a post-colonial nation long before large parts of Africa and Asia were colonial.[60] In this way, saddled with a large debt following the 1825 indemnity to France for which it had to borrow even more money to pay back along with regular threats to its sovereignty from France and increasingly the United States, nineteenth-century Haiti foreshadows the advent of the Third World and the vicissitudes of "development" that have played out in the twentieth century across Latin America and Africa.

As a critical construct, the Francophone Caribbean combines several historical and geographical factors that allow this dissertation to productively re-orient the study of disaster in the region. Harking back to the eighteenth century when Haiti, Martinique, and Guadeloupe were important cogs in the French imperial economy, the Francophone Caribbean brings together

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[58] Elizabeth M. Deloughrey, Renée K. Gosson, and George B. Handley, "Introduction," in *Caribbean Literature and the Environment: Between Nature and Culture*, ed. Elizabeth M. Deloughrey, Renée K. Gosson, and George B. Handley (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2005), 1.

[59] Ania Loomba et al., "Introduction," *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond*, ed. Ania Loomba et al. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 1-38; Paul Jay, *Global Matters: The Transnaitonal Turn in Literary Studies* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010).

[60] Laurent Dubois, "In Search of the Haitian Revolution," in *Francophone Postcolonial Studies: A Critical Introduction,* ed. Charles Fordsdick and David Murphy (London: Arnold, 2003), 32.

these three islands therefore to create a continual juxtaposition of the postcolonial with the (neo)colonial since Haitian independence in 1804 and despite the official end of colonization in Martinique and Guadeloupe upon their 1946 integration into the French state as overseas departments. As a legacy of French colonialism and as a testament to the long-lasting efforts to "unthink" this system by the groups subjected to it, the Francophone Caribbean enables both a geographical and historical comparison that is meant to expand the study of Caribbean catastrophes between single events, sites, and time periods (colonial vs. post-colonial) in order to bring out the continuities and discontinuities in Caribbean reactions to catastrophe across both time and space. In this way, this dissertation aims to offer insight into how Caribbean intellectuals have appropriated catastrophe as a critical idiom to rethink dominant discourses (e.g. racism, colonialism, globalization, and humanitarianism) and to articulate postcolonial identities (e.g. Haitianness, Negritude, *créolité*, *métissage*, and cosmopolitanism) from the early nineteenth century to the present.

Geographies of Suffering

Trauma and testimony have proved to be a dominant paradigm in literary studies of catastrophe from the Holocaust to the Rwandan Genocide. In largely abstract terms that reflect on the dislocation of the subject in language and meaning in *The Writing of Disaster* (1986), Maurice Blanchot characterizes disaster as the breakdown of language when he writes that "the disaster de-scribes."[61] Although disaster reveals the limits of language, it never forecloses on the possibility of language and by extension the ability to narrate the event: "There is disaster only because, ceaselessly, it falls short of disaster. The end of nature, the end of culture," explains the French philosopher and critic.[62] The change that disaster does effect within language is "a rip

[61] Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of Disaster*, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 7.
[62] Ibid., 41.

forever ripping apart" and a "break with every form of totality" that openly questions the stability of meaning.[63] Commenting on the dislocation of the subject with respect to language, the critic Marie-Hélène Huet effectively brings this discussion back to the order-disorder dyad that especially characterizes attempts to narrate disaster. In a remark that clarifies Blanchot's thesis, Huet writes, "Thinking through disasters is best exemplified in our incapacity to reassemble fragments into a reassuring whole."[64] But it is the very attempt to narrate disaster, the recognition that the disaster was not total, that Huet suggests is what "dispels the inhuman" of disaster by integrating the shock into the realm of meaning.[65]

Nasrin Qader's *Narratives of Catastrophes* (2009) explores the dislocations of language and meaning caused by genocide, torture, and imprisonment and related attempts to dispel the inhumanity of these experiences in a number of Francophone African texts. For this critic, the attempts to re-order via narrative these traumas reveal not debilitating handicaps but instead the productive possibilities of literary discourse. Preferring the French "récit" from the verb "réciter," or to recite, to the English "narrative," Qader calls attention to the dual processes of repetition and displacement that the act of narrating entails.[66] The double movement, she posits, enacts a rupture or a "turning over," literally a catastrophe, that the subject undergoes vis-à-vis language as he or she comes to terms with the limit experiences of catastrophe through the displacements and dispersions of his or her narratives, or *récits*. For Qader, narratives of catastrophe offer an archive of human resiliency and survival, and for critics a window into the epistemic and conceptual re-ordering of the real.

In studies such as these, disaster serves largely as shorthand for trauma, a concept which

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[63] Ibid., 75.
[64] Huet, *The Culture of Disaster*, 12.
[65] Ibid., 163.
[66] Nasrin Qader, *Narratives of Catastrophe* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009), 8-9.

offers a pathway for understanding the way narratives of catastrophe interrogate relations between the self and the other. Focusing on the act of bearing witness, Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub have theorized testimony as a performative act that creates a witness to "'an event without witness' – an event eliminating its own witness."[67] Beyond the basic interpersonal level, Cathy Caruth posits that trauma, engendering an intergroup relation, offers an important "link between cultures."[68] Indeed, as Didier Fassin and Richard Rechtman write, trauma has become "a new language of the event."[69] A more recent cross-pollination with postcolonial studies has been crucial to decentering the paradigmatic status of the Holocaust as the model of testimony to reveal the larger geopolitics of trauma, or what Jacques Derrida once called geopsychoanalysis to denounce its Eurocentric biases.[70] "Ethnic cleansing" and genocides in the Balkans, Rwanda, and Darfur and a growing interest in colonial genocides in the Americas have extended the "borders" of trauma beyond the Western psyche.[71] This postcolonial turn has revealed the concept of trauma's ambiguous roots as a *dispositif* of power and control in colonial psychiatry while also underlining its long status as a site of the negotiation of otherness.[72] Representations of trauma hinge, then, on an unbalanced relation to others and otherness that reveal catastrophe as a "contact zone" rooted in the asymmetries of power between cultures, nationalities, ethnicities,

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[67] Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992), xvii, see chapter three: "An Even Without a Witness: Truth, Testimony and Survival," 75-92.
[68] Cathy Caruth, "Introduction" in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory Unclaimed Experience*, ed. Cathy Caruth (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press), 11.
[69] Didier Fassin and Richard Rechtman, *The Empire of Trauma: An Inquiry into the Condition of Victimhood*, trans. by Rachel Gomme (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009), 6.
[70] Jacques Derrida, "Geopsychoanalysis…' and the rest of the world,'" trans. D. Nicholson-Smith, *American Imago* 48 no. 2 (1991), 199-231.
[71] A. Dirk Moses, ed., *Empire, Genocide, Colony: Conquest, Occupation, and Subaltern Resistance in World History* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009).
[72] Warwick Anderson, Deborah Jenson and Richard C. Keller, "Introduction," *Unconscious Domains: Psychoanalysis, Colonial Trauma, and Global Sovereignties*, ed. Warwick Anderson, Deborah Jenson and Richard C. Keller (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011), 10.

and genders.[73]

Building on these considerations, my conceptualization of the literature of catastrophes shares the focus on the effects of trauma on narrative similar to Qader, but examines the politics of representing disaster, trauma, and suffering, questions their circulation, and maps the resulting geographies of suffering. While the critic Janet Walker's coinage of the term geography of suffering, emanating from a broader "spatial turn" in trauma studies, refers to her specific interest in the situatedness of post-Katrina testimony, I argue that this situatedness, or rather its deterritorialization and reterritorialization, is a defining characteristic of the literature of catastrophe.[74] To build on the argument that narratives of catastrophe register the subject's attempts to resituate him- or herself within language, I demonstrate in this dissertation that the literature of catastrophe is indissociable from attempts to re-inscribe, literally to re-place, the subject with respect to the dominant spatial orders of such world-systems as European colonialism or postmodern globalization. Susan Suleiman and Christie McDonald's metaphor of a GPS device in their introduction to *French Global* (2010) to show how literary texts situate themselves between overlapping local, national, and global scales that "allows users [authors and readers] to situate and navigate *themselves*" is useful to understanding the hermeneutic function of geographies of suffering.[75] In this way, the literature of catastrophe produces varying geographies of suffering that reflect, call into question, and subject such notions as center and periphery to intense critique.

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[73] Mary Louise Pratt, "Arts of the Contact Zone," *Profession* 9, no. 1 (1991), 34.
[74] Janet Walker, "Moving Testimonies and the Geography of Suffering: Perils and Fantasies of Belonging after Katrina," *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies* 24, no. 1 (February 2010), 52
[75] Susan Rubin Suleiman and Christie McDonald, "Introduction: The National and the Global" in *French Global: A New Approach to Literary History*, ed. Susan Rubin Suleiman and Christie McDonald (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), x, emphasis in original.

At stake in the interrogation of geographies of suffering and in the duelling orders of geography and narrative it conjoins is the question of how representations of suffering and catastrophe appropriate the (dis)order of disaster in realist as well as experiential forms of poetry and prose. As an ordered series of logical connections, which taken as a whole "make sense," narrative resembles in language the relation between a map and space with respect to how the former mediates our perception of the latter. In the (dis)continuities linking European colonialism to the spread and penetration of global capitalism across the world, textual and geographical domains of order are noticeably imbricated in each other. Thus, the old colonial powers of the global North, formerly the "First-World," constitute the centers of economic power whereas the former colonies of the South, the so-called "Third-World," hover in various stages of "development." This division of the world into centers and peripheries reflects the flow of capital first between metropole and colony and increasingly in the postmodern globalized world between the multinational corporations and institutions that, according to Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, constitute "Empire."[76] But, as postcolonial critics have argued, these economic divisions also depend on a proliferation of representations and textual practices –films, novels, administrative reports, etc. – to naturalize these orderings.[77] The notion of geographies of suffering registers the processes and mechanisms (economic exploitation, resource extraction, and non-governmental organizations, for example) that create such world-systems, but also destabilizes them by mapping new solidarities between and throughout North and South. As the Francophone Caribbean has vacillated from the center of the eighteenth-century Atlantic world-system to the periphery of contemporary global capitalism, reading this region's literature of

[76] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000).
[77] See Elleke Boehmer. "Imperialism and Textuality," in *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors*, 2nd ed (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 13-57; Homi K. Bhabha. "Sly Civility," in *The Location of Culture* (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), 93-101.

catastrophe is a practice of destabilizing the very hierarchies of power, cultures, and capital that marginalize the Caribbean and its peoples.

As a form of the narrative overturning and displacement that Qader underscores above geographies of suffering are, on the one hand, in the very literal sense of *graphia*, representations of suffering in space and, a way to think critically about space in literary discourse. In an analysis close to those already mentioned by Blanchot, Huet, and Qader, Elaine Scarry, also foregrounds the breakdown of language when the body is in pain. Similarly, she underscores the "catastrophe," or overturning, of language in trying to represent pain when she writes that "Physical pain…is language-destroying," what she alternatively describes as a process of "uncreating."[78] But, these overturnings, uncreatings, and unmakings also call forth the opposite process of making that involves mental imaging and "endowing the mental object with material or verbal form."[79] It is this dual process of how "we make ourselves (and the originally interior facts of sentience) available to one another through verbal and material artifacts" and how "the de-realization of artifacts may assist in taking away another person's visibility."[80] In the literature of catastrophe, geographies of suffering therefore build on Scarry's insight that "what is quite literally at stake in the body in pain is the making and unmaking of the world."[81] The representation of catastrophe and suffering in relation to place and space calls into question various world-systems by inscribing into Francophone Caribbean narratives varying geographies of suffering that "(re)map" the social, cultural, economic, and ecological stakes in the West Indies since the nineteenth century. The Francophone Caribbean literature of catastrophe offers a complex example of what Jed Esty and Colleen Nye call "peripheral realism" to conceptualize a

[78] Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 19-20.
[79] Ibid., 21.
[80] Ibid., 22.
[81] Ibid., 23.

literary discourse in novels from the global South that "invite their publics to grasp the world-system via its local appearances or epiphenomenal effects" and to interrogate larger structures of subjugation and inequality in the respective colonial and neo-liberal capitalist systems that have interfaced between the global North and South since the nineteenth century.[82]

In this dissertation, I develop and interrogate these two concepts, the literature of catastrophe and geographies of suffering, in a series of four interrelated case studies from Haiti, Martinique, and Guadeloupe. Taken as a whole along with the conclusion, these case studies "delineate the landscape of [catastrophe], revealing the lie of the land and the shape of its contours" at the global, regional, and insular levels in more than two centuries of literary re-presentation of disaster in the Francophone Caribbean.[83] By regularly shifting between the colonial and post-colonial periods, the chronological structure of this study reveals the long history of catastrophe in Caribbean discourse for reckoning with Caribbeanness inside and outside the archipelago. Chapters one and four engage with the cosmopolitan layers of writing about Caribbean catastrophe to explore how a number of writers not only from the region but from metropolitan France as well use worldwide experiences of catastrophe to create new forms of global solidarities. To begin, in chapter one, I offer the most explicit development of the idea of geographies of suffering and how they work in two different epochs to make readers grasp the dominant world-systems of the day. In my analysis of Voltaire's *Candide* (1759) alongside Maryse Condé's *En attendant la montée des eaux* (2010), I examine how both authors uncover layers of cultural entanglement in the Caribbean and marginalization to propose models of solidarity that call into question first European colonialism and then neo-liberal global

[82] Jed Esty and Colleen Nye, "Peripheral Realisms Now" *Modern Language Quarterly* 73 no. 3 (September 2012), 285.
[83] Dorothea Hillhorst and Gregory Bankoff, "Introduction: Mapping Vulnerability," in *Mapping Vulnerability: Disasters, Development, and People*, ed. Bregory Bankoff, Georg Frerks, and Dorothea Hillhorst (London: Earthscan, 2004), 1.

capitalism. Similarly, chapter four, which focuses on Daniel Maximin's Caribbean trilogy (*L'Isolé soleil*, *Soufrières*, and *L'Ile et une nuit*) and disaster testimonies by Dany Laferrière and Yanick Lahens about the 2010 Haiti earthquake, shows how disaster writing reshapes the imagined communities of Guadeloupe and Haiti. By re-asserting various voices of resistance to the exploitative forces of Caribbean history, by re-inscribing political and social forces into the history of natural catastrophe, and by translating the natural forces of rupture into epistemic breeches and paradigmatic shifts in local, national, and global histories of subjugation, writing catastrophe is an act of historical witnessing whose stakes are as much ethical as they are political.

Conversely, chapters two and three focus on the regional and local ripples of catastrophe across the Caribbean. In this way, chapter two interrogates cross-island reflections on nineteenth-century earthquakes and ruins in Haiti and Guadeloupe. It brings into relief a pervasive discourse on Caribbean ruins whose barely hidden subtext questions the legacy of the Haitian Revolution and the vision of radical equality that it inscribed into the first Haitian constitution. Concerned with the semiotics of ruins – from revolution, war, and disrepair as well as two massive earthquakes in 1842 (Cap-Haïtien) and 1843 (Pointe-à-Pitre) – this discourse reflects the way various intellectuals including the French abolitionist Victor Schœlcher, Haitian intellectuals Hérard Dumesle and Demesvar Delorme, and white Creole planters in the Lesser Antilles grappled with notions of equality and freedom in post-colonial Haiti and before the second abolition of slavery in Guadeloupe. Eschewing a geographically comparative framework for a diachronic approach to literary representations of the same disaster within the same island society, I redirect my focus in chapter three to the long afterlife of the 1902 volcanic catastrophe of Saint-Pierre in the works of Jean Max, Aimé Césaire, Raphaël Tardon, Édouard Glissant,

Patrick Chamoiseau, and Suzanne Dracius. From white Creole prestige to Negritude to créolité and *métissage*, I demonstrate how the literary traces of the catastrophe in effect map twentieth- and twentieth-century Martinican intellectual engagements with the island's history of creolization and, thereby, question the real and imagined ties that bind Martinican society together in what some have called a "kaleidoscopic totality."[84]

Finally, at the end of this study to bring together the overlapping insular, regional, and global scales that inform the preceding chapters, I conclude by highlighting a burgeoning corpus of Caribbean science fiction texts that in one way or another question the catastrophe(s) of the future and interrogate Benítez-Rojo's characterization of the Caribbean as anti-apocalyptic. In my conclusion, I argue that these Caribbean post-apocalyptic narratives effectively redeploy the literature of catastrophe as a way of raising awareness about the social and political stakes of future global ecological disaster and the challenges such scenarios pose in particular for Caribbean societies. While their settings and anticipated catastrophes ostensibly stress the local and the regional, the post-apocalyptic future that canonical authors like Édouard Glissant and minor figures like the latter's Martinican compatriot Charles-Henri Maricel-Baltus imagine is decidedly global. The dire futures that readers glimpse in these novels establish the literature of catastrophe as a significant site of critical interrogation regarding the challenges facing not only Caribbean societies but ecologically vulnerable populations around the world as well. These narratives further foreground the importance of rethinking the triple social, ecological, and discursive relation of catastrophe at time when the global North and South are increasingly forced to reckon with the consequences of climate change and rising levels of economic inequality.

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[84] Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau, Raphaël Confiant, *Eloge de la créolité*, trans. Mohamed Bouya Taleb-Khyar (Paris: Gallimard 1993), 89.

CHAPTER 1

Global Suffering in Voltaire's *Candide and* Maryse Condé's *En attendant la montée des eaux*

Ce sont des points sur la carte et des événemens qui se perdent dans l'histoire de l'univers; mais enfin, ces pays, qu'on peut à peine apercevoir dans une mappemonde, produisirent en France une circulation annuelle d'environ soixante millions de marchandises.

- *Voltaire, "Des Iles Françaises et des Flibustiers," Essai sur les mœurs, 1756*[85]

The word 'globalization' is sometimes equated with Americanism or Americanization … and calls to mind negative images. It is supposed to have the effect of suppressing authentic culture and subsuming everything into one vast, boundless mess.…The countries of the Third World, especially the Caribbean countries, seem to be the most concerned with this future since they lack political and economic power. They make headlines only when there is a hurricane, an earthquake, or other catastrophe.

- *Maryse Condé, "Brave New World," 1998*[86]

The Spatial Order of Disasters

When the January 2010 earthquake struck Haiti, the Guadeloupean writer Maryse Condé recalls finding herself transfixed by the scenes unfolding before her on TV inside her New York City apartment. "I felt like a pitiful voyeur," she writes, "I absorbed everything: the dead, scattered throughout the streets; the injured pulled out painfully from the rubble; the homeless; the collapsed monuments; the destroyed homes; all of that suffering."[87] This spectacle of destruction would have important reverberations on Condé's own creative work, in particular on a recently finished novel that she would later publish as *En attendant la montée des eaux* (2010). After hours of "liv[ing] the disaster in my mind, I had to rewrite everything," Condé explains, "Or at the very least change the final pages."[88] More than 250 years earlier and an ocean away,

[85] Voltaire, *Essai sur les mœurs*, vol. 4 (Paris: Garnery, 1827), 187.
[86] Maryse Condé, "O Brave New World," *Research in African Literatures* 29, no. 3 (Autumn, 1998), 1.
[87] Maryse Condé, "Haïti Chérie," in *Haiti Rising: Haitian History, Culture and the Earthquake of 2010*, ed. Martin Munro (Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2010), 151.
[88] Ibid.

François-Marie Arouet, best known as Voltaire, faced a somewhat similar encounter with widespread suffering after the 1755 Lisbon earthquake that would ripple broadly throughout his subsequent literary and philosophical production. Although Voltaire could not see live transmissions of the disaster from his retreat in Ferney, the Lisbon earthquake famously entered the arsenal of his literary and philosophical critique of Leibnizian theodicy in the "Poème sur le désastre de Lisbonne" (1756) and later in *Candide* (1759).[89] Understanding the Lisbon earthquake in relation to other massive seismic disasters in China (1699) and Peru (1746), Voltaire concedes that "Tout est arrangé, ordonné, sans doute par la Providence; mais il n'est que trop sensible que tout, depuis longtemps, n'est arrangé pour notre bien-être présent."[90] With time, the sentiment that theodicy cannot explain away the spectacle of senseless suffering would boil over into the scathing satirical attacks of *Candide.* What connects Voltaire and Condé is the reverberation of catastrophes on their respective literary projects as each grapples with how to re-present the suffering that arrests their attention. Hailing from the "center" (France) and "periphery" (Guadeloupe) of the Francophone world, the authors' responses to distant catastrophe also question the place of disaster and suffering in the colonial and globalized worlds that their novels re-present more than two and a half centuries apart from one another.

In this chapter, I analyze how Voltaire and Condé place the periphery, Suriname and Haiti, at the heart of their representations of global suffering in *Candide* and *En attendant la montée des eaux*, respectively. I explore how such representations destablilize, or "dis-order," narrative and geographical orderings of space. Narrative, to the extent that it presents an account of events that is ordered in a series of (logical) connections, which taken together "make sense,"

[89] As Grégory Quenet has noted, Voltaire returns to the Lisbon tragedy in *Essai sur l'histoire générale* (1756) and *Précis du siècle de Louis XV (*1769*)* in addition to the "Poème" and Candide. See Grégory Quenet, *Les Tremblements de terre aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles*. *La Naissance d'un risque* (Paris: Champ Vallon, 2005), 349.
[90] Voltaire, Préface to "Poème sur le désastre de Lisbonne," in *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 9 (Paris: Garnier, 1877), 465.

mirrors in essence the relation between a map and space and the way the former organizes, and informs, our perception of the latter. Textual and geographical domains of order explicitly overlap in the history of how space is talked about in, for example, European colonialism and the discourse of globalization in which the former colonial metropoles constitute the global North and the centers of economic power while the former colonies in the global South languish in various states of "development" as determined by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. The economic division of the world into centers and peripheries enables, but also depends on, the production of texts and representations in films, maps, literature, and administrative reports whose effect is to reinforce or naturalize these very same divisions.[91] In the two case studies that I present here, I argue that the representation of suffering both reflects and refracts, or disrupts, the reigning geographical and ideological orders inscribed into Voltaire and Condé's narratives. In this reading of the geographical inscription of disaster and suffering in these novels, I bring representations of Enlightenment-era colonialism into conversation with interrogations of globalization to question the complicities and discontinuities between colonial and post-colonial, what the critic Chris Bongie calls the "post/colonial," orderings of the world.[92] In so doing, I demonstrate how the geographical stakes of these texts articulate a "threatening reversal" of the hierarchical divisions between center and periphery that structure Western geo-political imaginaries.[93]

By reading suffering in terms of place, I reveal how Voltaire's and Condé's novels peel back layers of cultural entanglement and make manifest the politics of representing disaster.

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[91] See Elleke Boehmer. "Imperialism and Textuality," in *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 13-57; Homi K. Bhabha. "Sly Civility," in *The Location of Culture* (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), 93-101.
[92] Chris Bongie, *Islands and Exiles: The Creole Identities of Post/colonial Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 12-13.
[93] Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, 100.

Against the marginalization of the Caribbean to which each writer's epigraph to this chapter alludes, I argue that, in placing the Caribbean in the center of their explorations of suffering and catastrophe, Voltaire and Condé make visible the region's unbalanced links to Western centers of power under such different, yet related, world-systems as European colonialism and neo-liberal globalization. Moreover, by juxtaposing a contemporary black woman writer from Guadeloupe with one of the (white) patriarchs of the French Enlightenment, I not only uncover a number of structural and thematic similarities between the two authors, but foreground the resonance and dissonance between a colonial and a post-colonial text. Set at the respective chronological limits of my study of catastrophe, the side-by-side positioning of Voltaire and Condé illuminates how Caribbean geographies of suffering, past and present, continually deconstruct, but also reinforce, the division between colonial or global peripheries and their centers. In their descriptions of localized suffering and disaster, both texts offer examples of "peripheral realisms" that "invite their publics to grasp the world-system, via its local appearances or epiphenomenal effects" and question the structures of domination and exploitation in the respective colonial and global capitalist systems that they interrogate.[94]

Behind the historical, cultural, and geographic differences separating Voltaire and Condé lie several significant similarities that make their juxtaposition critically productive. On the structural level, both novels are the products of nomadic narratives that ground each text in a peripatetic framework propelling characters from site to site across wide geographic expanses. As nomadic narratives, *Candide* and *En attendant la montée des eaux* multiply the number of different characters their protagonists meet and the diverse viewpoints such encounters represent. As Candide and Babakar, the protagonist of *En attendant la montée des eaux*, transit from

[94] Jed Esty and Colleen Nye, "Peripheral Realisms Now" *Modern Language Quarterly* 73, no. 3 (September 2012), 285.

continent to continent, a thematic parallel emerges in the way each confronts suffering and the consequences of catastrophe every step of the way. In fact, Voltaire and Condé are both highly attuned to the global sites of suffering of their respective times as well as to (neo-)colonial forces of economic, political, and cultural subjugation that inform the unequal global distribution of suffering. In the readings that follow, I analyze a key episode in the middle of *Candide* in which suffering and colonialism coalesce in Voltaire's critique of philosophical optimism. As for Condé, the proliferation of disasters in *En attendant la montée des eaux,* I argue, is central to her long-standing exploration of the fault lines and blind spots of globalization.

Slavery, Sugar, and Pain: Voltaire's Politics of Suffering in the Atlantic World

In a passing remark on Voltaire's "philosophical style," Jean Starobinski describes *Candide* as "un documentaire" on the atrocities of Voltaire's time which enables "la perception de toutes les plaies de l'humanité, par une sorte de sensibilité douloureuse qui étend son réseau nerveux à la surface entière du globe."[95] The global network of suffering that *Candide* makes visible, presciently captured in Starobinski's cinematic metaphor, depends on the many narrative displacements whose result is to maximize the number of improbable, if not fantastic, encounters in the novel. On the one hand, the focus on visuality in representing disaster links *Candide* back to Voltaire's earlier "Poème sur le désastre de Lisbonne" (1756). In the philosopher's long narrative poem, written in the highly formal alexandrine verse, Voltaire stresses a spectacle of suffering so as to make readers *see* the disconnect between theory and reality, between theodicy

[95] Jean Starobinski, *Le remède dans le mal: critique et légitimation de l'artifice à l'âge des Lumières* (Paris: Gallimard, 1989), 125. Likewise, in her own comparative study of Condé and Voltaire, Mary Poteau-Tralie evokes how the latter offers a catalogue of human suffering in *Candide*. See Mary Poteau-Tralie, "Landscape, Identity, and Sexuality: Tituba as Candide in Maryse Condé's *Moi, Tituba, Soricière...Noire de Salem,"* in *Land and Landscape in Francographic Literature: Remapping Uncertain Territories*, ed. Magali Compan and Katarzyna Pieprzak (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), 27-40.

and senseless suffering. On the other hand, the multiplication of encounters and locales in *Candide* distinguish it from the earlier "Poème" whose focus never leaves Lisbon.

Despite, however, their role in shifting the scope of Voltaire's philosophical attack on optimism from Portugal in the "Poème" to the Atlantic and Mediterranean worlds in *Candide*, travel and mobility fit neatly into Voltaire's critique of metaphysical systems. In this way, these devices common to the picaresque novel fully participate in Voltaire's unraveling of Leibnizian optimism, that "nœud fatal qu'il fallait délier" as he explains in his "Poème."[96] In each successive episode of *Candide*, travel crops up when the dissonance between an abstract cause and a violent effect place the characters at an impasse. As Gilbert Larochelle observes, travel as "la seule échappée hors du système" is "l'unique manière de fragiliser les systèmes contraignants et de déjouer la métaphysique, afin de restaurer, ne serait-ce que pour un temps, le primat de la contingence."[97] Thus, travel sweeps Candide up in war, religious fanaticism, plague, natural disaster, and slavery among other hardships and confronts the hero with a variety of harsh economic and political realities including colonialism and capitalism. As Voltaire combats the inherent teleology of theodicy, his novel's eponymous protagonist follows an itinerary that moves from East to West and back again, from the "Old" to the "New" World, or, to put it another way, from center to periphery.

Appearing at the beginning, middle, and end in the Westphalian castle, Eldorado, and the garden episode, the question of utopia symmetrically punctuates Candide's global tour of horrors. As such, much of the critical work on *Candide* has attended to this question, focusing on

[96] Voltaire, "Poème sur le désastre de Lisbonne," 473, v.79.
[97] Gilbert Larochelle, "Voltaire: du tremblement de terre de Lisbonne à la déportation des Acadiens," in "*The Lisbon Earthquake of 1755*," ed. Theodore E.D. Braun and John B. Radner, special issue, *SVEC* 2 (2005), 237.

the role of genre, satire, or travel to decipher these episodes in Candide's journey.[98] As Candide moves between "u-topia," or non-places, and the real world of war, suffering, exploitation, and death, the text's spatial play navigates "ideological critique[s] of ideology" to borrow Louis Marin's notion of the function of utopia.[99] In a "tale" containing many fantastic and improbable happenings, history permeates the novel's every page.[100] As Candide and Cacambo exit Eldorado, or descend, according to one critic, from myth into history, they briefly encounter a mutilated slave in Suriname at the edge of the Caribbean, the fulcrum of the Atlantic world economy.[101] In this way, the narrative brings the eighteenth-century colonial enterprise into the narrative frame and offers a glimpse of the (economic) ties that bind the metropolitan center to the colonial periphery.

In fact, the duo's departure from the non-hierarchical, egalitarian Eldorado and their re-emergence into history in Suriname, a slave colony characterized by asymmetrical divisions of power and wealth, creates a jarring juxtaposition that makes explicit the capitalist reality that "tout objet peut devenir marchandise, [et] tout homme peut devenir objet."[102] Privileging a moment when the text lays bare the colonial economy of suffering, I will consider the way the slave scene foregrounds the postcolonial coordinates of the novel's geography of suffering. In a novel that critics tend to reduce to Enlightenment-era debates on evil, Voltaire provides an ambiguous critique of the period's dominant social, political, and economic order in the Atlantic

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[98] On satire, see Donna Isaacs Dalnekoff, "The Meaning of Eldorado: Utopia and Satire in *Candide," SVEC* CXXVII (1974) 41-59; For the role of travel, see Patrick Henry, "Travel in *Candide:* Moving on But Going Nowhere," *Papers in Language and Literature* 13, no. 2 (Spring 1977), 193-197; On Voltaire's philosophical style, see Starobinski, *Le remède dans le mal;* On the role of the correspondence in Voltaire's position on optimism, see Paul Ilie, "The Voices in Candide's Garden, 1755-1759: A Methodology for Voltaire's Correspondence" *SVEC* CXLLIII (1976) 37-113.

[99] Louis Marin, *Utopiques: jeux d'espaces* (Paris: Édition de Minuit, 1973), 249-50.

[100] France Vernier, "Les disfonctionnements des normes du conte dans *Candide,"Littérature* 1 (February 1971), 19; Paul Ilie, "*Candide* as History: The Iberian-American Infrastructure," in *Approaches to Teaching Voltaire's* Candide, ed. Renée Waldinger (New York: MLA, 1987), 183.

[101] Patrick Henry, "Sacred and Profane Gardens in *Candide,*" *SVEC* CLXXVI (1979), 133-153.

[102] Jean-Marie Apostolidès, "Le système des échanges dans *Candide,*" *Poétique* 48 (Novembre 1981), 455.

world. In other words, the suffering slave articulates a critique of the social, political, and economic realities of European exploitation in the colonies. Through the slave's suffering, literally his *pathos* in Greek, the text channels an ambivalent postcolonial critique of European economic exploitation and capitalistic consumption of both sugar and slaves to readers at the heart of the empire.

Yet, before the slave's entry into the narrative, the looming specter of colonial commerce and the capitalist search for profits that drove this system are already lurking in the shadows of Eldorado. Motivated by profit, Candide and Cacambo leave the New World utopia in order to enrich themselves with the proceeds of the objects found in this earthly paradise.[103] Taken literally, the pair's plan to import red sheep covered in precious stones only adds to the litany of the novel's other fantastic occurrences. On the figurative level, however, the displacement of these bejeweled sheep – possibly misidentified llamas in Voltaire's source material or an allusion to the commerce of cochineal – from periphery to center becomes a thinly veiled reference to the economic structures of the Atlantic world.[104] Therefore, the translation of raw materials into luxury goods that this episode foregrounds evokes the European extraction of precious metals in the New World. But it is not uniquely through synecdoche and other allusive references to Candide's "colonial" fortune that the economic structures of the eighteenth-century Atlantic

[103] Voltaire, "Candide, ou l'optimisme," in *Romans et contes, ed.* Frédéric Deloffre and Jacques Van den Heuvel, (Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1979), 190 (hereafter cited in text as *C*).

[104] As for the significance of the "red sheep," Paul Ilie, extrapolating from the sheep's red wool, relates them as well to the epoch's transatlantic colonial commerce and, in particular, to the European trade in cochineal, a small insect from which a vivid dye could be extracted and which was used to make "ordinary sheep wool red" and sold as a luxury item. Ilie, "*Candide* as History," 178. In her study *Plants and Empire*, the historian Londa Schiebinger retraces the economic stakes of European trade in cochineal and French attempts in the eighteenth century to break the Spanish dominance in this commerce. See Londa Schiebinger, *Plants and Empire: Colonial Bioprospecting in the Atlantic World* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2004), 39-45. This same insect is still widely used today as a red dye in the cosmic and food industries.

world – extraction and consumption bifurcated between periphery and center – inscribe themselves into Voltaire's novel.[105]

Indeed, if the (theoretical) trading of red sheep/cochineal for profits and power draws on the initial resource extraction model applied to the New World, sugar had replaced precious metals and other imports including indigo and coffee as the centerpiece of the Atlantic world by the eighteenth century. The text's superimposition of these successive Euro-colonial economic models is manifest after Candide and Cacambo's departure from Eldorado and their arrival in Suriname where slaves cultivate sugar and coffee on large plantations in this Dutch colony. As Candide and Cacambo seek to trade the red sheep from Eldorado, they come face to face with the human consequences of a trade of a different sort in a telling juxtaposition of Atlantic world sources of commerce. While the master-valet duo's colonial commerce depends on the extraction of resources and their movement elsewhere, namely Europe, the figure of the displaced African betrays a different type of "extraction" and transfer, or "traite" in French, that underwrites the era's transatlantic economy: the African slave trade or, in French, *la traite des Noirs*.[106] At a time when representations of New World slavery were rare in relation to the copious amounts of writing about Amerindians or Oriental seraglios, *Candide*, while parodying both these phenomena, significantly breaks the mold, so to speak, by briefly bringing the question of enslaved Africans to the forefront.[107] Offering a fuller picture of the eighteenth-century Atlantic

[105] See Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage, 1994). Said argues here for a recognition that many European canonical literary classics depend on the existence and exploitation of empire for character and plot development. In this way, empire on the periphery cannot be separated from metropolitan culture at the center.
[106] Miller, *French Atlantic Triangle*, 11.
[107] Madeleine Dobie, *Trading Places: Colonization and Slavery in Eighteenth-Century French Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010), 9; For his part, Christopher Miller has written about the use of slavery as a philosophical metaphor for freedom during the Enlightenment that was wholly abstracted from colonial reality. For example, regarding the usage of slavery in Montesquieu's *De l'esprit des lois*: "This 'political slavery' is a *metaphor*, reflecting real forms of oppression, of course but not slavery itself. The very metaphorcity of this usage – the predominance of political 'slavery' in European discourse – becomes an obstacle to the Enlightenment's consideration of *real* slavery," Miller, *French Atlantic Triangle*, 64-65.

world, Candide and Cacambo's encounter with the slave in Suriname, to which I will now turn, helps to implicate Europe in the suffering of slaves in its overseas colonies.

Set at the beginning of chapter nineteen, Voltaire structures Candide and Cacambo's encounter with the disfigured slave awaiting his master's return with recourse to the visual in order to make visible the suffering in question. As if to better "show" the dissonance between the real and Leibnizian optimism, the play between the reader's and the protagonist's gazes is important to the way Voltaire frames the scene. The collapse of Candide's gaze with the reader's own, and therefore the convergence of their points of view, channels the scene through the eyes of the eponymous hero in order to foster a greater identification with the protagonist in this scene. In this respect, then, this scene largely diverges from the rest of the novel wherein the *distance* between the reader who is always in on the joke and Candide's literal interpretations of Pangloss's optimism represents the primary mechanism of Voltaire's satire and parody.[108]

Central to the collapse of the reader's gaze within Candide's own is the representation of violence to which the slave's brutalized body attests. According to Jean-Marie Apostolidès, Voltaire's descriptions of violence conceal the novel's economical use of realism. Placing Voltaire in relation to representational strategies of such later writers as the Marquis de Sade, whose aesthetics of pain critics have sometimes interpreted as a critique of capitalism, Apostolidès writes that in *Candide* the suffering body "est dénudé, questionné, disséqué, et analysé…afin que le spectateur, grâce à cette planche anatomique, puisse voir le jeu de ce corps-machine."[109] In this scene, the mangled slave implicates the consumption of sugar in the

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[108] E.M. Langille, "Cacambo and Candide: A New Look at Voltaire's 'Valet-Master' Duo," *SVEC* 7 (2003), 3.
[109] Apostolidès, "Le système des échanges dans *Candide*," 453. "Comme l'ont compris Barthes [in *Sade, Fourier, Loyola*] and George Steiner [in *Bluebeard's Castle*], le corps humain, quel que soit son sexe, est soumis au même dressage sadique dans l'industrie ou la relation sexuelle marchande," Apostolidès explains further (453-54). More recently, Colin (Joan) Dayan, reading *Les cent vingt journées de Sodome* through the lens of the *Code noir* argues that Sade "imported the plantation into the metropole," writing that "he carried the Enlightenment, its patterns of thought, and the consequences of that reasonable uplifting (for example, the lumping together of the slave and *le*

"consumption" of Africans in, to use a Deleuzian term, the colonial machine, a strategy that English abolitionists would also employ in calls for sugar boycotts in the eighteenth-century.

The narrator sets the stage at the beginning of the scene: "En approchant de la ville, ils rencontrèrent un nègre étendu par terre, n'ayant plus que la moitié de son habit, c'est-à-dire d'un caleçon de toile bleue; il manquait à ce pauvre homme la jambe gauche et la main droite. 'Eh, mon Dieu! lui dit Candide en hollandais, que fais-tu là, mon ami, dans l'état horrible où je te vois'" (*C,* 192). The meeting between the duo and the anonymous slave seems, upon first glance, to stage a cross-cultural, yet unbalanced, encounter in the thick of the colonial contact zone.[110] Embedded in this fortuitous colonial encounter is the long history of forced displacement and hierarchical subjugation that defined New World societies. If Candide, the former member of a Spanish military expedition momentarily symbolizes the colonizer and the mutilated African-born slave the colonized, Cacambo's position in this hierarchy, as the ostensible Amerindian in this colonial matrix, is located somewhere in between. On the one hand, the enterprising valet is himself the product of *métissage* in the contact zone since, as the narrator reveals, "C'était un quart d'Espagnol, né d'un métis dans le Tucuman" (*C,* 175) – though the narrator's description of his skin pigmentation as the "color of soot" might also betray an African ancestor (*C,* 219). Moreover, it is Cacambo's cultural in-betweeness, his mastery of indigenous and European languages and customs, that endears him to Candide as a guide and translator in South America before he becomes Candide's proxy when they part ways in Suriname. It is, on the other hand, in the face of the influence and power that both Candide and the narrator bestow upon Cacambo that a simple reading of this character as a powerless, non-white colonized subject crumbles.

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peuple) to places undreamed of by the *philosophes*. He then turned to the colonies, taking the justifications of slavery in the Americas and applying them to the masses back in France." See Colin (Joan) Dayan, *Haiti, History, and the Gods* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998 [1995]), 214.

[110] Mary Louise Pratt, "Arts of the Contact Zone." *Profession* 9, no. 1 (1991), 33-40.

Whether Candide's newly acquired riches make him superior to his valet or Cacambo's common-sense approach to survival instead shapes his master's philosophical outlook, I wish to emphasize their symbolic imbrication alongside the slave within the field of representation.[111] In bringing into relief the text's re-creation of the New World contact zone and its European, African, and Amerindian inhabitants, I underscore the way colonial hierarchies seemingly structure the representation of suffering in this encounter. In the scene, the European (Candide and likely contemporary readers) contemplate the suffering slave body while the mixed-race Cacambo, who also presumably looks upon the man, becomes effaced in the description. Seemingly conforming to the power gradients of the contact zone, the spectacle of pain here sets an objectified African, on the one hand, against a European spectator, on the other hand.

To conclude my analysis here, however, would be precisely to leave the slave arrested in a position of powerlessness and ensnared in the epistemic operations of Aimé Césaire's characterization of colonial discourse as "chosification."[112] Similar, then, to Cacambo's destabilization of the colonizer-colonized binary, the slave's narrative intervention reveals his own first-person subjective gaze on his situation and, therefore, offsets the text's initial casting of the slave in this episode as the passive object of the white, European gaze. This move has the double consequence of, first, removing the slave from the passive end of the colonizer-colonized gaze and, second, bestows upon him the agency to propose his own narrative of suffering, a formula that repeats itself in the story for nearly every secondary and tertiary character. As will

[111] On the ambiguous nature of the power relations between Candide and Cacambo, see France Vernier, who argues, in a Marxist reading of the Eldorado scene, that Candide's newly acquired riches finally make him superior to his valet since "c'est l'acquisition des richesses d'Eldorado qui fait de Candide un bourgeois face à son valet," Vernier, "les disfonctionnements," 20. On the other hand, E.M. Langille provides a more nuanced reading of the master-valet duo when he underscores Cacambo's influence on Candide's philosophical outlook: "In the face of Pangloss's unconvincing theories, and Martin's overwhelming pessimism, Cacambo's middle-road approach to survival, his common sense and his philosophical skepticism – recounted incidentally in the middle chapters of the book – have a significant impact on the way Candide comes to view life and the world," Langille, "Cacambo and Candide," 4.
[112] Aimé Césaire, *Discours sur le colonialisme* (Paris: Présence africaine, 2004 [1950]), 23.

become evident, the slave's intervention constitutes a moment of a narrative *marronnage* that mirrors his prior claim to agency signified by his status as a former runaway slave.

The abridged autobiography that follows this moment reads like a veiled critique of the infamous *Code noir* supposed to regulate the slave trade and plantation life in the French empire since its passage by Louis XIV in 1685. After telling Candide and Cacambo that he is waiting for his master, the same M. Vanderdendur who will swindle most of Candide's sheep in the following chapter, the slave tells them that it was indeed his master who disfigured him. In order to indict the institution of slavery in this passage, the slave oscillates between the singular and the collective. In other words, the slave becomes a synecdoche for the whole institution of slavery through a dual process of collectivization in the slave's narration conveyed by his choice of pronouns. Recounting his personal itinerary, the slave regularly pluralizes the hardships of his life through the use of the first-person plural pronoun "nous" in order to inscribe his own journey into the collective experience of the displaced African slaves in the Americas. Running alongside this group in becoming is a move toward abstraction that is channeled through the use of the impersonal third-person singular pronoun "on," which also helps to extrapolate from the particular to the general in relation to European colonial practices. This occurs throughout the slave's intervention in the narration when, for example, he explains how he lost his right hand in a sugar mill accident "Quand nous travaillons aux sucreries, et que la meule nous attrape le doigt, on nous coupe la main" (*C*, 192-93). However, other instances draw the reader's attention to the *Code noir* such as when the slave evokes the tattered rags he wears for clothes ("On nous donne un caleçon de toile pour tout vêtement deux fois l'année," *C*, 192) or, to return to his previous attempts to flee colonial slavery, regarding the reason provided for his missing left leg ("Quand nous voulons nous enfuir, on nous coupe la jambe," *C*, 193), both allusions to articles

twenty-five and thirty-eight of the *Code noir*, respectively, detailing slave owners' obligation to clothe their slaves and the appropriate corporal mutilation to be dispensed as punishment for attempted escapes.[113]

As the slave's narration nears its conclusion, his subversive exposition of such barbaric practices – still contained in this parallel process of collectivization and abstraction – leaves the register of material destitutions and physical violence and engages with the moral justifications of slavery rooted in Christianity and legitimated in the *Code noir* as well. The episode's shift to the terrain of religion is significant for two related reasons: first, in the context of the *Code noir*, as Doris Garraway has demonstrated, religion is an important, if not jarring sub-text to this document; second, remembering his own religious "conversion," the slave extends the priests' logic to its natural conclusion, and in so doing, exploits this ambivalence in the discourse of Christian solidarity vis-à-vis the question of slavery. In her fascinating reading of the *Code noir*, Garraway lingers on the intersecting economic and religious missions in this rigorous codification of chattel slavery. In an explanation worth quoting at length, she writes:

> Simultaneously redeemed to join the ranks of Christian salvation and turned over as commodities at the colonial outpost, Africans are conceived in terms of body and soul. As an embodiment of this dualism, the slave mediates between two contrary systems of value that collude in the colonial enterprise…In missionary ideology the African inducted into slavery is simultaneously converted into a Christian and a beast of burden; the capture of the soul is transacted through the

[113] The full text of these articles is as follows: "Seront tenus les maîtres de fournir à chacun esclave par chacun an deux habits de toile ou quatre aulnes de toile, au gré des dits maîtres" (article 25); "L'esclave fugitif qui aura été en fuite pendant un mois à compter du jour que son maître l'aura dénoncé en justice, aura les oreilles coupées et sera marqué d'une fleur de lis sur une épaule; et s'il récidive une autre fois à compter pareillement du jour de la dénonciation aura le jarret coupé et il sera marqué d'une fleur de lis sur l'autre épaule; et la troisième fois il sera puni de mort (article 38) from Louis Sala-Molins, "Le Code noir: texte et commentaires," in *Le Code noir, ou le calvaire de Canaan* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France,1987), 140, 166.

> theft and dispossession of the body. Nowhere was this principle better illustrated than in the 1685 *Code noir*.[114]

However, as Garraway suggests, the document contains the traces of the failed conjugation of the economic demands of slavery with Christianity in articles, such as the aforementioned article thirty-eight, which implicitly "[forecast] not only the failure of the assumed pact of reciprocity but also the captives' refusal to be dehumanized and their persistent attempts to circumvent slavery's mandate of abjection so as ultimately to challenge the system itself."[115] In the end, the document encodes the fissures of colonial power in the very framework and projection of its dominance. For by "transforming Christianity into a vehicle for the permanent servitude of the body," Garraway argues, religion becomes, borrowing from Homi Bhabha, a form of "mimicry," or an instance when an ideology used for social control is denatured or becomes a "simulacrum" of its original in the colonial context.[116]

Christianity, described in the scene as a colorful, syncretic blend of West African religiosity and Dutch Protestantism, acts as a dual idiom for domination and solidarity and, as such, represents a contested site of cultural entanglement. As the slave passes from an implied critique of slavery with the aforementioned references to particular articles of the *Code noir* to the hypocrisy of Christianity on the plantation, his critique of slavery grows more explicit. Remembering his religious "conversion," the slave is careful to take the priests' discourse to its logical conclusion and, draws on the original act of division and violence in the Christian tradition, the story of Cain and Abel. He declares, "Les fétiches hollandais qui m'ont converti me disent tous les dimanches que nous sommes tous enfants d'Adam, blancs et noirs. Je ne suis pas

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[114] Doris Garraway, *The Libertine Colony: Creolization in the Early French Caribbean* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 158-159.
[115] For both the refusal to be dehumanized and colonial Christianity as form of "mimicry" see ibid., 162.
[116] Ibid.; Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, 86-87.

généalogiste; mais si ces prêcheurs disent vrai, nous sommes tous cousins issus de germains. Or vous m'avouerez qu'on ne peut pas en user avec ses parents d'une manière plus horrible" (*C*, 193). Extending Bhabha's framework of colonial mimicry, used in Garraway's reading of the *Code noir*'s self-implosion, to the slave's speech becomes a revealing critical exercise: the slave's repetition of the pastors' teachings is a repetition with a colonial *différance* that revels in, but also reveals, the ambivalence of colonial discourse.[117] In the Derridean outlook subtending the idea of mimicry, the slave shows Christianity for what it is in the colonies and in the *Code noir*, a "dangerous supplement" whose discourse of equality hides its function as a cultural instrument of empire.[118]

As the eruption of this enslaved African into the narration of *Candide* comes to a close, his critique of colonial slavery quickly fades into the background where it finds a place among the long list of hardships and misfortunes illustrating the senseless ubiquity of *le mal* for Voltaire. This brief encounter involving Candide, Cacambo, and the slave, which, according to several critics, was a late addition to the novel, while evocative of other representations of suffering throughout *Candide* and the "Poème," is essential to understanding the postcolonial geography of suffering in Voltaire's representation of *le mal*.[119] Similar to other episodes of pain and misery, Voltaire's ventriloquized slave bends to the *philosophe*'s strategy of mobilizing "real" suffering to debunk the false teleology underwriting optimism. Yet, as Candide seeks to

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[117] The process at work here also resembles Gates's "Signifying Monkey" in which black vernacular English and cultural practices repeat standard English and cultural practices with a black difference that encodes them with new meaning. See Henry Louis Gates, Jr, *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

[118] Jacques Derrida, *De la grammatologie*, (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1967).

[119] Several critiques have attributed the late addition of this scene to the novel to Voltaire's reading of a footnote in Helvétius's *De l'esprit:* "On conviendra qu'il n'arrive point de barrique de sucre en Europe qui ne soit teinte du sang humain," *De l'esprit* in *Œuvres complètes*. vol. 1 (Paris: Crapelet, 1818), 25n1. See René Pomeau, "Introduction," in Voltaire, *Candide, ou l'optimisme*, in *Les Œuvres complètes de Voltaire*. ed. René Pomeau. vol. 48 (Geneva: Institut et Musée Voltaire, 1980), 46; Jean Goldzink, "Introduction," in Voltaire, *Candide, ou l'optimisme*, ed. Jean Goldzink (Paris: GF Flammarion, 2007), 95n6.

integrate the example of the suffering slave into Pangloss's system, it is in the slave's famous quip that "C'est à ce prix que vous mangez du sucre en Europe" that a wholly postcolonial geography, and genealogy, of suffering reveals itself (*C,* 193).

Returning to the visual construction of the scene wherein the narrator conflates the gaze of Candide with that of the reader, it is the *sight* of the suffering slave body that short-circuits optimism's sublimation of individual pain to the greater good, in this case sweetened refreshments in Europe. But it is also the *site* – at the porous borders of the Caribbean – in which this episode is set that is also at stake. In this way, the inclusion of the disfigured slave raises the specter of the representation of the slave trade and its place in the triangular trade connecting the disparate parts of the Atlantic world; his intervention reveals the deliberately obfuscated geography of suffering upon which European pleasure and refinement were predicated in eighteenth-century Europe. Thus, the narrator adds slavery and colonialism to the sites of human catastrophe that ceaselessly challenge Candide's adherence to his Liebnizian *maître à penser* Pangloss. Both the sight of the slave and his life story seem in particular to shake (at least momentarily) Candide's optimism. As Candide wonders aloud, overcome by tears, "Ô Pangloss!…tu n'avais pas deviné cette abomination; c'en est fait, il faudra qu'à la fin je renonce à ton optimisme," which in turn he defines for Cacambo as "la rage de soutenir que tout est bien quand on est mal" (*C,* 193). The visual framing of suffering in this scene is thus essential to derailing the calculus of Liebnizian optimism; it "shows" to the extent that the novel (or poetry) as a text-based medium allows, that neither the senseless suffering and deaths of thousands in Lisbon nor the millions of deported Africans in the Americas increase collective well-being. In other words, to reverse the terms, it shows that the suffering of the many ensures the well-being of the few.

Although European involvement in the African slave trade and colonialism rings through in this passage, a certain degree of ambivalence mitigates, nevertheless, the force of Voltaire's representation of the catastrophe of slavery in the New World. This ambiguity comes from within and without, from the novel itself as well as from elsewhere in Voltaire's oeuvre. The same third-person singular pronoun "on" that implicates the colonizer in the corporal and epistemic violence enacted on the colonized also elides a specific recognition of culpability given the very impersonal quality that enables the rhetorical abstraction of the slave's critique. At the same time as this "on" accuses European colonialism as a whole, the text only makes explicit mention of the Dutch via the figure of the master, M. Vanderdendur. This ellipsis might result from a narrative inconsistency on Voltaire's part when Candide and Cacambo depart from Eldorado for Cayenne and, as René Pomeau points out, arrive instead in neighboring Suriname without explanation.[120] This oversight might also explain the existence of the *Code noir*, applicable throughout the French empire including in neighboring Guyane since 1704, in Dutch Suriname. Yet, Voltaire's treatment of New World colonial slavery elsewhere bespeaks a similar displacement. For instance, *Alzire* (1736), a successful play about European-indigenous relations similarly situates itself in the thick of Spanish South America in Peru and, as Christopher Miller notes, consistently skirts the question of African slavery there.[121] Whether deliberate or not, such an ellipsis has the effect of displacing the moral opprobrium of Voltaire's vehement denunciation onto France's imperial rivals who, in *Candide*, are not limited to the Dutch, but also include the Spanish into whose imperial regime of violence Candide enlists to quickly escape Europe.

[120] Pomeau, *Candide*, 194n1.
[121] Miller, *French Atlantic Triangle*, 72; Voltaire does speak about replacement of indigenous slaves by Africans in *Essai sur les mœurs*. See Voltaire, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 12, 401. It is also worth mentioning that the *légende noire* about the Spanish conquest of South America still resonated strongly in the eighteenth century.

Voltaire's silence on the subject of French colonialism is significant when considered beside the vast territories of New France in North America and highly profitable islands in the Caribbean (Saint-Domingue) or the Indian Ocean (Ile Bourbon and Ile de France) to mention only a few under the French control at the time of the publication of *Candide* in 1759. Despite the truncation of a major part of this empire in the 1763 Treaty of Paris that marked France's defeat to Great Britain and the loss of most of New France at the conclusion of the Seven Years' War, France remained a significant force in the transatlantic slave trade.[122] Throughout the eighteenth century, France transported an estimated 1,139,113 African slaves over some 3,341 expeditions, the third most after the British and the Portuguese according to estimates, a figure that accounts for more than eighty percent of the entire French slave trade from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century.[123] Prior to the French Revolution at the century's end, the colonial lobby in the National Assembly claimed that more than forty percent of French foreign trade was tied to colonial products and, moreover, that "this colonial system in turn supplied labor to six million French people throughout the kingdom" for a population that grew from an estimated 20 to 28 million over the course of the eighteenth century.[124] Voltaire's own ambiguity toward slavery accompanies the text's repression of France's involvement in European colonialism. Despite his critique of slavery, Voltaire himself had indirect ties to the slave trade as an investor in the *Compagnie des Indes occidentales,* which held a long-time monopoly over the French

[122] Voltaire famously alludes to this conflict in *Candide* with Martin's (in)famous comment to Candide: "Vous savez que ces deux nations sont en guerre pour quelques arpents de neige vers le Canada, et qu'elles dépensent pour cette belle guerre beaucoup plus que tout le Canada ne vaut" (209).

[123] The estimated figure on the number of Africans transported on French slavers comes from the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database, "Estimates," accessed October 24, 2012, http://slavevoyages.org/tast/assessment/estimates. The percentage, a calculation based on data in this database, is also found in Miller, *French Atlantic Triangle*, 13; The number of expeditions is taken from Olivier Pétré-Grenouilleau, *Nantes au temps de la traite des Noirs* (Paris: Hachette, 1998), 7.

[124] Jules François Saintoyant, *La colonisation française sous l'Ancien régime*, vol. 2 (Paris: La Renaissance du livre, 1929), 345 cited in Garraway, *The Libertine Colony*, 8.

portion of the trade and was honored when a leading Bordeaux slave-trader named a vessel after him.[125]

Moreover, the polygenist position that he stakes out in other texts seemingly racializes African differences and, thereby, attempts to naturalize or justify the trade in African slaves. Writing at the beginning of *Essai sur les mœurs,* Voltaire reveals his belief in the incommensurate differences that divide humans into different species, in general, and, in particular, on the subject of Africans when he writes: "Leurs yeux ronds, leur nez épaté, leurs lèvres toujours grosses, leurs oreilles différemment figurées, la laine de leur tête, la mesure même de leur intelligence, *mettent entre eux et les autres espèces d'hommes des différences prodigieuses*."[126] But it is when Voltaire the historian reaches the colonization of the Americas that African difference returns in his depiction of the colonial racial hierarchy dividing Europeans, Africans, and Amerindians. Via this essentialization of difference, he explains that:

> La nature a subordonné à ce principe ces différents degrés de génie et ces caractères des nations qu'on voit si rarement changer. C'est par là que les nègres sont les esclaves des autres hommes. On les achète sur les côtes d'Afrique comme des bêtes, et les multitudes de ces noirs, transplantés dans nos colonies d'Amérique, servent un très-petit nombre d'Européens. L'expérience a encore appris quelle supériorité ces Européens ont sur les Américains, qui, aisément vaincus partout, n'ont jamais osé tenter une révolution, quoiqu'ils fussent plus de mille contre un.[127]

[125] See Ilie, "*Candide* as History," 177 and Dobie, *Trading Places*, 12. For a complete discussion of this anecdote and its circulation among critics see Miller, *French Atlantic Triangle*, 428n62-429n63.
[126] Voltaire, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 11, 6. My emphasis.
[127] Ibid., vol. 12., 381.

To bring the discussion of Voltaire's polygeny back to *Candide*, his stark depiction of the contact zone here in the *Essai* resonates with other representations of colonial alterity in the novel. That Candide and Cacambo's encounter with the slave occurs on the heels of their dealings with indigenous native "savages" is not by chance for some critics. As they flee Paraguay, Candide and Cacambo witness two Oreillon women copulating with monkeys and are later captured and nearly eaten by other members of the same tribe. The references to bestiality and cannibalism help the *philosophe* satirize Enlightenment-era idealizations of the Amerindian's "primitive" existence in the "state of nature," a cliché that Voltaire, however, exploits in *L'Ingénu* (1767) to critique corrupt French religious and monarchical institutions. This inconsistency aside, the satire of the Amerindian state of nature in *Candide*, nevertheless, resonates with Voltaire's general critique of utopia in the novel. Yet, in relation to the critical representation of slavery later on, the stereotypes of the "savage" in these scenes betray Voltaire's conflation of colonial alterity and, as Catherine Gallouët posits, demonstrate that, for Voltaire, "un sauvage en vaut bien un autre."[128] As Cacambo remarks to Candide after the latter has killed the monkeys, "Pourquoi trouvez-vous si étrange que dans quelques pays il y ait des singes qui obtiennent les bonnes grâces des dames ? Ils sont des quarts d'homme, comme je suis un quart d'Espagnol" (*C*, 181). It is in this murky cultural grammar of hierarchical otherness that Voltaire interrogates "not the limit between the animal and the human, but rather the boundary between 'primitive' (i.e. African/Amerindian) peoples and primates" as well as, one might add, Europeans.[129]

[128] Catherine Gallouët, "Le corps noir dans la fiction narrative du XVIIIe siècle: Voltaire, Montesquieu, de La Place, Castilhon, de Duras," in *Le corps romanesque: Images et usages topiques sous l'Ancien Régime*, ed. Monique Moser-Verrey, Lucie Desjardins et Chantal Turbide (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2009,) 105. Gallouët positis further that "la portée de l'attaque contre l'esclavage se trouve ainsi profondément minée par la représentation continue de sauvages sans humanité, représentation qui retient toute identification" (ibid.).
[129] Dobie, *Trading Places*, 298.

While the above examples temper the radical "postcolonial" critique that Voltaire articulates via the slave in *Candide*, I read this episode not as a "dangerous supplement" that escaped the control of an author steeped in the colonial stereotypes of his time, but instead as indicative of a broader postcolonial ambivalence on the part of writers and critics alike. These reminders of Voltaire's ambivalence on the subjects of race, slavery, and empire parallel the profound cultural entanglement of the contact zone and should not be considered in a Manichean opposition as either good or bad. The same sort of ambivalence lurks in contemporary postcolonial critics and their relation to colonialism. On the one hand, while postcolonial theory celebrates the hybridity of the colonial hierarchy as a performative site of resistance and critique, it is important to recall, on the other hand, the traumatic genesis of said hybridity in the horrors of the Middle Passage, the plantation, and widespread sexual terror.[130] The representation of the postcolonial geography of suffering in *Candide* evinces this same ambivalence. Simultaneously, building upon, yet subverting, the racialized hierarchies of the contact zone, the slave episode in *Candide* relays the suffering at the heart of New World societies to the imperial center. But, just as Voltaire can subvert the Atlantic world order in *Candide*, he is also capable of reinforcing the cultural hierarchies that helped maintain it.[131]

At the heart of Voltaire's ambiguous postcolonial geography of suffering lies the productive play on the very ambivalence, or liminality, of the greater Caribbean region that the author has inscribed, literally, into the middle of the novel's narrative architecture. Scattered

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[130] Miller, *French Atlantic Triangle*, iv; Garraway, *The Libertine Colony*, 17-22.

[131] For his part, the critic Andrew Curran declares that "Cette accusation implicite de l'institution et des effets de l'esclavage dissimule le fait que Voltaire n'avait pas compris le lien entre sa représentation dénigrante des noirs et la justification de leur servitude." See Andrew Curran, "Imaginer l'Afrique au siècle des Lumières," *Cromohs*, 10 (2005), 10, accessed August 30, 2012, http://www.cromohs.unifi.it/10_2005/curran_afrique.html. Furthermore, my reading of Voltaire's geography of suffering here is similar to Bill Marshall's understanding of the French Atlantic. Drawing on *Mille Plateaux*, he suggests that "In Deleuzean terms, we can see the Atlantic, yes, as a rhizomatic space of interconnections, decentredness, rootlessness and lack of hiearchy, but always of course, with 'des points d'arborescence' that designate the opposite." See Bill Marshall, *The French Atlantic: Travels in Culture and History* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009), 18.

between the Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico, between North and South America with cultural and historic ties beyond the Western hemisphere in Europe, Africa, and the Middle East, the Caribbean archipelago is at once what separates these continents and the site of their (forced) union. The Martinican theorist Édouard Glissant illustrates this when he describes the Caribbean as "une sorte de préface au continent" and "une espèce d'introduction au continent" that served as the initial site of debarkation and transit for newly arrived slaves before their transfer north and south to the continents or east and west to other islands.[132] Glissant's framing of the Caribbean as a threshold of cultural encounter and movement becomes significant, then, in this reading of *Candide* to the extent that the slave episode connects the Old World to the New World in the narrative structure as Candide embarks for Europe immediately after its conclusion.

Travel once again becomes central to the narrative as Candide prepares his return to Europe. As Jean Goldzink explains relating travel to Voltaire's interrogation of *le mal*, "Mettre le mal en récit revient à le faire voyager," which the critic suggests instantiates a "géographie du mal,"[133] that one may distinguish from what I have been calling a geography of suffering throughout this chapter. Rather than retracing a map of mid-eighteenth-century wrongs (*le mal*), in proposing a geography of suffering, I insist on the importance of writing, of representing to this geo*graphy* of suffering – in the very literal sense of *graphia* – in space. The significance of Caribbean liminality only increases, for it is here that the forces of this geography of suffering are brought to bear on the text as localized suffering is shown to have global impact and import. In the threshold space represented in the slave episode, one depicting a hybrid, multicultural New World society predicated on racialized violence and exploitation, the text links the violence

[132] Edouard Glissant, *Introduction à une poétique du divers* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996), 12. The same is also implied in Antonio Benítez-Rojo's assertation that the Caribbean is a meta-archipelago possessing the "virtue of having neither a center or a boundary." Antonio Benítez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective*. 2nd ed. trans. James E. Maraniss (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 4.
[133] Goldzink, "Introduction," 12.

enacted on the colonized body to the benefits of European refinement and modernity and, thereby, shows the centrality of the colonial periphery to the center in the eighteenth-century Atlantic world. It is precisely in relating the seeming banality of sugar to the brutality of slavery, that Voltaire demonstrates that one person's suffering is central to another person's sweetener in eighteenth-century Europe.[134]

Contrary to the other episodes in the novel, this one teases out the structural connections situated in the Caribbean interstices of both worlds ("Old" and "New") into which the novel divides the narrative space. The suffering slave – both as passive object of Candide's and Cacambo's gazes and as active, subversive "narrator" – is thus the fulcrum that not only conjoins the New World to the Old World, but also offers a synecdochical presence to the absent third space of the Atlantic world's triangular commerce, sub-Saharan Africa. Complementing its geographic liminality both in terms of the Caribbean and the broader Atlantic World, Suriname is also the narrative threshold between the Old World and the New World through which Candide must pass to return home. In linking the center to the periphery, and vice versa, this textual and geographical passage is key to connecting the novel's succession of cataclysms, both individual and collective, human-made and natural, into the same narrative but also between different points of the Atlantic world. It is, then, in this way that the Caribbean, broadly defined to include the border region on the coast of South America which shares similarly violent histories of slavery and creolization, emerges in *Candide* at the center of an elaborate geography of suffering connecting the experience of disaster across disparate geographical sites, a move renewed by Maryse Condé more than 250 years later that I will now examine.

[134] I wish to thank Patrick Bray to whom I am indebted for suggesting this particular turn of phrase.

Conjuring West Indian Disorder in Maryse Condé's *En attendant la montée des eaux*

Maryse Condé weaves the question of global suffering into the representation of disaster in *En attendant la montée des eaux*, a novel that connects the Caribbean to sub-Saharan West Africa in addition to the Middle East. In her recent novel, the Guadeloupean writer follows her nomadic protagonist, the doctor Babakar, from his birth in Mali to a Guadeloupean teacher and Malian functionary to civil war in a fictional West African country and, later, to the sectarian violence of Haiti in the 2000s. Along the way, the narrative offers forays into Canada, Guadeloupe, and Palestine as the author assembles an international group of companions around Babakar by the novel's end. Passing through a collection of human and natural catastrophes, the impulse driving Condé peripatetic narrative is the questioning of suffering to which her characters are witnesses. But at the same time in this succession of disasters the Caribbean holds a unique place in the novel, which an exchange between Babakar and his deceased mother Thécla, with whom he regularly "communicates" in his sleep, attests when the former decides to move to Haiti. To Babakar's assertion that "Les grands dangers sont ailleurs. Les tours qui s'effondrent aux USA. Le feu qui ravage le Taj et l'Oberoi et piège les touristes à Mumbai. La terre qui tremble au Sri Lanka, " Thécla replies, "Haïti, c'est tout cela réuni."[135] Beyond the renewal of a disaster discourse with regard to Haiti here, I contend that the compression of the different geographies that Thécla's comment enacts offers a window into the representation of disaster as the novel plots it way from sub-Saharan Africa to the Caribbean via Guadeloupe and Haiti. Thécla's pejorative characterization of a disaster-ridden country in Haiti reflects a greater tendency in the novel to connect disparate sites of catastrophe and suffering to Haiti in the heart of the Caribbean. As a counter to the alienating political and economic forces of globalization,

[135] Maryse Condé, *En attendant la montée des eaux* (Paris: JC Lattès, 2010), 174 (hereafter cited in the text as *EA*).

Condé seizes disaster as a worldwide threat and experience to articulate a cosmopolitan solidarity across not only the global periphery but also the North-South divide.

In this second part of the chapter, my focus transitions to how Condé's typical deconstruction of the boundaries of identity in an epoch of catastrophe offers readers a geography of suffering which destabilizes the cultural and political hierarchies of globalization. In a 1998 address, Condé spells out her views on globalization and the place of literature in this "Brave New World," the title of her lecture. As the latter of this chapter's epigraphs demonstrates, Condé resists thinking about globalization solely as a synonym of Americanization, to which she opposes the term "positive globalization."[136] Positive globalization, for Condé, is primarily a literary-cultural endeavor by which the writers and intellectuals of the black diaspora have long sought out the interconnections between peoples and cultures; it enacts "a widening of horizons as the settings of their novels shuttle between different world locations."[137] In her own work, this "widening of horizons" has often been the result of her characters' nomadic wanderings across the Caribbean, the Americas, Europe, and Africa. Giving her novels a perpetual sense of motion and itinerancy, nomadism allows the writer to challenge the orthodoxy of stable, rooted identities and, in so doing, to question what it means to be a "West Indian" author. With characters unmoored in relation to both space and place via the experience of migration or exile, the liminality of her protagonists is often the conceit of her trenchant social and cultural critiques.

Nomadism, then, constitutes one of Condé's primary tools for disrupting the West Indian *status quo* as Madeleine Cottenet-Hage and Lydie Moudileno argue: "Balayant l'éventail des classes, des couleurs, des cultures et des générations, [le nomadisme] détecte sans complaisance

[136] Condé, "O Brave New World," 2.
[137] Ibid., 5.

les points d'affrontement, les lignes de faille d'une interdépendance malaisée entre les groupements humains, grâce à des personnages 'péripatétiques.'"[138] Condé's lasting search for the fault lines of Caribbean identity and more recently globalization has long scrambled the traditional frames of the West Indian Francophone novel.[139] As such, disorder functions as an essential leitmotif in Maryse Condé's prolific literary production whether in her "scandalous" portrayal of unapologetic female sexuality and critique of Pan-Africanism in *Hérémakhonon* (1976), of xenophobia and West Indian insularity in *Traversée de la mangrove* (1989), or of taboo homosexuality in *La belle créole* (2001) and the more recent play "Comme deux frères" (2007). In fact, in a piece of literary criticism, Condé explicitly links the notion of disorder to creativity by writing that "In a Bambara myth of origin, after the creation of the earth, and the organization of everything on its surface, disorder was introduced by a woman. Disorder meant the power to create new objects to modify the existing ones. In a word, disorder meant creativity."[140] Mirroring the effects of catastrophe, disorder and chaos imprint themselves within the narrative architecture of *En attendant la montée des eaux* and become tools in the author's long engagement with not only the frictions of globalization, but also the productive possibilities that such cross-cultural entanglements foster.

Disaster and catastrophe loom large in *En attendant la montée des eaux* as the novel's title suggests. While the narrative begins in Guadeloupe with a storm that startles Babakar from his slumber, the idea of impending natural catastrophe is articulated through the alarming

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[138] Madeleine Cottenet-Hage and Lydie Moudileno, "Présentation," in *Maryse Condé : une nomade inconvenante : mélanges offerts à Maryse Condé*, ed. Madeleine Cottenet-Hage and Lydie Moudileno (Petit-Bourg: Ibis-Rouge, 2002), 11.

[139] As Condé has stated in an interview: "My books are concerned less with race and much more with the complexities of overlapping cultures, with conditions of diaspora, and with cross-racial, cross-generational encounters." See Emily Apter, "Crossover Texts/Creole Tongues: A Conversation with Maryse Condé, *Public Culture* 13, no.1 (2001), 93.

[140] Maryse Condé, "Order, Disorder, Freedom, and the West Indian Writer," in "Post/Colonial Conditions: Exiles, Migrations, and Nomadisms," ed. Françoise Lionnet and Ronnie Scharfman, special issue, *Yale French Studies* 83, (1993), 130.

predictions of a retired Cuban exile Hugo Moreno whom Babakar has befriended. Moreno seemingly transforms into the prophet of a Caribbean apocalypse wrought by the disastrous consequences of global warming and the melting of the polar ice caps (*EA*, 22-23; see conclusion for further analysis). At the other end of the novel is a different natural catastrophe that opposes prophetic warnings of Caribbean effacement with the very real 2010 earthquake in Haiti, an event that, as Condé has stated, forced her to modify the ending of *En attendant* (see above). Thus, couched between two catastrophic scenarios – one predicted, one real– it is possible to read the novel as a sustained interrogation of its own title, that is to say of what to do while waiting for catastrophe, ecological or otherwise. It is, then, while the trio of characters – Babakar, Movar, and Fouad – at the center of this novel "wait" for disaster that they are confronted with a surfeit of human-made catastrophes in the form of sectarian violence and the suffering of the innocent.

In a parallel with *Candide*'s whirlwind engagement with global suffering, the specter of utopia also emerges in *En attendant* and informs Condé's articulation of a post/colonial geography of suffering. The novel's answer to this question of suffering is the re-creation of Candide's *métairie* in *le centre médical Maria Teresa*, which the trio operates in Port-au-Prince. Conceived as a clinic for poor women that also houses twenty orphaned children, Babakar, Movar, and Fouad rename the center "la Maison," perhaps in a move to anchor these nomadic characters from Mali, Haiti, and Lebanon, respectively. Their association in this humanitarian enterprise effectively realizes, for a brief moment, a New World "utopia" that is central to my argument in this part of the chapter and which is anticipated in Michel Foucault's discussion of heterotopias. In his treatment of this concept, Foucault explores the ways in which utopias relate to space and, in so doing, frames the way his neologism heterotopia offers a critically productive

"other space" to interrogate the representation of space. In the analysis that follows, I consider Maryse Condé's *En attendant* in relation to the foucauldian notion of heterotopias to demonstrate how the way in which Condé blends together disparate geographies in her representations of suffering also enacts her ideal of "positive globalization." Here, the Caribbean once again emerges at the center of the intersecting geographies in Condé's representation of suffering and is central to her critical engagement with globalization.

Transatlantic Connections: The Rhizomatic Linkages of Catastrophe

In *En attendant la montée des eaux*, an intertextual dialogue with Voltaire's *Candide*, I argue, underwrites the renewal of Condé's interest in exile, diaspora, cross-cultural friction, and the bounds of identity in the novel. In addition to one character's direct, yet ironic, citation of the Panglossian maxim "le meilleur des mondes," Condé's novel offers structural and thematic similarities, namely embedded narratives and a preoccupation with global suffering, that situate it as a privileged interlocutor with *Candide*. Like the embedded narratives of, for instance, La Vieille, Cunégonde, and Pangloss that relate the non-diegetic misfortunes of each character, the narration of *En attendant* is a polyphonic multiplication of first-person perspectives.[141] Within this structure of fragmented linearity, the first-person narrative interventions, as opposed to the anonymous third-person narrator of the novel's present, analeptically relate each character's hardship-ridden trajectory of displacement and exile landing him (or her) in Haiti. For the half-Malian, half-Guadeloupean protagonist, Babakar Traoré, civil war in sub-Saharan Africa forces him back to the Caribbean of his maternal origins, first in Guadeloupe, then in Haiti. For the Haitian "*sans-papiers*" Movar Pompilius, it is the sectarian violence of the last decade in post-Aristide Haiti that leads him to immigrate to Guadeloupe where he befriends Babakar, only to

[141] John C. O'Neal, "Interpolated Narrative in Voltaire's *Candide*," in *Approaches to Teaching* Candide, ed. Waldinger, 45-50.

return home with the latter. In Port-au-Prince, Babakar and Movar encounter the doubly exiled Palestinian, Fouad, sent to Haiti from Lebanon, where his family had settled, as a result of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The thematic and structural continuities, but also the twists, between Voltaire and Condé offer an intertextual dialogue extending my discussion of suffering and catastrophe from the colonial past to the postcolonial, globalized present.

United by disparate experiences of internecine conflict in West Africa, the Middle East, and Haiti, the text, nevertheless, frames the trio's Caribbean exile as a collectivized experience of suffering. This is most explicit during one of the many instances when Babakar converses with his dead mother, Thécla, in his sleep. In an instance of free-indirect discourse, blending Thécla's voice with that of the narrator as if to articulate the author's own point of view, the mother summarizes the trajectories of her son and his companion Fouad as follows: "C'était deux variations sur les thèmes de la violence et du déplacement, des variantes d'un schéma qui devenait de plus en plus ordinaire. Ils avaient tous les deux été emportés dans une spirale d'évènements qu'ils ne pouvaient contrôler et qui avaient finalement englouti ce qu'ils avaient de plus cher" (*EA*, 224). While Thécla's remarks could have equally applied to Movar, they speak to the coil-like structure of the narrative that weaves one catastrophe – both natural and human-made – into the next as hurricanes and earthquakes punctuate civil war and sectarian fighting, a structure that recalls fellow Guadeloupean Daniel Maximin's "spiralist" approach to disaster in his Caribbean trilogy (see chapter four). Throughout the novel, this process sweeps the characters up in spite of themselves in a series of events similar to Candide's disaster-ridden peripatetic adventure through Europe, the Americas, and the Mediterranean in a commentary on the individual's subjugation to catastrophic political and natural forces that are beyond his or her control. Babakar, however, shares none of Candide's (sardonic) optimism and Condé has neither

Leibniz nor theodicy on her agenda as a writer. By contrast, Babakar appears resigned to this fate when he responds to another character's question about how he deals with the many hardships he has suffered, saying "J'étais fait pour être un tranquille médecin-accoucheur dans un paisible hôpital de brousse. Au lieu de cela, la vie m'a jeté sur les chemins les plus inattendus" (*EA*, 251).

For Babakar, these unexpected paths in life could be equated to an up-close experience of catastrophe in West Africa that spirals into his becoming a participant-observer of disaster in the Caribbean after he traverses the Atlantic. The novel's fragmented narrative interrogates the effects of colonial subjugation as Condé weaves together disparate historical strata from the colonial and post-colonial Atlantic world into a palimpsest of the present-day Caribbean. Set, then, on dueling chronological planes, *En attendant* moves between the central narrative kernel in the present and analeptic retellings of each character's past. In this way, Babakar's adoption of the newborn Anaïs whose *sans-papiers* mother Reinette died giving birth and his decision to return the infant to her mother's remaining family in Haiti occupies the novel in the present while Movar's, Babakar's, and Fouad's successive interventions inscribe the past into the narrative architecture. Beyond foregrounding the present as a palimpsest of the past, the conjunction of past and present subtends the novel's bipartite search for identity: first, Babakar's quest to come to terms with his dual African and Caribbean origins despite forever feeling dis-placed between (or beyond) both and, second, Haiti's reckoning with its (post-)Duvalier past as Babakar slowly uncovers Reinette's family history. Although this reading is less about identity than about the construction of suffering through geography, a closer look at Babakar's own identity will bring the latter into better relief. It is necessary, then, to begin by focusing on West Africa, a common setting in Condé's fiction. Ostensibly the third-installment of the *Ségou* novels

(1984-1985), *En attendant* is less a sweeping dramatic historical saga than a postmodern reflection on the connections of suffering throughout the so-called Third World.[142]

Despite Babakar's nomadic wanderings through African, the Caribbean, and briefly North America, his family tree is firmly rooted in several of Maryse Condé's other literary forays into Africa. Babakar's Guadeloupean mother, Thécla Minerve resembles the protagonist of *Hérémakhonon* Véronica, another schoolteacher hailing from the French Antilles. Yet, unlike Véronica, Thécla has no romantic ideas of reconnecting with her lost African past. [143] Similarly, his Malian father descends from the Traoré family prominently featured in *Ségou*. After losing his mother, as a young adolescent, Babakar is raised by a distant father whose slow ascent of the ministerial ranks of government takes the two from job to job throughout Mali. A successful student, Babakar receives a scholarship to study medicine in Montreal where he specializes in obstetrics and befriends Hassan, the son of a prominent family in a fictional country neighboring Mali to the south, whom he follows home after graduation to work in Ébrunéa at one of the capital city's most prestigious private clinics. Babakar's initial encounter with Hassan in Canada crystallizes the simmering identity crisis within the protagonist, and it foregrounds the uneasy insider-outsider status his Afro-Antillean origins confer upon him as he moves throughout West Africa and the Caribbean. Babakar's detached involvement in the novel's events, his positionality as participant-observer, proves an effective strategy for preserving a space of critique from which the author can interrogate the question of the preponderance of suffering in certain places.

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[142] Maryse Condé, "Entretien avec Maryse Condé autour du roman *En attendant la montée des eaux*," by Christian Tortel, *France Ô*, September 16, 2010, accessed October 26, 2012, http://www.francetv.fr/culturebox/entretien-avec-maryse-conde-auteur-du-roman-en-attendant-la-montee-des-eaux-39943.

[143] Describing Thécla's motivations for going to Mali, the narrator writes, "Elle rêvait de respirer un grand bol d'air. Elle se satisfit du premier pays qui avait besoin d'expatriés, le Mali. N'y voyez donc aucune quête d'identité, aucune recherche d'ancêtre bambara! Thécla n'avait jamais entendu parler du royaume bambara de Ségou même si elle devait épouser un descendant de 'yerewolo.' Dernier détail: la paye était bonne" (43).

To be more precise, Babakar's insider-outsider status triggers a discussion of competing models of cultural identity in the novel. Split between the rootedness of his paternal ancestors in Ségou and the uprootedness of his maternal forbearers dis-placed by the horrors of the Middle Passage, *En attendant* is also the story of Babakar's coming to terms with his own place in a world that, to borrow from Édouard Glissant, "se créolise."[144] Significantly, the divisions within Babakar's family tree reproduce Glissant's famous distinction between *identité-racine* and *identité-rhizome*, or identity perceived as fixed, atavistic, and exclusive, on the one hand, in opposition to a conception in which identity is porous, plural, and always a becoming, on the other hand.[145] They might also be likened to the competing cultural models facing postcolonial Caribbean intellectuals who have alternatively hovered between attempts to (re)capture "authenticity" and celebrations of the productive potential of *métissage* or creolization.[146]

Holding true to a position that has defined her work since at least Véronica's failed search for "authenticity" in *Hérémakhonon*, Condé prefers, here, the protean contours offered by the notion of *identité-rhizome* to detail the intersecting ethno-cultural identities that Babakar refuses to hierarchize. This is where Babakar's friendship with Hassan becomes most telling as the protagonist eschews stable ethnic identities to put forward instead his own uprootedness:

> L'histoire de Hassan, ultime descendant de glorieux sages, présentait le même contour que la mienne. Mais là s'arrêtait toute ressemblance entre nous. Non seulement, je ne tirais nul orgueil de mes origines, mais je ne possédais aucun sentiment d'identité ethnique. J'étais un Malien puisque j'étais né au Mali, c'est

[144] Glissant, *Introduction à une poétique*, 15; While it is certainly the case that the Traoré family is deeply rooted in Ségou, the seat of the family's power for centuries, the novels nonetheless recount a certain detail of cultural and ethnic *métissage* through intermarriage as well as the literal uprooting of a certain characters and their descendants who are sold into the slave trade or exiled far from Ségou on the African coast or deep in the hinterland.
[145] Ibid., 23, 59-79.
[146] This oscillation between the search for authenticity and the celebration of hybridity also characterizes Caribbean literary history to a large extent. See J. Michael Dash, *The Other America: Caribbean Literature in a New World Context* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998).

> tout. Bambara, malinké, songhaï, du Nord, du Sud, de l'Est, qu'importait! Bien sûr, il fallait voir là l'influence de ma mère qui m'avait élevé sans aucun esprit de révérence pour ce qu'elle qualifiait de mythes encombrants. (*EA*, 97-98)

In yet another Deleuzian echo, French historian Pap Ndiaye argues that ethnic identity constitutes in fact only one fold ("pli" in French) of one's self that may be emphasized or not according to the situation. [147] Deleuze's fold, and to a certain extent as well his theory of the rhizome, which ironically in the larger context of this chapter originate with Leibniz who provoked so much indignation in Voltaire, throw into relief the way Babakar refuses any fixed ethnic identity for himself.[148] Pushing back against both his family tree and any number of ethnic and geographical identifications, described only as cumbersome myths, Babakar secures his insider-outsider status. By casting Babakar in opposition to the fixed ethnic identities that the leaders of the camps put forward in the civil war in which he finds himself embroiled, Condé challenges the fixed nature of the borders between the camps, revealing them instead to be different sides of the same fold.

Babakar's insider-outsider status soon becomes the text's frame for representing disaster when civil war breaks out in the fictional Sub-Saharan West African country in which he has taken up residence. As he leaves Éburnéa to join Hassan in the North, he first passes through the disasterscape that this capital city has become and offers the following observation:

> J'avais l'impression de jouer à la guerre. Pourtant, je le savais, le danger était réel. Des salves d'artillerie résonnaient sans arrêt. Partout des incendies rougeoyaient!

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[147] Pap Ndiaye, *La condition noire: essai sur une minorité française* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 2008), 43.
[148] Gilles Deleuze, *Le pli: Leibniz et le baroque* (Paris: Éditions de minuit, 1988). More generally, for an analysis of Caribbean and postcolonial uses of Deleuze's philosophy see Lorna Burns, *Contemporary Caribbean Writing and Deleuze: Literature between Postcolonialism and Post-Continental Philosophy* (New York: Continuum, 2012) and Lorna Burns and Birgit M. Kaiser, eds, *Postcolonial Literatures and Deleuze: Colonial Pasts, Differential Futures* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

> Des quartiers entiers étaient la proie des flammes. Sur ce paysage désolé pesait une épouvantable odeur de charogne. Des cadavres, certains affreusement mutilés, pourrissaient dans les rues. Quand nous parvînmes à quitter la ville, tout le long de la route défilaient des colonnes d'hommes, de femmes chargées d'enfants de tous âges, fuyant les combats. Mon cœur me faisait mal en les regardant. (*EA*, 115)

Babakar's disasterscape records the uncanny effect his confrontation with mass suffering has on him. Here the sights, sounds, and stench of the real irrupt into the dreamlike world that Babakar first inhabits as events around him escalate and overload his senses. Beyond the real-unreal binary subtending Babakar's observations, the author positions Babakar both inside, as a uniformed field surgeon for his friend Hassan's northern army, and outside as a Malian-Guadeloupean witness to an ethnic civil war in a foreign nation. This in-between status affords Babakar a critical distance from which to question the events happening around him when, for example, he concludes his description of the disasterscape by asking, "Pourquoi toute cette souffrance? À qui profite-t-elle?" (*EA*, 115)

Although Condé's direct answer to this question inscribes her response into the structuring opposition between *identité-racine* and *identité-rhizome*, her representations of suffering nonetheless go beyond this discussion of identity and rely on the comingling of a number of disparate geographies. In yet another flare-up of violence in this civil war pitting north against south along the borders of perceived ethnic differences, Condé links this conflict to the larger question of identity through Babakar's commentary on the episode as he explains, "Voilà à quoi conduisaient l'orgueil forcené des origines et l'obsession de restaurer les grandeurs du passé" (*EA*, 161). Yet, the descriptions of this human-created catastrophe quickly surpass the

sole boundaries of identity when the author inscribes them in a network of "rhizomatic" geographies. Linking the narrative re-presentation of this event to the commentary that Condé provides of it is the author's recourse to the memory of disaster in the Caribbean. While much of Babakar's narration bespeaks the vicissitudes of identity and trauma in relation to the character's own subjective experience of the violent conflict, the narrative trace of other large-scale contemporary disasters widens the scope of Condé's interrogation of suffering beyond local and regional contexts. By creating explicit and implicit textual links between disparate sites, the author establishes catastrophe and suffering as a connective force within the text. For instance, when Babakar returns to a devastated Éburnéa he recalls the following:

> En pénétrant dans les faubourgs, un poids de chagrin et de solitude m'écrasa. Quand j'y vis plus clair et fus en état de regarder autour de moi, je ne reconnus pas cette capitale, jadis opulente et prospère que j'avais tant aimée. On aurait dit que pareil à La Nouvelle-Orléans, l'ouragan Katrina l'avait ravagée. Ses rues désertes, parcourues par des chiens errants montrant méchamment leurs crocs, étaient sales et défoncées, les trottoirs jonchés de détritus. (*EA,* 129)

At stake in the link between diverse sites of catastrophe, in this case drawing together Africa and the Greater Caribbean, or Gulf Coast region, one finds, in terms of geographical scale, the superimposition of the near and the far. Here the past conditional of the phrase "on aurait dit" subtends this textual link between distant disasters as the text re-locates the ravaging forces of Hurricane Katrina, or more precisely the stark images of a flooded, destroyed city that remain in the collective memory of contemporary readers, to Éburnéa.

It is precisely to the Caribbean region that Babakar displaces the narrative to close this long analeptic moment when he leaves Africa for his mother's home island of Guadeloupe where

En attendant first begins. There, Babakar exercises his profession at a local clinic and following the death of a Haitian *sans-papiers*, Reinette, adopts her newborn child Anaïs. During this period, Babakar settles into fatherhood and admits that he is ready to "mettre fin à [s]on errance et [s]e fixer" in Guadeloupe (*EA*, 167). Yet, unfortunately for his desire for stability, his adoption of Anaïs proves to be the point of departure of a new stage of both Babakar's itinerancy and the novel's quest for identity when Movar convinces him of the necessity to return Anaïs to her family in Haiti. In Port-au-Prince looking for Reinette's remaining relatives, Babakar and Movar's criss-crossing search launches a questioning of (post-)Duvalier Haiti as they begin to uncover the compromising history the close links between Reinette's family and the Duvalier dictatorship.

For more than one character, Haiti and Port-au-Prince possess an uncanny quality that foregrounds Condé's conjoining of disparate geographies through disaster. This becomes most evident upon Babarak's arrival in Haiti as he begins to process the new cityscape around him. Making his way into Port-au-Prince, the narrator writes:

> Babakar regardait à droite et à gauche, stupéfié par cette impression de déjà-vu. Port-au-Prince, plantée au mitan des Caraïbes, séparée de l'Afrique par tant de mers et de lieues, ressemblait à Éburnéa…On pourrait dire que Port-au-Prince se situait à un stade de décomposition plus avancée que [Éburnéa]…On circulait sur une bande de goudron défoncée, jonchée de détritus, bordée de palissades criblées d'impacts de balles. Des camions et des 4x4 remplis d'hommes en armes se croisent à vive allure. Les inévitables chiens errants, trains arrière haut perchés, se déhanchaient en courant d'un tas d'immondices à l'autre. Et Babakar ne savait plus où il se trouvait. Était-ce hier ou aujourd'hui? Avait-il parcouru tant de

> kilomètres pour revenir à la case départ? S'il n'avait eu ce bébé [Anaïs], ce nourrisson endormi, serré contre sa poitrine, il aurait pu oublier ce qu'il avait vécu. (*EA*, 175-76)

If, as this long passage suggests near its conclusion, Babakar's arrival in Port-au-Prince creates in him a sense of déjà-vu, readers might arguably experience here a similar sensation of "déjà-lu," of reading a repetitive description of a disasterscape weaving two cities together. In fact, a closer reading of this passage reveals it to be a mirror description of Babarak's prior arrival in Éburnéa. However, reversing the directionality, so to speak, of the way that the author describes Éburnéa through the lens of Hurricane Katrina, it is with the representation of war's physical and material aftermaths in Africa that Condé frames her Caribbean disasterscape in Haiti. A number of repetitions between the two passages in question have the disorienting effect of collapsing both time and place as Port-au-Prince and Ébrunéa converge in Babakar's mind. These include, for instance, literally the same descriptions of the cities – "les trottoirs jonchés de détritus" (*EA*, 129) and "Une bande de goudron … jonchée de détritus," (*EA*, 176), the same images of feral dogs, and the presence of bullet-ridden walls and buildings that offer a parallel between the fictional civil war in sub-Saharan Africa and sectarian violence in Haiti following Aristide's ouster in 2004. A similar moment in Babakar's mind occurs a few pagers later, as if to stress that the effect is not a textual aberration, when he encounters a group of UN soldiers at Fouad's hotel and "se cr[oit] revenu à Danembe" the site of the northern military hospital in which he served in Hassan's army (*EA*, 184). The discursive, symbolic, and psychological landscapes couched in both the narrator and Babakar's disasterscapes posit catastrophe as a worldwide condition linking the near and the far across time and space and are essential to the way the author imagines an interconnected globalized space within the pages of *En attenant la montée des eaux.*

Heterotopias, "Positive Globalization," and the Geography of Suffering

In a piece whose composition dates back to the 1960s but which was only published posthumously, Michel Foucault sketches out how disparate sites have been conjoined in different, often contradictory spaces. Prescient of the way present-day scholars would come to talk about globalization, Foucault's discussion of intersecting spaces begins with the notion of utopia and ends with the articulation of the concept of heterotopia. Tracing a broad historical shift in space, defined as the phenomenological experience of a place, from the Middle Ages, the seventeenth century, and finally to the contemporary period, what interests Foucault in this trajectory is the way that, in the current paradigm, the near and the far, the local and the global in the jargon of globalization, have become implicated within the same space. His description evokes what observers today would call the globalized world with its now cliché web-like network of connections and interactions when he writes that:

> Nous sommes à l'époque du simultané, nous sommes à l'époque de la juxtaposition, à l'époque du proche et du lointain, du côte à côte, du dispersé. Nous sommes à un moment où le monde s'éprouve, je crois, moins comme une grande vie qui se développerait à travers le temps que comme un réseau qui relie des points et qui entrecroise son écheveau.[149]

Foucault goes on to offer a taxonomy of these different types of spaces that are "en rapport avec tous les autres emplacements, mais sur un mode tel qu'ils suspendent, neutralisent ou inversent l'ensemble des rapports qui se trouvent, par eux, désignés, reflétés, ou récléchis" by dividing them into two types: utopia and heterotopia.[150] On the one hand, he argues regarding the former, "C'est la société elle-même perfectionnée ou c'est l'envers de la société, mais, de toute façon,

[149] Michel Foucault, "Des espaces autres," in *Dits et écrits IV, 1980-1988*, ed. Daniel Defert and François Ewald (Paris: Gallimard, 2001), 752.
[150] Ibid., 755.

ces utopies sont des espaces qui sont fondamentalement essentiellement irréels."[151] Heterotopias, on the other hand, differ in two important ways from utopia given, first, their situated and localizable presence in real space and, second, the rupture they actualize in terms of representing the real. As Foucault writes, they are:

> Des sortes de contre-emplacements, sortes d'utopies réalisées dans lesquelles les emplacements réels, tous les autres emplacements réels que l'on peut trouver à l'intérieur de la culture sont à la fois représentés, contestés, et inversés, des sortes de lieux qui sont hors de tous les lieux, bien que pourtant ils soient effectivement localisables.[152]

Forming an "other space," to borrow (and slightly modify) the original French title of the intervention, heterotopias provide "une espèce de contestation à la fois mythique et réelle de l'espace où nous vivons."[153] Significantly, in delineating a hybrid space of contestation, the notion of heterotopia also resonates with Bhabha's idea of a "third space," the space in-between the oppressed and the oppressor that recognizes hybridity and contests hierarchical, binary oppositions. As Bhabha writes, "It is in the emergence of the interstices – the overlap and displacement of domains of difference – that the intersubjective and collective experiences of nationness, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated."[154] Both "other" and "third" spaces evoked here set the stage for, on the one hand, re-reading the search for utopia in *En attendant* and, on the other hand, accounting for how the space in which this utopia takes shape interrogates the representation of suffering in a global age. Space, both in terms of geography

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[151] Ibid.
[152] Ibid., 755-56.
[153] Ibid., 756.
[154] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 2.

and as a metaphor for epistemological critique, is thus inextricably tied to the dueling notions of utopia and heterotopia in *En attendant*.

Within this framework, Maryse Condé refocuses the reader's attention on the intertextual link with *Candide* via the theme of utopia near the novel's end. However, Babakar's twenty-first century "métairie" takes a decidedly humanitarian twist in the image of the clinic and refuge *le centre médical Maria Teresa*, which he operates in Port-au-Prince with Movar and Fouad to care for poor women and dozens of orphaned children. The Maison brings to fruition a sarcastic remark Thécla makes to Babakar during one of the latter's nocturnal communications with his mother. The commentary she offers, nonetheless, is telling of the place the Maison holds in the narrative. Joking about the odd, heteroclite nature of the trio's origins, Thécla muses, in a self-reflexive gesture to another novel-length reflection on utopia by Condé:

> Vous voilà bien rencontrés. Trois hommes, on pourrait dire trois veufs qui pleurent pareillement leurs amours. Je vous conseille de vivre ensemble et de fonder une colonie…La colonie des veufs inconsolables, tiens donc. Ou mieux: *la colonie du nouveau monde*. Cela sonne bien. Vous êtes tous les trois d'identités différentes: un Arabe, un Africain sub-saharien à demi créole, un Haïtien. C'est d'une nouvelle humanité qu'il s'agirait. Une humanité sans Européens, c'est-à-dire sans Découvreurs-Colonisateurs, sans Maîtres et sans Esclaves ou Exploités. Vous pourrez refaire un univers plus juste! (*EA*, 223, my emphasis)

Once Babakar effectively takes over the clinic from its departing director, the Maison becomes the image of this "New World colony" his mother disparagingly describes. Not the shelter of the religious sect at the heart of Condé's *La colonie du nouveau monde* (1993), the Maison is, rather, a self-sustaining, though tenuously so given its impending sale to a Chinese hotel magnet,

"colony" withdrawn from politics in its refusal to be co-opted by the local government while remaining deeply engaged with the world around it.[155] In this way, it is as if Condé's gloss on Candide's "Il faut cultiver notre jardin" is to be found here in Babakar, Movar, and Fouad's confrontation with suffering and their attempt to heal and make the world more just according to their own capacities with Babakar serving as doctor, Movar as vegetable gardener, and Fouad as cook.

Bereft, in Thécla's vision it should be noted, of Europeans, slaves, and the exploited, this "New World colony" instantiates a utopia in the literal sense of the word. As the succession of crises in the post-colonial Caribbean and Africa suggests in *En attendant*, such a place has "no place" in the contemporary global South represented in the novel. Despite its dismissive derision, the hermeneutic importance of Thécla's statement lies precisely in her articulation of the coordinates of the post/colonial Caribbean ("Découvreurs-Colonisateurs," "Maîtres," "Esclaves," and "Exploités") and, thereby, begins to frame Condé's interrogation of a globalized geography of suffering within this context. It is, then, I will argue, not a coincidence that the moment when the narrative intertwines each character's itinerary, binding so to speak the Middle East and Africa to the Caribbean in the Maison, occurs in the Caribbean. While these itineraries could serve as allusions to two important migratory flows to the region, the forced immigration of enslaved Africans and the later arrival of a Syro-Lebanese immigration, they nevertheless re-actualize the region's implication, since at least the seventeenth century in the long history of (forced) exile. Like Voltaire in the first part of this chapter, Maryse Condé establishes the Caribbean as the site of encounter in which disaster and suffering become productive idioms for staging a critical engagement with postcolonial cultural entanglement in the present day.

[155] See Maryse Condé, *La colonie du nouveau monde* (Paris: Laffont, 1993).

Before concluding this chapter, I propose a close reading of one last scene that demonstrates how Condé's utopian Maison, understood through the lens of heterotopia, constitutes a space outside of space – a literal utopia, a non-place located in the fictional suburb of Port-au-Prince, Saint-Soledad – that serves to both invert and contest the realities of globalization. In this interpretation, it is necessary to remember Thécla's characterization of the Maison as a space devoid of domination and hierarchy as well as to recall Condé's notion, discussed above, of a "positive globalization," in which cross-cultural, transnational links of solidarity become possible. This "widening of horizons," to borrow from Condé, challenges the shackles of exclusive identities by drawing out their myriad connections, thus recalling Glissant's *identité-rhizome* or Paul Gilroy's distinction between the homonyms "roots" and "routes" in *The Black Atlantic*.[156] Yet, it is Gilroy's trope of "routes" as a spatial linkage between discrete places which returns my analysis to the issue of the connections between suffering in different geographic sites and globalization in a move that productively brings together these parallel discussions of Foucault and Condé.

Disaster and heterotopia fuse in *En attendant* during one episode during which the Maison hosts all those in need of shelter during a major hurricane. Here natural catastrophe is fully integrated into human-made catastrophe and violence as the ravages of nature seemingly complete those of humankind's own creation in the eyes of the mayor of Saint-Soledad. In what he views as the coming apocalypse and actualization of the rising floodwaters to which the novel's title alludes, the mayor exclaims that "Cette fois, c'est vraiment la fin d'Haïti. Nous mourrons tous et ce que les Duvaliers, Cedras et autres satrapes ne sont parvenus à faire, la

[156] Paul Gilroy. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 19: "Marked by its European origins, modern black political culture has always been more interested in the relationship of identity to roots and rootedness than in seeing identity as a process of movement and mediation that is more appropriately approached via the homonym routes."

colère du ciel y parviendra" (*EA*, 312). Yet, in spite of the danger and uncertainty of such an event, Condé offers the stark contrast of the sudden instantiation of human solidarity within the confines of the Maison whose atmosphere is described alternatively as "festive" (*EA*, 317) and "une belle cacophonie" (*EA*, 318). Here the Maison has become (temporarily) "home" for many occupants with myriad views. Its occupants tell jokes in Creole and sing French songs alongside traditional Creole songs at the same time that an evangelical preacher exhorts all to repent to an angry God and his tempestuous wrath. In what the narrator describes as a "bel exemple de la mondialisation" (*EA*, 316), Haitians and Europeans as well as the Palestinian Fouad and the half-Guadeloupean, half-Malian Babakar ride out the storm in festive solidarity.

In a number of ways this passage resonates with the idea of a heterotopia while implicitly commenting on the unidirectional flow from center to periphery in Foucault's use of the concept. First, the passage follows previous examples taken from the novel in which distant geographies, such as the Caribbean and West Africa, are overlain upon the same site: here the descriptive echoes that bound together the disasterscapes of Éburnéa and Port-au-Prince are replaced by a cosmopolitan gathering of residents in the Maison whose assemblage in this time of crisis makes the clinic a synecdoche for the compression of geography and cultural encounter, or globalization writ small. Second, as an enclosed compound, the clinic becomes a space set off from its surroundings in which its inhabitants, at least momentarily, come together in solidarity despite the differences enumerated above; the clinic, in this way, accumulates two functions when, to its palliative mission, the text adds this instantiation of what Condé terms "positive globalization." Finally, a third point of convergence lies in Thécla's already mentioned characterization of the Maison as a "New World colony," which recalls one of the explicit functions of heterotopias in relation to the real and one of the most concrete illustrations of the

concept Foucault provides throughout the piece. Nearing his conclusion, Foucault posits that the main function of heterotopias is a denunciation of the real that may take the form of "un autre espace réel, aussi parfait, aussi méticuleux, aussi bien arrangé que le nôtre est désordonné, mal agencé et brouillon."[157]

Thus, embedded within the heterotopia is the order-disorder dyad that is at the heart of the literature of catastrophe. First, by channeling the representation of suffering through the Caribbean, Condé, similar to Voltaire, makes the archipelago central to the global geographies subtending the novel. It might seem that the visibility Condé brings to the Caribbean in *En attendant* reproduces the critique in her epigraph to this chapter of the way the region gains visibility on the world stage only in times of disaster by using a succession of catastrophes precisely to cast light on these very same sites. However, it is the festive solidarity in the face of disaster enabled by her heterotopic geography of suffering and through its materialization in the Maison that Condé effectively creates an "other space" of solidarity, a fictional space within a space in which the Caribbean ephemerally becomes a model of "positive globalization." In terms of order and disorder, the geography of suffering that Condé constructs throughout the novel's engagement with catastrophe, understood as both human-created and natural phenomena, enables the author to reverse the order, so to speak, and flow of representations of the region and, thereby, to invite the periphery to the center.

While Foucault in discussing the notion of heterotopia largely restricts the uses of the term "colony" to utopian communities, his treatment of the subject hinges on a play between center and periphery that is implicitly indebted to European colonial history. In addition to the utopian religious communities such as the New England Puritans or the Jesuit settlements in South America that the philosopher cites and with which "la chrétienté marquait…de son signe

[157] Foucault, "Des espaces autres," 761.

fondamental l'espace et la géographie du monde américain," Foucault identifies European shipping as a key heterotopia in his discussion of the concept.[158] Ships, Foucault suggests, and their ability to bring different worlds together, in other words metropole and colony, via the movement of goods made these vessels not only "le plus grand instrument de développement économique" for Europe but "l'hétérotopie par excellence."[159] The missed occasion to bring to bear the realities of the Middle Passage as a site of a prolonged, yet enclosed, cultural encounter in a vast oceanic non-place into his discussion of colonial heterotopias is especially striking.[160] This is, however, not the place to belabor Foucault's problematic relation to overseas European imperial power despite the theorist's perspicacious investigations into the mechanics of power and domination.[161] Instead, the point I wish to establish here with this reminder of Foucault's colonial "shortcomings" is the twist my reading of Condé's novel provides to his theory of heterotopia. Foucault's representative moments of heterotopia concern Europeans who, like the French philosopher Charles Fourier, the founder of numerous utopian communities in the nineteenth-century United States, look to the periphery to reorder, or reinvent the metropole. In terms of Maryse Condé's geography of suffering, the Guadeloupean writer engages heterotopia from the point of view of the postcolonial descendants of those excluded from Foucault's account of "colonial" history. In her novel Condé throws into relief the links throughout the global South, thus bypassing and decentering the North in the nexus of global relations offered in the text. From the Maison, located in Haiti and operated by Haitian, Guadeloupean-Malian, and

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[158] Ibid.
[159] Ibid., 1581.
[160] The importance of the ship has not escaped other commentators. In addition to Gilroy, for whom the ship serves as the ultimate chronotope of the Black Atlantic, Antonio Benitez-Rojo recognizes the importance of the navel fleet system to European dominance in the region in *The Repeating Island*, 7.
[161] See Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995); Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 271-313; Or Timothy Mitchell on the colonial origins of panoptic power in *Colonizing Egypt* (Berekeley: University of California Press, 1991), 35.

Palestinian characters in a "bel exemple de la mondialisation" emerges an "other" space not to offer a utopian global village, but to materialize, albeit momentarily, a different ethics of cross-cultural relations in the global capitalist system.

This other, or "third," space near the end of *En attendant* actualizes an instance "positive globalization," or a disaster cosmopolitanism, wherein a culturally diverse population comes together in the face of catastrophe. The Maison's festive solidarity counters the atomization of the social order that is the base of neo-liberal globalization emphasizing the individual over the collective while pitting entire regions and countries against one another in the name of economic competition. Yet the utopian moment that gives rise to this "extraordinary community" is fleeting and soon fades in the text after the hurricane's passage as the Maison ceases its humanitarian, non-profit mission.[162] Following the hurricane, the US NGO that owns the Maison decides it can no longer afford to finance the orphanage, and sells the structure to a Chinese hotel magnet. Revealing the trio's humanitarian mission to be subordinate to real estate speculation and attempts to convert Haiti into a Caribbean tourist destination, the sale and destruction of the Maison demonstrates the ambivalent circulation of people, goods, and money in global capitalism. On the one hand, the Maison, a product itself of international migration and humanitarian capitalism, promotes a model of dealing with global disaster and suffering in terms of cross-cultural solidarity that resists the atomization of social life in neo-liberal globalization whose effect is to pit individuals against one another. On the other hand, the decline of the Maison ultimately shows how global capitalism re-appropriates the very fleeting spaces of critique that emerged, and flourished, in the Maison as a result of immigration and international

[162] Rebecca Solnit, *A Paradise Built in Hell: The Extraordinary Communities that Arise in Disasters* (New York: Viking, 2009).

humanitarian aid, which themselves represent significant cultural and financial mechanisms of contemporary globalization.

With the closing of the Maison, Babakar ponders joining a new "colony" in Tanzania where a group of refugees has withdrawn itself "du monde pour réfléchir en commun aux moyens de l'améliorer" (*EA*, 358). Babakar's experience in the Maison, this so-called "colonie du nouveau monde," and his plan to join a new colony in Africa, a choice that he will ultimately decide against, raises the question of the intertextual relation between *En attendant la montée des eaux* and Maryse Condé's other novel-length reflection on utopia in *La colonie du nouveau monde*. Published nearly two decades apart, both novels follow characters struggling not only to find their place in the world, but also to effect change, that is to create a "new world." Written against the backdrop of the fall of the Berlin wall, *La colonie du nouveau monde* is less the mise-en-scène of a utopian "end of history" than a reflection on postmodern political and social commitment among German, Guadeloupean, Haitian, and Colombian characters whose capitalist, communist, and religious utopias have failed them. On the contrary, in *En attendant*, Babakar's existential problem is not the disintegration or absence of a meta-narrative to guide his way through the world, but the surfeit of suffering he encounters on his journey through Africa and the Caribbean. In this way, comparing the endings of both novels is telling. In *La colonie du nouveau monde*, the only resolution to utopian ideological thinking is disappointment, isolation, frustration, and even death. Similarly, *En attendant* offers no magical remedy for suffering or catastrophe. Instead, Condé posits a humanitarian solidarity in response to the global suffering that her novel depicts in the conclusion to *En attendant* which ends with Babakar rushing out of Toussaint Louverture International Airport in Port-au-Prince to join other first-responders to the 2010 earthquake in Haiti.

Conclusion: Disaster Cosmopolitanism

In Voltaire's *Candide* and Maryse Condé *En attendant la montée des eaux*, the greater Caribbean emerges as a pivotal location in each author's interrogation of worldwide catastrophe and suffering. From its nebulous location on the cusp of the Atlantic between North and South America, the Caribbean functions in Voltaire's and Condé's respective geographies of suffering to trouble distinctions between center and periphery in colonial and global capitalist economies. The focus each writer brings to the geographical implications of representing suffering posits a disaster cosmopolitanism that is useful for thinking through catastrophe and the respective colonial and neo-liberal economic and political structures that shape it. The geographies of suffering that these two authors elaborate emphasize the interconnectedness of peoples in disparate regions and the existence of "overlapping communities of fate" joining the bourgeois French sugar consumer to the Surinamese slave and likewise linking different points along the global South to one another in the Caribbean.[163] What is at stake in the representation of global suffering and the play between the near and the far is a humanitarian solidarity that recognizes the interconnectedness of disparate peoples despite, or because of, the hierarchical forces of colonialist and capitalist exploitation that mediate these relations in the two narratives.

In delineating the archipelago's place in a global disasterscape, Voltaire's and Condé's texts set the stage to explore the circulation of representations of catastrophe on a different scale in the Caribbean collective imaginary from Haiti to Guadeloupe and Martinique in the next chapter. This shift in scale is further accompanied by a shift in historical focus from the diachronic linkage between the eighteenth and twenty-first centuries to a cluster of narratives published during the middle third of the nineteenth century that all bespeak a certain interest in

[163] David Held, "Reframing Global Governance: Apocalypse Soon or Reform!", in *The Cosmopolitan Reader*, ed. Garret Wallace Brown and David Held (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2010), 295.

Caribbean ruins. My examination of the ruins of war, disrepair, and natural disaster in independent Haiti and colonial Guadeloupe emphasizes the historical links as well as the contemporary discontinuities between these two island societies in the nineteenth century. It also re-orients the comparative analytical framework from a global focus in this chapter to a regional, pan-Caribbean one in the next to explore the function of ruins in the literature of catastrophe as a key trope for interrogating the consequences of the Haitian Revolution across the colonial and post-colonial society.

CHAPTER 2

The Ghost of Disasters Past:
The Haitian Revolution and Nineteenth-Century Caribbean Ruinscapes

History was alive and I had heard its sounds elsewhere. From Rouen to Santa Fe, from Bangkok to Lisbon, I had touched ghosts suddenly real, I had engaged people far remote in time and in space. Distance was no barrier. History did not need to be mine in order to engage me.

- *Michel-Rolph Trouillot, Silencing the Past, 1995*[164]

Je crois que toutes les Antilles reposent sur quelques gouffres qui finiront par engloutir tout cet archipel avec l'attirail d'esclaves, de maîtres, d'aventuriers, et de busons qui s'agitent et se tiraillent à la surface.

- *Eugène Berthot, Trois ans à la Guadeloupe, 1845*[165]

Seeing and Reading Ruins

On January 1, 1804, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, the revolutionary general and successor to Toussaint Louverture, addressed the newly independent people of Haiti in an impassioned speech urging them to renounce forever France and its "barbaric" domination. Despite the rhetoric of rupture, Dessalines brings into relief the difficulty of this task in his remark that, "Le nom français lugubre encore nos contrées. Tout y retrace le souvenir des cruautés de ce peuple barbare: nos lois, nos mœurs, nos villes, tout encore porte l'empreinte française."[166] Dessalines's comment on the incomplete eclipse of France in Haiti foregrounds his country's "postcoloniality in a colonial world," that uneasy state of being theorists have described as a "time of

[164] Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 142.
[165] Eugène Berthot to Dame Berthot, Basse-Terre, 28 April 1845, in *Trois ans à la Guadeloupe: lettres d'Eugène Berthot à son épouse demeurée en France, 1843-1846*, ed. Jacques Résal and Claude Thiébaut (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2012), 229.
[166] Jean-Jacques Dessalines, "Proclamation du Général en chef au peuple d'Haïti," in *Recueil général des lois et des actes du gouvernement d'Haïti depuis son indépendance jusqu'à nos jours*, vol. 1 1804-1808, ed. S. Linstant, 2nd ed. (Paris: A. Durand – Pédone-Lauriel, Sr, 1886), 3.

entanglement" or via the neologism "post/colonialism."[167] His observation associates with one of Haiti's founding moments an interrogation of the colonial past and the material traces it left in the ruins of French Saint Domingue. But more significantly, Dessalines's remarks bring into relief this chapter's principal concern with interpreting ruins as a cipher for Haiti and its place in the geo-political landscape of the nineteenth-century Caribbean.

This chapter focuses on the fixation on ruins as the symbol and material trace of catastrophe in both Haiti and Guadeloupe in order to examine how the discourse of rupture was vital to competing articulations of collective identity in these two parts of the Caribbean that were once part of the same French colonial empire but by the mid-nineteenth-century found themselves on opposite sides of the post-colonial divide. Ruins in Haiti and Guadeloupe constituted a trope through which nineteenth-century intellectuals grappled with the post-colonial paradigm shift of the Haitian Revolution. For some, ruins were integral to the process of articulating a post-colonial collective identity while, for others, they symbolized the limits of black revolution and nationhood not only in Haiti but in the nearby Spanish, French, and British colonies as well. Confronted with the ruins of the past or the massive destruction of periodic earthquakes, foreign and domestic writers made these themes an important site for reckoning with the political, social, and economic order of the Caribbean in the wake of the Haitian Revolution. The competing discourses on ruins and destruction in this chapter constitute a

[167] Deborah Jenson, "Before Malcolm X, Dessalines: Postcoloniality in a Colonial World," in *Beyond the Slave Narrative: Politics, Sex, and Manuscripts in the Haitian Revolution* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011), 81-121; For "time of entanglement," See Achille Mbembé, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 17; On the post/colonial neologism, Chris Bongie writes that it describes a situation in "which two words and worlds appear uneasily as one, joined together and yet also divided in a relation of (dis)continuity." Chris Bongie, *Islands and Exiles: The Creole identities of Post/colonial Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 12.

discursive space giving form and order, or the opposite, to what Nick Nesbitt has called the "idea of 1804," or the Haitian Revolution's radical project of universal liberty and equality.[168]

According to Michel-Rolph Trouillot, the Haitian Revolution was an "unthinkable revolution" to the extent that it represented a rift in contemporary colonial epistemology by exploding all previous interpretive grids and "challeng[ing] the very framework within which proponents and opponents had examined race, colonialism, and slavery in the Americas."[169] Ruins, as the material trace of history, form a readable "ruinscape" in which nineteenth-century writers and intellectuals in the Caribbean confronted the possibility of equality and self-rule by the formerly colonized in a number of overlapping reflections on creolization, the plantation system, black equality, collective memory, and revolution. As I demonstrate in this chapter, nineteenth-century Caribbean *Ruinenlust* alternatively gives the lie to Trouillot's oft-cited assertion by offering a departure point for some to think through the liberating possibilities of equality and freedom while also confirming the anthropologist's original insight when others use their writings about ruins to foreclose the "idea of 1804."

As this chapter makes clear, ruinscapes in the Francophone Caribbean, while indebted to European Romantic discourses, also re-scrambled their coordinates for the purpose of nation building in Haiti. As ruins became important objects of study and increasingly aestheticized in the mid-eighteenth century, European intellectuals, writers, and artists found in ruins, for example after the 1755 Lisbon earthquake or the excavation of Pompeii, the historicity, if not the mortality, of their own culture.[170] While the phenomenon spread in Europe after the French Revolution, translating deepening intellectual crises of Tradition, the Absolute, and the Eternal,

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[168] Nick Nesbitt, "The Idea of 1804," in "The Haiti Issue: 1804 and Nineteenth-Century French Studies," ed. Deborah Jenson, special issue, *Yale French Studies* 107 (2005), 6-38; Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 82-83.
[169] Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 82;
[170] Göran Blix, *From Paris to Pompeii: French Romanticism and the Cultural Politics of Archaeology* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 1.

European *Ruinenlust* was not limited to vestiges of Roman and Hellenic antiquity.[171] The "rediscovery" of Mayan ruins in Central America by the likes of Alexander van Humboldt and John Lloyd Stephens also extended interest in ruins to the Americas and its indigenous civilizations in the first half of the nineteenth century. In the Caribbean where transplanted African, European, and eventually Asian peoples replaced the displaced and massacred Arawaks and Caribs, indigenous ruins would also figure prominently in early Haitian ruinscapes. In this way, Caribbean ruinscapes constitute implicit reflections on the modalities of creolization, that is the relations between the cultures, past and present, that have inhabited the region, long before the notion gained widespread theoretical purchase in the twentieth century.

But if ruinscapes helped situate one group in relation to another, they similarly offered a way of (re)thinking history as a succession of overlapping civilizations. In Dessalines's January 1, 1804 speech, the ruins that cast their shadow over post-colonial Haiti evoke the Haitian Revolution as well as the deep colonial imprint with which the new country would need to reckon. In this way, the ruins of French colonialism in Haiti demonstrate the difficulty, not to say the impossibility, of thinking about the latter without the former in the nineteenth century. Such post-colonial entanglements are, for Achille Mbembé a defining characteristic of the postcolony which, the theorist explains further, is made up of "an *interlocking* of presents, pasts, and futures that retain their depths of other presents, pasts, and futures, each age bearing, altering, and maintaining the previous ones."[172] For as much as the Haitian Revolution was a rupture and displacement of French colonialism (some, including Dessalines, reset time, referring to 1804 as "year I"), the persistent presence of ruins, of the traces of the colonizer, suggest the

[171] Ibid., 159-60. See also Sophie Lacroix, *Ce que nous disent les ruines: La fonction critique des ruines* (Paris. L'Harmattan, 2007), 18, 55.
[172] Mbembé, *On the Postcolony*, 16, emphasis in original.

incompleteness, if not the impossibility, of the post-colonial erasure of empire and the necessity to rebuild with or upon this history in Haiti.

Ruins occupy a hybrid space of indeterminability, a no-man's land of being and non-being that connects the past to the present.[173] The phantasmagorical force of the poetics of ruins, as devised by Diderot in his ruminations on the paintings of Hubert Robert, the philosopher Volney in his meditations on ruins and human revolutions, Romantic writers like Chateaubriand, and the various European and Caribbean authors considered in this chapter including Victor Schœlcher and Hérard Dumesle, also troubles the binary division between "civilization" and "nature."[174] An aestheticized breach between past and present, "nature" and "civilization," colonial ruins in Haiti become a readable, decipherable "text," or ruinscape, in which writers grapple with the unfulfilled legacies of the "idea of 1804." Dessalines's remarks on January 1, 1804 about a spectral "nom français" glooming over Haiti portend several productive interpretations of the palimpsestic Haitian ruinscape – combining multiple strata of indigenous, European, and African histories – that are the focus of this chapter. On the one hand, as Laurent Dubois suggests, "the unconventional transformation of the adjective 'lugubre' – 'lugubrious' – into a verb capture[s] just how deeply the history of French colonialism shadowed the newborn country."[175] On the other hand, however, it is possible to supplement this reading with a slightly different twist on the unusual usage of the word "lugubre." Derived from the Latin verb for mourning, *lugere*, the term could very well stand for the trauma and loss that the same "nom français" evokes for the former colonizer by recalling the island's former status as the so-called

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[173] Lacroix, *Les ruines*, 17.

[174] On Diderot see Denis Diderot, *Salons*. vol. III 1767. ed. Jean Seznec, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 227; On Volney see C.F. Volney, *Les ruines, ou méditations sur les révolutions des empires*. 12th ed. (Paris: Bossange Frères, 1822 [1791]). As for Chateaubriand, the narrator of his *René* (1802) wanders the ruins of Greece and Rome, which nature has progressively reclaimed, before fleeing to the New World. On the contrary, in George Sand's *Indiana* (1832), the formations of the volcanic rock that the narrator encounters at the novel's end contain the artistic genius of every nation in history.

[175] Laurent Dubois, *Haiti: The Aftershocks of History* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2012), 16.

“pearl of the Antilles.” While this was not Dessalines’s explicit usage, the possibility of this alternative reading reflects the underside of the post-colonial ruinscape in Haiti by highlighting the latent presence of its neo-colonial double.

In invoking a multidirectional gaze that captures competing interpretations of the Haitian Revolution, the semantic instability of Dessalines’s declaration foreshadows the postcolonial semiotics of ruin traced throughout this chapter. Building on the dueling significations of Haiti’s glooming “French name,” this chapter counter-poses two related, but different, ways that writers and intellectuals inscribe ruins into their narratives. On the one hand, travelogues including those written by the liberal Haitian senator and writer Hérard Dumesle and the French abolitionist Victor Schœlcher enact a literary practice of “reading” ruins to translate their diverse meanings for their readers. On the other hand, witness accounts of two large mid-century earthquakes in Haiti and Guadeloupe offer a metamorphosis in the Caribbean ruinscape detailed in this chapter as they instead transform ruins into a spectacle. In part one, I read the travelogue by Dumesle and Schœlcher to throw into relief two competing claims on how the very real ruins of French colonialism interface among the past, the present, and the future in Haiti. Shifting from the reading of ruins to the spectacle of ruin, in part two, I focus on the “twin” earthquakes of 1842 in Cap-Haïtien (Le Cap) and 1843 in Guadeloupe (Pointe-à-Pitre) both in isolation and in juxtaposition to demonstrate how catastrophe obliges these two different societies to confront the radical implications of the Haitian Revolution that elites on each island actively worked to suppress. Overall, this chapter examines the consolidation and the foreclosure of the “idea of 1804” as it relates to each ruinscape and the various remembrances enacted through these sites. Set in a series of concentric circles that shift the scale of analysis from the local, national lens to

a regional, pan-Caribbean one, this chapter sheds light on how these Antillean sites of memory relate to the tendentious circulation of collective memory in the region.

Reading Ruins I: Hérard Dumesle's Caribbean Phoenix

For the former revolutionaries in post-1804 Haiti, constructing a new narrative of the past was essential to the task of building a new nation. This consolidation of competing memories of the past would prove key to the invention of a new national culture bringing together an ethnically heterogeneous population hailing for the majority from Africa. In this "triple construction du peuple, de la société et de la nation," the role of collective memory and efforts to turn the moment of post-colonial rupture – the Haitian Revolution – into a national site of memory assumed the utmost importance among the country's intellectual elites.[176] Thus, the way elites translated – understanding translation as both a displacement and a transformation – the Haitian Revolution into independent Haiti is important for understanding how this group envisioned the nation.[177] Following Dessalines's assassination in 1806 and the division of Haiti into two competing states, Henry Christophe's northern "black" Kingdom of Haiti and Alexandre Pétion's southern "mulatto" Republic of Haiti, the memory of the Revolution is split or doubled in the "scribal politics" opposing each regime's key intellectuals in a memory war. In this "conflict," the discursive double of the actual civil war, each side valorized the role of either blacks or light-skinned figures during the Revolution to legitimate its own regime.

Chris Bongie's description of Haitian "scribal politics," based on Régis Debray's concept of *le scribe*, usefully captures the function of the intellectual elite in distilling collective memory in addition to their key role in legitimating and mediating power between the state and the

[176] Michel Hector and Laënnec Hurbon, "Introduction: Les fondations," in *Genèse de l'Etat haïtien (1804-1859)*, ed. Michel Hector and Laënnec Hurbon (Paris: Editions de la Maison des sciences de l'homme, 2009), 20.
[177] On translating the Revolution, see Chris Bongie, *Friends and Enemies: The Scribal Politics of Post/colonial Literature* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), 45.

populace.[178] Building on Débray', Bongie writes, "The birth of the post-colonial state (like that of any state) is inseparable from the emergence of an intellectual elite charged with *mediating* the state's power."[179] In early nineteenth-century Haiti, these figures included Dessalines's speechwriter Louis Boisrond-Tonnère, King Henry Christophe's personal secretary Pompée Valentin Vastey, or the Baron de Vastey, and Pétion's publicist Noël Colombel. The journalist, senator, writer, and sometime poet Hérard Dumesle proves himself part successor to the scribal politics of the 1810s with his interminable scorn for Christophe and unwavering support for Pétion. Yet underneath his blatant partisanship, one finds a thoughtful examination of the distant and recent past that seeks to reconcile color "differences" in Jean-Pierre Boyer's newly unified Haiti following the death of Pétion in 1818 and Christophe's suicide in 1820. Born into the mixed-raced elite in the southern city Les Cayes in 1784, Dumesle became politically and militarily engaged in the civil war following Dessalines's assassination serving as a secretary to one of Pétion's generals from 1807-1810 during the battle of Le Môle Saint Nicolas. A rising intellectual star in Pétion's republic, Dumesle would become one of the leading liberal voices of his generation. Starting in the 1830s, his staunch republicanism would place him squarely in the opposition as President Boyer increasingly concentrated power in the executive. Twice elected to the Senate and expelled both times by Boyer, Dumesle would later lead the *Société des droits de l'homme et du citoyen*, a secret political society that would play an instrumental role in overthrowing Boyer in 1843. With his cousin, Charles Rivière-Hérard, newly installed as

[178] See Régis Debray, *Le Scribe: genèse du politique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1980).
[179] Bongie, *Friends and Enemies*, 32, emphasis in original.

president, a new coup would ultimately force Dumesle to flee to Jamaica with Rivière-Hérard after the latter's promised liberal reforms failed to materialize.[180]

Dumesle's role as a Haitian scribe, or "functionary of memory," is inseparable from the publication of his *Voyage dans le nord d'Hayti, ou révélations des lieux et des monuments* (1824). In a pastiche of Columbus's December debarkation in Le Môle Saint Nicolas, Dumesle signals his intention to revisit not only the first "travelogue" (the Genovese explorer's *Journal*), but also the island's entire written history.[181] Dumesle's "rediscovery" of Haiti – he travels through the western and southern in addition to the northern regions – is an inventive, non-linear narrative whose "marvelous realist" style has drawn comparisons by one critic to that of Jacques Stephen Alexis.[182] Detailing the invisible links between disparate epochs and peoples, the text constitutes both "one of the earliest accounts of national history," in the view of Laurent Dubois, and "the first literary work of any consequence produced in post-unification Haiti," in the eyes of Chris Bongie.[183] Primarily known for its bilingual (French-Creole) poem about the mythic Bois-Caïman ceremony, Léon-François Hoffmann observes that the work contains one of the first compositions in Creole as well as an early defense of the Vodou religion.[184] In this context, my close reading of Dumesle's groundbreaking narrative examines the postcolonial ruinscape that it offers readers. In so doing, Dumesle brings into focus the stakes of writing about ruins in northern Haiti. In his *Voyage,* ruins and texts are marshaled together to instantiate a national memorialization of the Haitian Revolution which views the ruins of French colonialism in Haiti as the source of regeneration for a people humiliated and oppressed by decades of servitude.

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[180] For biographical details see Daniel Supplice, *Dictionnaire biographique des personnalités politiques de la République d'Haïti, 1804-2001* (Lanoo Impr., 2001), 235-36; Ertha Pascal Trouillot and Ernst Trouillot, *Encyclopédie biographique d'Haïti,* vol. 1 (Montreal: Les Editions SEMIS, 2001), 345.
[181] See Carl Hermann Middelanis, "Les mémoires fleurissent dans les lieux ruines: *Le Voyage dans le Nord d'Hayti* ou les paradoxes de l'historiographie d'une jeune nation," *Ethnologies,* 28 no. 1(2006), 106.
[182] For the link to the "realism merveilleux" see ibid., 108.
[183] Dubois, *Haiti,* 88; Bongie, *Friends and Enemies,* 26
[184] Léon-François Hoffmann, *Haiti: lettres et l'être* (Toronto: Editions du GREF, 1992), 283.

A result of both history and geography, coupled with a desire to see for himself the aftermath of Christrophe's regime, Dumesle's northern destination is not a capricious choice. The north of Haiti around Le Cap, as David Geggus explains, is particularly rich in history as both the starting and endpoint of European colonialism in the territory that would become Haiti, witnessing "the first revolt against European colonization in the Americas…less than twelve months after Columbus's arrival in the Caribbean" and, three centuries later, the largest slave uprising in New World history that "led to the creation of Latin America's first independent state."[185] In this way, ruins and destruction have a deep resonance in northern Haiti, echoing as far back as the widespread massacre of the island's original inhabitants, but also rippling out across the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century. A rapid survey of the era's foreign travel literature therefore reveals the significance of Dumesle's engagement with such a loaded historical and intertextual site. One of the earliest foreign travelogues, James Franklin's *The Present State of Hayti* (1828), exemplifies this process of reading ruins as a lack of progress and civilization in the author's formulaic and systematic characterization of each Haitian city as "nearly demolished and tumbling into ruins."[186] Such descriptions of Haiti in general and Cap-Haïtien in particular span the nineteenth century with little variation in the writings of such travelers as Victor Schœlcher in the early 1840s, the American abolitionist James Redpath at the end of the 1850s, and the British travel author Hesketh Prichard at the turn of the twentieth century to name only a few examples.[187]

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[185] David Patrick Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), vii.
[186] James Franklin, *The Present State of Hayti (Saint Domingo) with Remarks on its Agriculture, Commerce, Laws, Religions, Finances, and Populations, etc.* (London: J. Murray, 1828), 282
[187] Victor Schœlcher, *Colonies étrangères et Haïti: résultats de l'émancipation anglaise*, vol. 2 (Paris : Pagnerre, 1843), 171; James Redpath, "A Visit to Hayti," *New York Daily Tribune*, April 12, 1859; Hesketh Prichard, *Where Black Rules Whites: A Journey across and about Hayti* (Westminister: A. Constable & Co., 1900), 172.

Significantly, Hesketh Prichard attempts to cast the city's "ruined houses, ruined aqueducts, ruined fountains of stone, ruined walls, ruined forts" against the relief of history as "the indelible impress" of the 1842 earthquake in an ominously, yet tellingly, titled chapter on Le Cap, "A Living City within a Dead One."[188] While the superimposition of the living and the dead in this ruinscape helps further foreground the question of memory and history in Cap-Haïtien, it falls far short of doing justice to the numerous strata of Haitian history firmly compressed by the city's long, repeated history of damage and destruction in the 1793 siege during the Revolution, the Christophe-Pétion civil war, the aforementioned 1842 earthquake, and the 1865 Salnave rebellion in which the city was once again besieged and bombarded. Certainly symbolic of this theme is the history of the Cap-Haïtien cathedral: rebuilt just months before the 1842 earthquake, the force of this seismic shock completely razed the edifice, which remained in ruins until 1941 when it was rebuilt for the earthquake's centennial.[189]

Published in the early 1820s, Dumesle's text anticipates this enduring discourse of ruins. Yet it also upends the ahistorical flattening of the Haitian landscape as well as the paternalism that often accompanies such assessments of early Haitian history. Exemplary of this latter trend is British traveler James Franklin's racist extrapolation that takes the ruins in Gonaïves and Saint Marc as a symbol of black civilization, of "a race devoid of all desire of improvement, and only raised a very small degree above the brute creation," he writes.[190] Instead, Dumesle gives pride of place to ruins, especially in Le Cap, from the beginning of his text in this direct address to his wife Estelle to whom he dedicates his book:

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[188] Prichard, "A Living City within a Dead One," chap. 9 in *Where Black Rules White*, 169-182.
[189] J.M. Jan, *Un Siècle de l'Eglise du Cap-Haïtien, 1860-1960* (Port-au-Prince: Editions Henri Deschamps, 1959), 35-45.
[190] Franklin, *The Present State of Hayti*, 280.

> Je vous parlerai de cette ville opulente et superbe, que, vers la fin du siècle dernier, le commerce, le luxe, et l'industrie proclamèrent l'astre de l'archipel américain, et où des ruines semblent aujourd'hui conserver pour l'histoire la mémoire des grands événements qui préparèrent notre régénération.[191]

Dumesle hints here at the way ruins braid together layers of history collapsing them into the physical remnants of the past. A number of overlapping frameworks avail themselves to conceptualize the various conjugations of past and present embedded in Dumesle's remarks. By writing ruins as the site of the juxtaposition of the colonial past and post-colonial present, Dumesle underlines what modern commentators would term Haiti's postcoloniality. His remark about the colonial city as "l'astre de l'archipel américain," although a clear reference to the city's former status as one of the Atlantic world's leading economic capitals, foreshadows his later call for Haiti, in an idealized future, to reclaim its position at the center of the Caribbean (*V*, 262). Implicitly, however, this remark raises the question of Haitian exceptionalism and the contested "meaning" of the first post-slavery, decolonized state.[192] Seen as a beacon of the future by some and as an aberration of history by others, Haiti's disputed "exceptionalism" helps to segue into Dumesle's creative framing of the instability of meaning with regard to both Haiti and the ruins that he spotlights throughout the text.

The incipient plurality of meaning at the beginning of Dumesle's text develops into a rejection of an essentialist view of Haitian identity. Instead, while fixing a national memory, Dumesle employs a multidirectional historical gaze that underlines the ways that Amerindian, European, and African history – literally and figuratively – bleed together. Writing about

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[191] Hérard Dumesle, *Voyage dans le nord d'Hayti, ou révélations des lieux et des monument* (Les Cayes, 1824), 2 (hereafter cited in text as *V*).

[192] On the question of Haitian exceptionalism, see J. Michael Dash's study of this discourse in the U.S. literary imaginary in *Haiti and the United States: National Stereotypes and the Literary Imagination*, 2nd ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997).

revolution-era French violence enacted on Haitians, the author recounts how "le sang des successeurs des Aborigènes coula de toutes part" (*V*, 197). It is, thus, in the rubble of colonial and post-colonial history that Dumesle seeks to uncover these intertwining strata of Haiti's postcoloniality and, ultimately, cast Haiti as a Caribbean phoenix rising from ashes and ruins. On its most basic, literal level, Dumesle's intervention in *Voyage* is a polemic against a dead king, Henry Christophe, whose recently terminated rule in the north is depicted as a reign of terror and destruction. In this way, Dumesle's description of the legacy of the Kingdom of Haiti in terms of despotic excess – "ni homme, ni femme, ni enfants, ni même les animaux les plus utiles, rien n'était en sécurité" (*V*, 235) – and ruins "ensevelis sous des lianes" (*V*, 9) racializes his ruinscape to the extent that the author participates in an emerging "mulatto legend" in which light-skinned Haitian historians valorized the contributions of mixed-race revolutionaries and leaders to Haiti's history at the expense of the black, African-born majority condemned for their "lack" of civilization.[193] Here, ruins, standing in stark contrast to Pétion's enlightened liberal republicanism, are seen as Christophe's violent record and legacy. For Dumesle, they are signs that must be properly interpreted as a perpetual history lesson – one might say an "anti-monument" – of the Black Kingdom's supposed moral decrepitude.

While the shortcomings of the lionized Pétion receive no mention in Dumesle's view of post-Dessalines Haiti, the ideas of monumentality and memorialization become increasingly central to Dumesle's attack on Christophe and the ruler's contested legacy. Recent revisionist histories have reassessed Christophe's regime, not to deny its reign of terror, but to underscore its modernity and advances in education, the economy, and state administration.[194] For his part,

[193] On the "mulatto legend" see David Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier: Race, Colour and National Independence in Haiti* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 88-107.
[194] See Michel Hector, "Une autre voie de construction de l'Etat-nation: l'expérience christophienne (1806-1820)," in *Genèse de l'Etat haïtien*, ed. Hector and Hurbon, 243-272.

Dumesle shows little nuance for Christophe who, despite his revolution-era heroics, has since made himself undeserving "de tout souvenir honorable, en se baignant dans le sang haïtien qu'il répandit à grands flots" (*V*, 193). Evoking the "totalitarian" strands of Christophe's regime rather than his visionary reforms, Dumesle writes "S'il rassemblait les ossements de ses victimes, il ferait un monument qui atteindrait les cieux" (*V*, 253). The metonymic presence/absence of Christophe's victims invokes a "pedagogical" memory meant to avoid future despotism (*V*, 222). Foreshadowing what the French have termed the "devoir de mémoire," or this duty to remember so prevalent in present-day memorializations of traumatic pasts (the Holocaust, Slavery, etc.), Dumesle's project would ultimately fail both in the short and long term as authoritarian dictatorships would continue to characterize Haitian regimes in the second half of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth as well as, for the detractors of Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the twenty-first centuries.

Dumesle's partisan "scribal" politics of memory conceal a post/colonial poetics of ruins that is not dissimilar from an undercurrent of French Romanticism. In his literary history of this movement, Göran Blix uncovers a "diffuse archeological gaze" highly fixated on ruins and spurred by the ruptures of the French Revolution and the onset of modernity.[195] Spelling the collapse of Tradition and creating the impression that "all that is solid melts into air," Blix reads this Romantic *Ruinenlust* as a cipher of the rising sentiment concerning "the mortality of cultures."[196] Such a parallel with the French Romantics, rather than bolstering Raphaël Confiant and Patrick Chamoiseau's broad claim about the derivative quality of nineteenth-century Haitian letters, underscores instead how one Haitian intellectual engages with broader literary trends

[195] On the "archeological gaze" see Blix, *From Paris to Pompeii*, 5; On the "mortality of cultures" see Ibid., 1.
[196] Marshall Berman, *All that is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Viking Peguin, 1988).

during this period.[197] Rather than a genealogical exercise in literary origins, Dumesle's Caribbean "archeological gaze" opens up a new interpretive avenue for a text read primarily either as an example of state and "mulatto" propaganda or as a source for the Bois-Caïman ceremony.[198]

While the obsession with ruins may betray a certain anxiety about cultural eclipse in its French manifestation, Dumesle's narrative hinges on a reversal of the Romantic semiotics of ruins in its quest to instantiate a national memory of the Revolution. Writing in the early 1820s in the wake of the Haitian Revolution, in the aftermath of civil war, and the vacuum of international isolation – *Voyage* was published only one year before the 1825 indemnity that would lead to diplomatic recognition of Haiti by contemporary colonial powers, Dumesle reconfigures the terms of this Romantic discourse of cultural effacement to found a new national identity arising from the ruins of colonial grandeur. Here, Dumesle's "archeological gaze" redirects itself; although ruins remain front and center, the text abruptly shifts in historical scope to look beyond Pétion-Christophe partisanship to foreground the colonial history of Le Cap and, thereby, reveal another layer in the author's recuperation of Haitian collective memory.[199]

Despite its former status as the capital of Christophe's government (it had even briefly been renamed Cap-Henry), Dumesle's arrival in Le Cap signals an odd shift away from the

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[197] Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphaël Confiant call this "bovarysme collectif haïtien," in *Lettres créoles: tracées antillaises et continentals de la littérature, Haïti, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Guyane, 1535-1975* (Paris: Gallimard, 1999), 106-118 ; For another critique of this, see J. Michael Dash, *The Other America: Caribbean Literature in a New World Context* (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1998), chapter 2.
[198] Geggus, *Haitian*, 81-92.
[199] Countering the prevalent opinion that nineteenth-century Haiti was internationally isolated, Mimi Sheller demonstrates, shifting the focus from diplomatic history to a history "from below," a certain number of international links – patterns of migration, intellectual exchange, and trade – connecting Haiti to the larger Caribbean basin. See Mimi Sheller, "The 'Haytian Fear': Racial Projects and Competing Reactions to the First Black Republic" in "The Global Color Line: Racial and Ethnic Inequality and Struggle from a Global Perspective," ed. Gwen Moore and J. Allen Whitt, special issue, *Research in Politics and Society* vol. 6 (1999), 285-303. She employs this antiquated spelling in order to suggest the period specificity of this discourse and its differences from similar narratives in the present day.

pejorative tone framing his previous treatment of the former king. Suspending his polemical tone, Dumesle highlights a deeper, colonial layer of memory:

> Bientôt la ville du Cap-Haïtien sembla sortir de derrière un rideau pour étaler à nos regards la perspective de ses beaux édifices et des ruines dont elle est parsemée...L'aspect de cette ville entretient la pensée de grands souvenirs, et ses ruines révèlent les événements dont elle fut le théâtre; l'imagination les contemple avec surprise, et s'occupe à les repasser froidement comme si elle était chargée de les recueillir pour l'histoire. Interrogeant les débris de ces monuments vénérables sur les grands traits de notre révolution, elle cherche à découvrir les causes qui la préparèrent, et qui rendirent sa marche si épouvantable. (*V*, 73)

The ruinscape that awaits the author in Le Cap takes on a markedly phantasmagorical, even "marvelous realist," nature that in the words of Dumesle pulls him into the "différentes époques dont je retrouvai les traces dans tout ce qui m'environnait" (*V*, 74). In the swirl of history around him, a "voix secrète qui parle à l'âme" breathes new life into the debris that Dumesle observes as the revolutionary events play themselves out in the pages that follow (*V*, 75).

Cap-Haïtien, thus, marks the narrative's plunge into the history of the Revolution and throws into relief for the author an indictment of colonialism that locates the origins of the new nation in the African diaspora and the experience of the Middle Passage. In so doing, Dumesle recycles the Black Spartacus myth from Raynal's *Histoire des deux Indes* (1770) famously applied to Toussaint Louverture by the French general Etienne Laveaux.[200] Trouillot has critiqued this oft-celebrated passage as a purely "rhetorical device" in Raynal's text since "the concrete possibility of such a slave rebellion flourishing into a revolution and a modern black

[200] On Laveaux see David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 47.

state was still part of the unthinkable."[201] Dumesle's iteration, however, articulates a specifically New World post-colonial nation:

> Gémissant sous le poids de la plus affreuse tyrannie, accablés par les vexations du préjugé le plus stupide, les fils de l'Amérique, originaires des contrées qu'arrose le Zaïre, et que couvrent les déserts de [sic] Sahara, leurs pères, transplantés de l'Ancien Monde dans le Nouveau, attendaient un libérateur de leur race. (*V*, 75)

Despite the markedly gendered language of the passage ("fils", "pères", "libérateur"), it is important to pause on a telling part of the history that the passage forces readers to consider. Conscious of the structured movement within the circuits of the Atlantic world triangular trade, Dumesle foregrounds the becoming of a new people forged by a shared experience of deportation, slavery, and racism in the New World.

However, the passage – with the phrase "les fils de l'Amérique" – frames the re-appropriation of the island by its transplanted inhabitants of African descent. I would argue that this re-appropriation reflects the author's own inscription of the ruins of French colonialism into a postcolonial semiotics of Haitian independence. Dumesle's recoding of ruins in the text comes with an awareness of another displaced civilization that inhabited the island and quickly became the victims of colonial genocide at the hands of European usurpers. In this context, a brief but no less significant moment near the conclusion of *Voyage* further inscribes this process into the text. On the boat taking him back to Les Cayes, Dumesle drifts off into a long rumination of a "temps presque fabuleux" off the shore near Léogâne where once:

> une femme, la reine Anacouana [sic], tenait la balance entre tous les Caciques du pays …, était l'arbitre des différends de ses voisins et réglait les rapports simples

[201] *Trouillot, Silencing the Past*, 85.

> de leurs petits états avant que d'avides usurpateurs eussent franchi l'Atlantique pour venir saccager et détruire sa patrie, là aussi au milieu d'une création nouvelle sortie du sein de la destruction même des espérances froissés, des ambitions déçues firent en 1794, sentir à quelques confédérés le prix des sacrifices qu'ils avaient faits en faveur de la révolution, et leur rendirent odieuse l'autorité des commissaires qui leur arrachaient les erreurs sur lesquelles ils fondaient leur félicité, en trompant leur attente. (*V*, 313-14)

Contemplating Léogâne, the former capital of the Taino cacique Yaguana, the exuberance of Dumesle's long run-on-sentence takes the reader to the end of the fifteenth century and to the beginning of recorded history on the island with the arrival of the Spanish and subsequent conquest, massacre, enslavement, and exile of the Amerindians. Just as in the momentary failure of syntactical logic in Dumesle's nearly page-long run-on-sentence in which subordinate clauses are seemingly and confusingly joined together, this passage binds together the common histories of resistance to European colonialism on Hispaniola by its successive Taino and then African-born or descendant inhabitants. Creating a homologous relationship of resistance between the figure of the Taino Queen Anacaona and slave and free men and women of color in Saint-Domingue, the connection of the colonized spanning more than three centuries inscribes both populations into a common genealogy of violence, treachery, and resistance. If, on the one hand, the passage equates Spanish and French colonial perfidy – the Spanish betrayed Anacaona in a way similar to how the French would trick Toussaint Louverture in order to arrest him and deport him to France – the goal, on the other hand, is to "indigenize" the recent presence of transplanted Africans and their descendants in western Hispaniola by casting them as the inheritors of the Taino.

Pulling back from *Voyage*, three stratified layers of a palimpsestic ruinscape come into view violently blending together Amerindian, Franco-European, and "Afro-Haitian" parts. Here the Euro-African colonial society and the triangular trade that sustained it come to represent "une création sortie du sein de la destruction" of Taino civilization (*V*, 314) while, to add to the stratification of vestiges, the new creole society of transplanted Africans and their descendants forced a major breach into the ramparts of colonial society with the French parliament's 1794 abolition of slavery, officially recognizing Sonthonax's August 1793 abolition, before ultimately tearing it down ten years later with independence. Betraying Buffon's idea of the succession of empires in his *Histoire naturelle* (1749-88), which Dumesle claims to read during his voyage (*V*, 7-8), the rhetorical move that underlines the emergence of successive civilizations from the violent displacement of their predecessors on the island parallels other, early efforts by Haitians, a majority of whom were exiles brought by force from Africa, to claim the island as their own.[202]

Thus, Dumesle's mediation on the ruin of Taino civilization along with his constant referral to Haitians as "les Indigènes" only prolongs the work of what Deborah Jenson calls "traumatic indigeneity." For Jenson, this concept bespeaks Dessalines and his generals' efforts to establish a "new Empire de la liberté…on the oblique memory of the destruction of native status at the intersection of the extinction of local inhabitants and their replacement by kidnapped Africans."[203] While literate elites could gather some knowledge of their Amerindian "ancestors," albeit through the taint of the colonial gaze, in works like Raynal's *Histoire des deux Indes*, slaves, to a certain extent, gained an awareness of their indigenous predecessors via the periodic discovery of Taino ruins and artifacts during fieldwork. The Baron de Vastey, whose pro-Christophe viewpoint Dumesle severely reproves but whose ardent defense of Haiti he finds

[202] Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 299.
[203] Jenson, *Beyond the Slave Narrative*, 233.

honorable (*V*, 267), captures this presence of Amerindian artifacts in his *Le système colonial dévoilé* (1814). At the beginning of this text, he recalls regularly finding Amerindian debris, vases, utensils, and artwork during walks, and, in mountain caves, discovering human bones and skeletons all attesting to "l'existence d'un peuple qui n'est plus."[204] Uniting a disparate population through layered memories of injustice, Dessalines's famous declaration "j'ai sauvé mon pays, j'ai vengé l'Amérique," the renaming of the territory after what was thought to be the original name, *Ayiti*, and Dumesle's renewal of this discourse are all attempts to elaborate a diasporan "identity of dispossession and a subsequent reconstruction of identity…on the basis of that dispossession."[205] With his repetition of this discourse, the notion of "traumatic indigeneity" sustains a large part of what Haitian national memory means for Hérard Dumesle. The ruins of French colonialism are not simply the signs of the colonial dispossession of the Tain and various African peoples in Saint-Domingue, but also the foundation of a reconstructed post-colonial Haitian identity: out of the destruction of Taino, African, and European peoples, the author constructs a collective identity based entirely on a postcolonial experience of the Americas including slavery, violence, and terror as well as the victorious struggle against the plantation and colonial system.

The stakes of Dumesle's dueling politics and poetics of ruins are thus a multilayered archeology of postcolonial memory capable of consolidating a disparate people into a new nation in the midst of a hostile environment of epistemic and military challenges to its sovereignty. Dumesle's production of Haitian national memory constitutes an articulation of a new imagined

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[204] Pompée Valentin Vastey, *Le système colonial dévoilé* (Cap-Henry, 1814), 3. On indigenous artifacts the Baron de Vastey writes, "Everywhere I tread or cast my gaze, I see shards, jars, tools, figurines, whose form bears witness to the infancy of art [and, in mountain caverns, whole whitened skeletons] … these remains that attest the existence of a people who are no more," Vastey, *Le système colonial*, 2-3 in Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, 217.
[205] Dessalines, "Proclamation relative au massacre des Français," in *Recueil général*, 22; On diasporan identity see Jenson, *Beyond the Slave Narrative*, 234.

community. It forms in this way a discursive "speech act," one that gives expression to and is a connective joining up of distinct parts at the same time.[206] Rooted in a traumatic indigeneity along with an anticolonial combat transcending class and color, despite a tendency at times in favor of "mulattos," Dumesle's articulation of national memory in post-unification Haiti offers a path to strengthen national unity. Discounting Christophe's Black Kingdom, Dumesle's text becomes a nation-building narrative that attempts to reconcile differences by evoking a common African ancestry and the world-historic anticolonial, antislavery combat of the Revolution, a "valeur héréditaire" of Haitians of all stripes that "dans ces climats ne peut être éteinte même par le despotisme" (*V*, 15). Noting how Dumesle's travels effectively link Haiti's three traditional regions – North, South, and West – while omitting completely the recently occupied eastern part of the island, Carl Middelanis writes that in expressing "l'avènement d'une nouvelle société" and "en ramassant les débris des discours révolutionnaires," the writer "offrait à ses concitoyens et à la postérité des lieux de mémoire nouveaux, des lieux qui ne peuvent jamais produire d'image unique ou idyllique puisqu'ils portent tous les traces de la violence des despotismes, dominants et vaincus."[207] Blending the marvelous with the historical, Dumesle's narrative is the product of a poetics of catastrophe, similar to Daniel Maximin in chapter four, that is predicated on cycles of destruction and (re)creation, and leaves readers with a textual monument to a multilayered past.

Framing Dumesle's text as a compendium of Haitian sites of memory brings into relief the pedagogical function that Dumesle ascribes to his ruinscape. Evoking Haiti and its ruins, the traveler proclaims the former "Terre classique de la liberté pour la famille africaine! Terre que

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[206] Stuart Hall, "Race, Articulation and Societies Structured in Dominance" in *Sociological Theories*: *Race and Colonialism*, ed. Unesco (Paris: Unesco, 1980), 328.

[207] On Dumesle's mulatto favoritism see Middelanis, "*Les mémoires*," 111: Il est significatif que ce récit exulte des représentants du people noir sans noms. Ils ont droit à des épithètes antiques, mais restent sans nom historique"; Ibid., 116-17.

foula l'orgueilleux despotisme" and, in the same breath, apostrophizes the latter, "et vous, débris imposants qui attestez sa chute, publiez ces faits pour les graver à jamais dans la mémoire des hommes" (*V*, 222). Here, this "tour" of Haitian national history – including visits to Christophe's Sans-Souci palace and Citadelle Laferrière, Pétion's tomb, and the battlefields of the north in addition to Le Cap – collapses the still blurry differences between literature and history as the physical ruinscape is intricately woven into the textual fabric of *Voyage*; it is as if Dumesle marshals both ruins and text in an effort to publish a memorialization of the Haitian Revolution. Foregrounding the materiality of history and its inscription in a country where oral history was dominant and the majority of the population illiterate, Dumesle's text frames the question of historical witnessing thanks to the author's almost systematic reliance on local informants to help "remember" the history of the sites that he visits.[208] Approaching this question of direct relationality to history in Dumesle's textual memorialization, his narrative plays an important role in the passage from lived memory to a more distanced and detached memory accessible only through mediated symbols and monuments. In other worlds, Dumesle's text lies at the crossroads not only of oral (popular) and written (elite) traditions, but it also serves as a key intermediary between lived and historical memory, what Pierre Nora differentiates as "milieux de mémoire" and "lieux de mémoire," in the 1820s as the revolutionary generation began slowly ceding its place to the post-revolutionary generation.[209]

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[208] On historical witnessing see ibid., 108, 111. See also Carolyn Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1990), 264-65. This is precisely the critique of one of the few contemporary reviewers who disparages the way Dumesle abuses and overuses the almost mythical and surely fictional solitary figures his narrator encounters on the site of each ruin who authoritatively, but suspiciously, recreate entire battles, dialogue and events. See Gustave d'Alaux, "Les mœurs et la littérature nègres," *Revue des Deux Mondes* 14 (1852), 762-794 or "La littérature jaune II," *Revue des Deux Mondes* 16 (1852), 1048-1085, cited in ibid., 108.

[209] Pierre Nora, "Entre mémoire et histoire" in *Les lieux de mémoire*, vol 1, ed. Pierre Nora (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), xxii-xlii.

Dumesle's palimpsestic ruinscape effectively interweaves memories of Amerindian, Franco-European, and (Euro-)African presences and interaction on the island in a way that resonates with recent revisions of Nora's notion of lieux de mémoire. In their re-conceptualization of lieux de mémoire as *noeuds de mémoire*, or knots of memory, Michael Rothberg, Debarati Sanyal, and Max Silverman demonstrate the way memories are knotted, braided, and inscribed rhizomatically within each other. Building upon Rothberg's notion of "multidirectional memory," which posits the relationality and interaction between competing sets of collective memories rather than seeing cultural memory as a "zero-sum game," the concept of knots of memory underscores the plurality of discourses on memory and their uneasy cohabitation.[210] The trope of ruins as a representational form for post-colonial rupture as articulated in Dumesle's work might very well fit such a framework given the way his excavation of a post-independence, post-colonial memory uncovers three different, but highly intertwined, layers that play off one another: the indigenous, the colonial, and the post-colonial. The denouement of *Voyage*, which portrays a regenerated Haitian nation, in reality only further binds, or knots, these disparate sites and memoires together.

Moreover, the concept of the knot, which has the hermeneutic benefit of framing the polysemic "meaning" of the ruins, further reveals the reality that Haitian writers did not have a monopoly on representations of their nation. In fact, a host of competing narratives regularly made claims not only on the country's sovereignty, but also on its ruins. In this trans-Atlantic,

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[210] Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009); Michael Rothberg, "Between Memory and Memory: From Lieux de mémoire to Nœuds de mémoire," in "Noeuds de mémoire: Multidirectional Memory in Postwar French and Francophone Culture," ed. Michael Rothberg, Debarati Sanyal and Max Silverman, special issue, *Yale French Studies* 118-119 (2010), 3-12. For a related image, the palimpsest, to capture the co-existence, or plurality of collective memories, see Max Silverman, *Palimpsestic Memory: The Holocaust and Colonialism in French and Francophone Fiction and Film* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2013). He argues that "palimpsestic memory" offers "a dynamic and open space composed of interconnecting traces of different voices, sites and times, and it would hold out the prospect of new solidarities across the lines of race and nation" (8).

pan-Caribbean arena, Dumesle's production of a national memory rooted in the Revolution is almost inseparable from its opposite: a (neo)colonial reactionary counter-memory in which the world-historic "idea of 1804" metamorphoses into a disquieting colonial apocalypse. Thus, if Dumesle's ruinscape offers a way to "think" post-colonial Haiti and its Revolution as a new Caribbean phoenix reborn from the ashes and as a model of anticolonial revolt, former colonists, anti-abolitionists, and even some self-proclaimed "friends" of Haiti like Victor Schœlcher contrive to "unthink," or silence, the Revolution by recasting its radical anticolonial project as a chaotic post-colonial aberration.

Reading Ruins II: French Memory in the Postcolonial Cemetery

Victor Schœlcher's place in both historiography and Franco-Caribbean memory is on the "good" side of history as the figure most closely associated with the campaign to abolish slavery under the July Monarchy and its implementation under the Second Republic in 1848.[211] Reinterred in the Panthéon in 1949 as a figurehead of French antislavery and moral compass of nineteenth-century republicanism like his close friend Victor Hugo, Victor Schœlcher's popular image is perhaps best summarized in the words of Aimé Césaire's paean of a man who "se situe dans le réel et oriente l'histoire vers sa fin."[212] Going further, the champion of Negritude rightly praises the abolitionist's writings as "un excellent exemple, et très moderne, de critique démystificatrice."[213] Concurring with Césaire's assessment, the Haitian writer Louis-Joseph Janvier, a contemporary of Schœlcher, in a book that is critical of the majority of foreign visitors to the island, praises Schœlcher as a great friend of Haiti whom every person of color should

[211] Nelly Schmidt, *Victor Schœlcher, et l'abolition de l'esclavage* (Paris: Fayard, 1994), 41; According to Lawrence Jennings, "it was not until the latter part of the Restoration monarchy of Louis XVIII and Charles X, and especially after the advent of the July Monarchy of King Louis Philippe in 1830, that French anti-slavery was reborn" in *French Anti-Slavery: The Movement for the Abolition of Slavery in France, 1802-1848*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), vii.
[212] Aimé Césaire, "Victor Schœlcher et l'abolition de l'esclavage," introduction to Victor Schœlcher, *Esclavage et Colonisation, textes choisis et annotés*, ed. Emile Tersen (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1948), 3.
[213] Ibid., 8.

read.[214] Yet, despite Schœlcher's progressive *bona fides* as a socialist abolitionist who also opposed the death penalty and the dictatorship of Napoleon III, the apocalyptic view of post-independent Haiti that emerges from his writing exposes the limits of the activist's radical thought. It also resonates to a certain extent with the (neo)colonial discourse of the Creole planters and colonial lobby he so ardently opposed in his abolitionist writings. For Schœlcher, the end of slavery was not coterminous with the end of colonialism; as an "abolitionniste et assimilationniste," in the words of Anne Girollet, it was but a step toward a more just and moral colonial regime that would reduce violence and exploitation, subject the colonies to the same rights as the metropole, and "civilize" the ex-slaves and their descendants.[215] While the French, English, and Spanish abolitions of slavery in the nineteenth-century Caribbean are in accordance with Schœlcher's model of abolition without independence, the case of Haiti presents a strong challenge to the post-slavery Caribbean envisioned by the Frenchman.

A wealthy rentier without any formal post-secondary training, Schœlcher, whose earliest published articles were works of art criticism published in *L'Artiste*, became interested in abolishing slavery during his first trip through the southern United States, the Caribbean, and Mexico as a representative for his father's porcelain business. His republican ideals and confrontation with the realities of slavery in the Americas quickly made him an activist for abolition. Although Schœlcher initially supported reformist and progressivist positions with respect to the question of abolition in the 1830s, he grew convinced of the need for immediate abolition in the early 1840s. On the one hand, British emancipation, enacted definitively in 1838, had shown that abolition would not sound the economic death knell of the colonies. On the other

[214] Louis-Joseph Janvier, *La république d'Haïti et ses visiteurs, 1840-1882* (Paris : Marpon et Flammarion, 1883), 198.
[215] Anne Girollet, *Victor Schœlcher, abolitionniste et républicain: Approche juridique et politique de l'œuvre d'un fondateur de la République* (Paris : Karthala, 2000), 276.

hand, the limits of the British model of progressive emancipation, which placed slaves in an apprenticeship under their masters before granting them complete freedom, a system decried according to Schœlcher by the ex-masters for their loss of authority and the slaves for the perpetuation of coerced, unpaid labor, forced him to reverse his previous progressivist views. This shift is reflected in the publications that followed his second trip to the Caribbean in *Des colonies françaises: Abolition immédiate de l'esclavage* (1842) and *Colonies étrangères et Haïti: Resultats de l'emancipation anglaises* (1843), which constitute important comparative economic, sociological, and anthropological studies of slavery and abolition in the region.

Schœlcher's project of emancipation for the French colonies involved a revolutionary re-organization of colonial life by granting slaves freedom, making them French citizens, and converting them into wage laborers for their former masters. Combating the anti-abolitionist argument that emancipation would trigger the end of the colonies, Schœlcher organizes his entire demonstration in *Des colonies françaises* around the premise that abolition would instead increase colonial wealth as he writes in the introduction, "émancipation des noirs, tel est notre premier vœu. Prospérité des colonies, tel est notre second vœu."[216] Following prior post-emancipation economic plans in the Caribbean including the British apprenticeship model or the Haitian post-revolutionary examples, large-scale plantation agriculture was key to the success of Schœlcher's plan. But differing from the British and Haitian examples predicated on forced labor during the apprenticeship period for the former and, for the latter, in the numerous civil codes promulgated in early nineteenth-century Haiti, Schœlcher's utopian post-slavery colonial society was heavily influenced by the saint-simonian belief in progress through industrialization – Schœlcher was a proponent of centralizing and expanding sugar production by creating centralized processing factories – and fourierist associationism to regenerate the Antillean

[216] Victor Schœlcher, *Des colonies étrangères: Abolition immédiate de l'esclavage* (Paris: Pagnerre, 1842), ix.

economy after emancipation in large phalanstery-like estates. Such a possibility already existed in latent form in the slavery-plagued French Antilles according to Schœlcher in the early 1840s: "Les campagnes des Antilles offrent de grandes et sérieuses réalisations de la puissance que les fouriéristes attribuent au travail en commun."[217] Schœlcher gives the utopian optimism of his post-emancipation blueprint full voice in a publication on the eve of the second French abolition. He writes that the rational re-organization of the plantation economy around the pillars of centralization, industrialization, and associationism will create new villages, gardens, and buildings in which "une population affranchie du fouet et du cachot, de l'injure et du mépris, libre et régénérée, jouira heureuse du fruit de son travail, du beau ciel, des douces brises et des frais ombrages."[218] While Schœlcher's second Caribbean voyage proved instrumental for convincing him of the moral necessity and economic feasibility of immediate abolition, Haiti reveals the limits of his project for post-emancipation Caribbean society. For a utopian thinker so intensely focused on the possibilities of the future in a post-slavery colonial society, his journey through the first country to obtain this status in the Americas is unexpectedly oriented toward the past whose receding grip Haitians still actively resisted through the very aspects of their society that Schœlcher would criticize.

Based on his 1841 trip to Haiti, Schœlcher's narrative of the country's history and political climate in the waning years of Boyer's authoritarian regime offers a portrait of a post-slavery society more than four decades in the making. Littered throughout his exhaustive assessment of the world's first nation to arise from a successful slave revolt are a number of reflections on ruin, revolution, and memorialization that open a curious intertextual dialogue, though twenty years later, with Dumesle's *Voyage* that oddly inverts the two writers' real-life

[217] Ibid., 22.
[218] Victor Schœlcher, *Histoire de l'eslavage pendant ces deux dernières années*, vol. II (Paris: Pagnerre, 1847), 380.

interaction during Schœlcher sojourn in Haiti. As Schœlcher's biographer Nelly Schmidt remarks, the abolitionist's Haitian hosts, among whom were many figures from the opposition including the now excluded senator Hérard Dumesle, strongly influenced their guest's view of Boyer's two-decade rule, a period of relative peace and stability despite growing authoritarian rule. In particular, Dumesle even organized a March 1841 banquet in Schœlcher's honor.[219] Going further, Schmidt even tracks many of Schœlcher's comments on Haiti to a document left in his personal papers authored by Dumesle and titled "Haïti en 1839," which argues primarily that "le gouvernement haïtien sacrifie l'avenir de ce peuple à l'intérêt particulier et au maintien d'une domination fondée sur l'oubli des droits de la société."[220] Schœlcher's liberal affinities for Dumesle's critical assessment of Boyerism dissipate, however, in the juxtaposition of the two's divergent poetics of ruins in Haiti, which thus lays bare significant differences in each figure's memorialization of the Haitian Revolution. Schœlcher's *Colonies étrangères et Haïti* constitutes a documented and detailed narrative that is part history and part travelogue, and which continues to offer precious insight into the nineteenth-century Caribbean. My reading of the Haitian episode in *Colonies étrangères et Haïti* begins at the end of the text in order to foreground immediately the way that Schœlcher weaves together ruins and other vestigial traces of empire with significant reflections on memorialization before developing these themes in a close reading of the rest of this work.[221]

Describing a walk through a small village cemetery in France, Schœlcher recalls discovering a tombstone with an unexpected inscription. The epitaph that catches his attention marks the resting place of "N., ancien propriétaire à Saint-Domingue" (*CEH* II, 321). At first

[219] On the banquet see Schmidt, *Victor Schœlcher*, 42.
[220] Hérard Dumesle, "Haïti en 1839," cited in ibid.
[221] Victor Schœlcher, *Colonies étrangères et Haïti*: *Résultats de l'émancipation anglaise* vol. 1-2 (Paris: Pagnerre, 1843). Hereafter cited in text as *CEH*.

surprised by the dead man's vanity, the epitaph soon carries his mind back to an old plantation outside Les Cayes on Haiti's southern coast. The memory of the dead planter's former estate engenders a long reflection on ruins, slavery, and the fleeting past:

> Les traces qu'ont laissées les colons de Saint-Domingue sont d'une véritable magnificence. Les ruines de leurs habitations sont des ruines de palais; leurs routes sont de savants ouvrages de ponts-et-chaussées qui ont un caractère de force romaine. Il faut l'avouer, ces arrogants et cruels possesseurs d'esclaves employaient une partie des richesses que produisaient les nègres à de belles œuvres…Tout a été détruit au milieu d'une longue guerre servile, et on ne le regrette pas puisque c'était le produit du travail forcé…Dans ces ruines on voit, sans éprouver de pitié, le juste châtiment dû à la violence, mais en même temps on ne peut refuser son admiration à leurs grandeurs. (*CEH* II, 321)

An ambivalent meditation on the legacy of the Haitian Revolution, Schœlcher's ruinscape foregrounds the implications for a post-colonial French memory of Saint-Domingue caught between an attraction to and repulsion from the "belles œuvres" of colonial slavery, the very same practice the abolitionist is attempting to dismantle in the remaining French colonies. Schœlcher's ambivalence here is further doubled by the symbolic ambiguity of the site of this memory, a French graveyard where tombs attest to a will to resist time, to serve as the trace of existence for perpetuity while the corpse's slow dissolution, decomposition, and effacement works against such desires for permanence and memory. Furthermore, as the proverbial site of haunting, Schœlcher's cemetery crystallizes the tensions and ambiguities that subtend his visit to Haiti earlier in the text.

Before arriving in Haiti, Schœlcher sets the stakes of his first and only visit to the country high. Anticipating the "sublime tableau" of "l'avenir réalisé" in this post-slavery society, the abolitionist regarded Haiti as a social and political science experiment whose results would determine right and wrong regarding the question of immediate abolition (*CEH* I, 3). "Je désirais, j'esperais, je craignais," he recollects feeling before landing in Le Cap (*CEH* II, 171); his first steps and the sights awaiting him there would soon confirm his temerity. It is these first steps into Haiti that set the tone for the rest of Schœlcher's narrative of his four-month journey throughout the new country. Although the Frenchman came and went months before the 1842 earthquake, the specter of catastrophe overshadows his excitement about visiting the place where "la race africaine prenait son rang au milieu de la civilisation" (*CEH* II, 171). Reaching Haiti via Le Cap, the abolitionist recalls the silent emptiness that welcomed his arrival on Haitian soil as if he had disembarked in the wake of a "siège" or "un grand désastre public" (*CEH* II, 171). If first impressions are telling, then the ones that Schœlcher would publish two years later in *Des colonies étrangères et Haïti* portend disappointment and a growing malaise concerning Haiti. In fact, despite (or perhaps because of) its highly charged status in the minds of friends and foes alike, the reality on which Schœlcher reports quickly unsettles the abolitionist. In Le Cap, Schœlcher remarks on the state of formerly luxurious three-story colonial homes: once the symbol of Saint-Domingue's wealth and status, recalling Dumesle's portrait of the ruined fort in Le Môle Saint Nicolas, they stand now in a shocking state of dilapidation buried in the overgrowth "des arbres vigoureux qui passent leurs branches verdoyantes à travers les fenêtres démontées" (*CEH* II, 172). Imbibed in the grandiose reputation of the city once known as the "Paris of the Antilles," the abolitionist laments that "Le Cap-Haïtien n'est plus que le squelette du Cap-Français" (*CEH* II, 172). The image of an urban skeleton that Schœlcher offers here is

important for comprehending the activist's understanding of nineteenth-century Haiti. The skeleton, whose imagery of death and decay evokes the cemetery mentioned earlier, reduces Cap-Haïtien to the specter or phantom of its colonial past. Schœlcher, therefore, from the outset defines Haiti as a haunting colonial lack. As the abolitionist's gaze imprints a ruinscape onto rural and urban Haiti, the interpretation – not to say the "reading" of these ruins – is essential to Schœlcher's report on Haiti's post-slavery "progress" or lack thereof.

Once outside the urban limits of Cap-Haïtien, Schœlcher is increasingly overcome by the spectacle of a slow-motion disaster more than forty years in the making. "Ruines, pauvreté, demi-sauvagerie" and "des maisons de maîtres délabrées," even in the nearby northern plains, once the site of wealthy plantations, alongside wilted sugarcane fields, increasingly define the Haitian landscape and continue to overwhelm the abolitionist's senses (*CEH* II, 314). Overall, Schœlcher is shocked that, in his own words, this new republic has failed to "remplir les ruines de l'esclavage" (*CEH* II, 172). In emptying the French ruins of the novel New World identity that Dumesle had projected onto them, Schœlcher redefines them as the symbol of post-colonial stasis. That ruins, revolution, and progress all intertwine for Schœlcher in this part of the Haitian countryside is not an accident given that the northern plains outside the city limits of Le Cap that Schœlcher observes were the location of a significant part of the large-estate latifundia plantation sugar economy that was the source of Saint-Domingue's immense wealth. But, as Schœlcher soon discovers, the situation is analogous elsewhere in western and southern Haiti.

In Croix-des-Boquets, outside Port-au-Prince in another zone where sugar production once flourished, Schœlcher writes that

> C'est un désert aride et blanchâtre…Les luxurieuses sucreries d'autrefois jonchent encore la terre de leurs ruines silencieuses…Les campagnes d'Haïti sont mortes.

> Là, où l'esclavage faisait des tonnes de sucre par milliers, on ne fait plus que quelques vivres et du sirop pour en fabriquer du tafia. (*CEH* II, 261)

Schœlcher laments what he sees as lost potential and explains the situation further by attributing the problem to a number of causes. While rampant theft and the lack of security and investment capital were surely significant factors, Schœlcher focuses on two other aspects to explain Haiti's "underdevelopment": first, the pernicious stereotype of lazy blacks ("le laboureur vit dans la paresse," *CEH* II, 263) and, second, the supposed fact that Haiti is not a society but instead "une agglomération d'hommes" (*CEH* II, 263) lacking unity and common conviction, thus returning the discussion of ruins back to the idea of nation-building from Dumesle's text.

In fact, it might be said that these two factors – "lazy" Haitians and lack of social cohesion – are not separate causes and that they, instead, should be thought of as connected. Here Schœlcher appropriates a discourse of development that elites in Haiti have repeatedly used and attempted to enact since even before Haiti's inception, when governor-general Toussaint Louverture installed a regime of forced labor requiring the former slaves to return to work the plantations with limited economic success. As the anthropologist Gérard Barthélemy explains, if Toussaint Louverture and after him Dessalines, Christophe, and Boyer whose *Code rural* prescribed the same *corvée* "se sont vus obligés de le [the plantation regime] réaffirmer sans cesse et ont tenté de l'imposer, c'est sans doute que tout cela n'était pas aussi évident pour la masse des anciens esclaves que pour la nouvelle élite."[222] The question now becomes one about the distance between the elite and the masses, the constituent parts of this "agglomeration" that are certainly in contact but remain separate. The reason for this separation has its origins in the tripartite division of colonial society among whites, free men and women of color, and slaves.

[222] Gérard Barthélemy, *Le pays en dehors: essai sur l'univers rural haïtien* (Port-au-Prince: Editions Henri Deschaps, 1989).

After the displacement of the colonial elite, the free men of color, typically creole mulattos and freed slaves who already owned significant amounts of property before the revolution, were able to monopolize the means of production. By contrast, the mostly African-born black majority was excluded and forced to provide its labor to a plantation system it had fought to obliterate. Thus, Schœlcher's comment on Haiti's inability to reproduce the colonial export economy hides the socio-economic divisions inherent to Haitian society and the varying responses that each group has developed in response to independence.

Across the Caribbean in the transition from slavery to emancipation, elites tried to reproduce the colonial plantation system, for instance, by passing laws restricting the movement of former slaves in order to tie them to the land of their former masters. Colonial commercial interests also recruited workers from Asia, primarily India, and Africa in an effort to increase the labor pool and drive down wages, a practice that Schœlcher denounces in *L'Immigration aux colonies* (1883). For his part, Schœlcher championed a more equal redistribution of wealth. In 1849, for example, Schœlcher distinguished in an editorial published in the Guadeloupean-based *Le Progrès* between two socialist schools of thought in the sugar colonies: state monopolies and worker associations. The first, he writes, represents a "communisme pur" whereas in the second, where his preference stands, workers and owners share in the profits produced on large plantations in a system that would yield greater production and offer work to all the former slaves.[223] Yet in the Haitian countryside, Schœlcher is unable to look beyond the ruins and see in their place a concerted resistance to the plantation system affirming peasant autonomy. At this time many rural Haitians lived in small village communities that scholars have termed the *lakou* (from the French *la cour*, or courtyard) system based on subsistence farming of commonly worked land shared among neighbors connected to one another through kinship and networks of

[223] Victor Schœlcher, "Du problème social," *Le Progrès*, July 1849, cited in Schmidt, *Victor Schœlcher*, 55.

solidarity that developed outside of state structures.[224] These small land-holding kinship groups, similar to the nineteenth-century Jamaican "yard" and provision ground according to Mimi Sheller, increasingly turned to small-scale coffee production, which required less capital to begin and less labor to cultivate.[225] The *lakou* offered rural Haitians an alternative, rooted in a semi-autonomous peasant economy and collective solidarity, to the large-scale agricultural estates in which Schœlcher and contemporary elites saw much potential.[226] As Laurent Dubois remarks, Schœlcher's inability to look beyond the ruined plantations in rural Haiti "shows how even a leading abolitionist like Schœlcher could remain blind to the antislavery revolution that was still underway in Haiti. The rural culture he condemned was driven by a historically constituted set of aspirations and determined search for autonomy."[227] The contradiction that Dubois finds in Schœlcher's consternation about the state of rural Haiti exposes the limits of the latter's abolitionism as it relates to the plantation system and the economic model upon which he founds his vision of emancipation. Schœlcher's rationalist phalanstery plantations overlook a different model of social organization that the former slaves had elaborated as a response to the regimes of forced labor implemented by successive colonial and post-colonial regimes after the 1793 abolition of slavery in the territory.

To put it another way: the ruined plantation conceals important stakes for the constitution of nineteenth-century Haiti and post-colonial nation building. Schœlcher's own reading sides

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[224] Serge Larose explains that, "The *lakou* is a "group of interrelated conjugal families, each occupying its own dwelling-unit, and sharing a common yard." A patriarchal, and sometimes polygynous household unit, the family is a "cognatic descent group occupying or originating from a clearly defined piece of land." See Serge Larose, "The Haitian Lakou: land, family, ritual" in *Family and Kinship in Middle America and the Caribbean*, eds. Arnaud Marks and Rene Romer (Curacao: University of Netherlands Antilles, 1975), 482. Cited in Mimi Sheller, *Democracy after Slavery: Black Publics and Peasant Radicalism in Haiti and Jamaica* (Gainesville: The University Press of Florida, 2000), 109n2.
[225] Sheller, *Democracy*, 92.
[226] Trouillot, *Haiti: State against Nation*, 60. "By 1859, Haiti was the fourth largest coffee producer in the world (after Brazil, Java, and Ceylon), and coffee constituted 70 percent of its exports," Sheller, *Democracy*, 48.
[227] Dubois, *Haiti*, 107, 114.

with Haitian elites in the first half of the century by seeing these dilapidated constructions as an untapped source of riches if Haiti could only resurrect the colonial plantation export economy, replacing slaves with salaried workers. Evacuating the plantation as a site of traumatic history – an oppressive synecdoche of a system that denied autonomy and humanity and went so far as to attempt to prevent thought according to Nick Nesbitt – that many Haitians in the 1840s had experienced firsthand and actively sought to avoid, Schœlcher proceeds to dismiss outright the counter-plantation *lakou* system.[228] As yet another lack, the incarnation of the skeletal remains of Saint-Domingue, the ruined plantations and, implicitly, the counter-plantation system represents for Schœlcher a negative happiness as he writes of the "complacent" peasants that "Ils n'ont pas encore senti la nécessité de se créer les besoins qui enfantent l'industrie, obligent au travail, et en développant notre sensibilité nerveuse, raffinent nos jouissances. Négativement heureux, ils existent au jour le jour, et grâce à la liberté, ils sont gais et contents malgré leur indigence" (*CEH* II, 266). The comment about the "laziness" of Haitian peasants reflects less a latent racism on the abolitionist's part than a belief in progress through agricultural industrialization in the Caribbean.

Throughout his work Schœlcher refutes that blacks are inherently lazy by regularly arguing that since slaves have no economic incentive to work for their masters they resist work as much as possible on the plantation.[229] Rather, for Schœlcher, laziness is a reflection of a state of civilization, or industriousness, of a people that is unrelated to race. For instance, about white peasants in Puerto Rico, Schœlcher writes that they "végète[nt] toujours dans une pareses inouïe au milieu des broussailles et des grandes herbes" (*CEH* I, 316). The discourse of slave or peasant laziness in the (former) colonies finds its corollary in a similar metropolitan preoccupation with

[228] Nesbitt writes that "The plantation was structured, through various forms of violence, in the vain attempt to obliterate every intimation of universality from the slaves' mental life, indeed, to keep them from thinking at all" in "The Idea of 1804," 26.
[229] See for example, Victor Schœlcher, "Des Noirs," *Revue de Paris* vol. 20, 78 or *La Vérité aux ouvriers et cultivateurs de la Martinique* (Paris: Pagnerre, 1849), 231-232.

the productivity of urban workers in an industrializing eighteenth-century France as Pierre Saint-Amand shows in *The Pursuit of Laziness* (2011). The intellectuals like Rousseau and Diderot that Saint-Amand studies redeploy laziness as a form of resistance to the alienating and exploitative forces of industrialization directed at workers in both mainland France and its colonies alike.[230] Throughout the Caribbean in general and in Haiti in particular, the discourse of laziness that Schœlcher repeats highlights the former slaves' search for economic and social autonomy as well as their refusal to subject themselves to the disciplining regime of the plantation whether conceived as a state-run factory or a utopian phalanstery. What is all the more strange about Schœlcher's description of rural Haiti is his failure to see in the *lakou* system a type of fourierist worker associations that he theorized for the post-emancipation Caribbean agricultural plantation. In Jamaica, Dominica, Antigua, and Martinique, Schœlcher cites examples of worker associations, albeit on a small-scale or in embryonic form, as a model of development in these societies. Haiti, however, is an exception in the Frenchman's Caribbean travelogue despite the association of labor inherent to the *lakou* system as manifested through the *kombit*, or the practice of neighbors working land together. Although other contemporary travelers, including the Jamaican Richard Hill observed this practice, its absence in Schœlcher's narrative only further underscores his fixation on the large-estate latifundia plantation of the colonial past.[231] The ruins therefore represent for him, not the debris of a system that the ex-slaves and their descendants fought to destroy during the Haitian Revolution and in the decades

[230] Pierre Saint-Amand, *The Pursuit of Laziness: An Idle Interpretation of the Enlightenment*, trans. Jennifer Curtiss Gage (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011). Saint Amand notes the paradoxical nature of this discourse in regards to African slaves in contemporary pamphlets like *De la nécessité d'adopter l'esclavage en France* (1797): "the Black is paradoxically judged to be inherently lazy, inimical to laborious activity (black nations are strangers to industry), but at the same time predisposed to work on the plantation, because of his natural tolerance for heat and other local conditions" (8).

[231] This is for example one of the sources of Sheller's demonstration of peasant radicalism in Haiti, Sheller, *Democracy*, 89-110. Sheller writes that "collective work structures that can be traced back to the nineteenth century (such as *Sociétés de Travail, Combites, Escouades*, and *Avanjou*), all share labour outside of the monetary system, work land collectively, serve as friendly societies, and in some cases elect leaders," *Democracy*, 94.

after independence, but rather an emancipation gone awry and the Haitian government's failure to develop the country.

Back to Schœlcher's earlier statement about Haitian progress before his voyage to Haiti and confrontation with the ruins, the ex-slaves have clearly rejected his notion of large-estate latifundia capitalist progress, the same colonial capitalism the Haitian Revolution had already dismantled in the territory. Yet, his perception of this "public disaster" in 1841, in Schœlcher's own words, shakes his belief in the abolitionist cause to the core when he summarily writes that "Tout en ces lieux justifie ce que les antagonists de la race noire disent contre elle" (*CEH* II, 181). Despite this slippage, his faith nevertheless persists; "Tout n'est pas perdu," he proclaims, hinting at the possibilities of the future (again a future depending largely on the ability of Haitian elites to re-launch on a massive scale plantation capitalism) by suggesting that if Haitians were able to free themselves from slavery, they are capable of overcoming their present hardships (*CEH* II, 331). To the "disorder and barbarity" that many observers underline as racialized proof of black inferiority and the perils of abolitionism, Schœlcher responds, "Haïti n'est pas si barbare que le disent les ennemis de la race africaine. Il est impossible de nier le caractère bienveillant, l'esprit doux de ces prétendus sauvages. Ce sont là des qualités essentielles. Le reste est affaire d'éducation" (*CEH* II, 176). His refusal of racial essentialization, which stops short of asserting outright equality, emanates from the abolitionist's career-long opposition to the anthropological and biological racism incarnated in such texts as Gobineau's *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines* (1853-55) and bespeaks the abolitionist's continued belief in the betterment of the oppressed, most notably through the civilizing benefits of education.[232] However, if Schœlcher's narrative eschews the barbarity of his opponents' characterization of Haiti, he more than

[232] For example, see Schœlcher, *Des colonies françaises*, chapter XI "Dans l'échelle des êtres le nègre appartient au genre homme," 139-154.

subscribes to the trope of Haitian disorder, to the characterization of post-independent Haiti as a ruin-laden disaster zone that only a resurrection of the colonial economy can remediate.

Significantly, in this usage of the past lurks an additional layer of Schœlcher's semiotics of ruins, one that further distances his account from Dumesle's as less forgiving and more perniciously neo-colonial. Schœlcher's vocabulary of ruins and skeletons offers his contemporary French readers a familiar conceptual framework to understand his disappointment regarding post-revolutionary Haiti. In the discourse of ruins so prominent among the Romantics wherein ruins attest to the decline of cultures and civilizations, Schœlcher's Haitian ruinscape translates a nostalgia for the eclipse of colonial Saint-Domingue. In this respect, his ruinscape is the mirror opposite of that of his friend Hérard Dumesle. Ruins in Haiti bring Schœlcher's reconciliation of colonialism with his staunch abolitionism to an impasse as he struggles to comprehend the Haitian peasants' search for autonomy and self-sufficiency. His focus on ruins, often of former plantations, betrays his incapacity to conceive of an alternate post-slavery society beyond the plantation system, on the one hand, and colonialism, on the other.[233] In this way, Schœlcher remains ideologically aligned with many nineteenth-century French republicans for whom colonial expansion would become a lynchpin of the republican regeneration of post-Second Empire France during the Third Republic as well as with the planters he furiously opposed on the question of abolition.

Placed front and center, then, ruins segue directly into the question of monuments and memorialization in Schœlcher's narrative. During his visits to national sites of memory in Haiti, Schœlcher bemoans the underwhelming quality, if not the lack, of monuments to the Haitian Revolution and its heroes. Schœlcher writes that "Il est superflu d'ajouter qu'il serait peut-être

[233] Both European colonization and industrial-style agriculture are two of the solutions that Schœlcher offers in response to the abject poverty he encounters among Egyptian peasants, or *fellas*. See Victor Schœlcher, *L'Égypte en 1845* (Paris: Pagnerre, 1846), 109.

impossible de citer dans toute la république une seule construction qui méritât le nom de monument. Ce que les Français ont laissé est détruit, et depuis on n'a fait que des masures" (*CEH* II, 190). Still on this theme, his remarks about the existing monuments focus on their ruined state as a result of a combination of a lack of care and means. Likewise, Schœlcher comments on the chapel where Pétion's remains lie by noting the blocks of un-used marble resting near the unfinished monument to one of the nation's founding fathers. Elsewhere, when he arrives in Gonaïves, Schœlcher recalls the city's rich presence in the nation's affairs as "une des places les plus célèbres dans l'histoire de Saint-Domingue et d'Haïti" (*CEH* II, 175). Although Toussaint Louverture initially had designs to make it an important trading city, it was ultimately in Gonaïves that he was captured and deported by General Leclerc. Later, the city would be the site of Dessalines's Declaration of Independence in 1804 in an edifice that Schœlcher suggests is still standing in 1841, and to underline its potential use in the production of memory he adds, "Si jamais Haïti veut ériger un temple à la patrie savuée, c'est là [in Gonaïves] qu'il faudra le construire" (*CEH* II, 175). Instead, in its place Schœlcher encounters outside the city what he thinks might be the only monument to the revolution in the form of "le Poteau," which he describes as "une petite colonne commémorative qui s'écroule pierre à pierre sans que personne songe à la relever" (*CEH* II, 175). In comparison to Dumesle's attempts to demarcate a number of sites that participate in the construction of a collective national memory of the Haitian Revolution including Pétion's tomb, the Citadelle Laferrière, and the city of Le Cap, Schœlcher's depiction of the state of affairs almost twenty years later suggests the regenerative process that Dumesle's text means to initiate is lagging. From the French perspective in which revolutionaries in that country converted churches into museums – the Pantheon being the most iconic with its conversion from a church into a monument to the

Revolution and back into a church during the Restoration before its re-conversion once again into a secular national monument after the Revolution of 1830 – the incomplete memorialization of the Haitian Revolution might seem striking. In fact, the *Musée du Panthéon national haïtien* was inaugurated only in 1983. The efforts of Dumesle and other intellectuals suggest that the consolidation of a national memory was a primary preoccupation in this first half of the nineteenth century in Haiti. At the same time, the ruined or incomplete monuments also bespeak the country's inability at this time to come to terms with its own past as illustrated by the civil war, the creole-bossale impasse, and the lingering color politics that will be the focus of the next part of this chapter.

To return to the image of the cemetery, Schœlcher's ruinscape, in forming the grave of French imperialism in Haiti, is predicated on the equivocal "silencing of the past." Schœlcher's gaze attends to the slow-motion "silencing" of the traces of the French colonial presence in the ruined plantations – the skeletal remains he so laments – fading into the literal and figurative overgrowth of the Haitian nation. In other words, the latent "catastrophe" of abolition for Schœlcher is the eclipse of French imperial power, of the colonial status quo. Yet, this silencing for Schœlcher of the colonizer's trace is coterminous with a silencing of the full implications of the "idea of 1804" under the shroud of a neo-colonial nostalgia. Though Schœlcher never explicitly questions the necessity of the Haitian Revolution ("pourquoi les désastres de cette chute, *qui fut nécessaire*, ne sont-ils pas réparés par l'indépendance," *CEH* II, 172, my emphasis), his ruinscape registers Haiti's presence outside the abolitionist's prescribed plan for post-emancipation colonial agro-industrialization and the French "civilizing mission." Oblivious to the counter-plantation system, Schœlcher views the ruins not as a renewed point of departure

but, ultimately, as the "symptômes de la caducité" (*CEH* II, 181), a fatal reversal of the civilizing progress of African bodies and souls that justifies European colonization for the republican.

The "symptômes de la caducité," in other words the squalor and ruins of Haiti, contain the slippage of a reversion back to the ex-slaves supposed "Africanness" as Schœlcher writes: "La ville des Gonaïves, éparpillée sur le sable et enfoncée dans une poussière blanche et brûlante avec ses trois ou quatre cents habitants, réalise ce qu'on se figure d'une ville de la côte d'Afrique" (*CEH* II, 175). Adding to this exoticization of underdevelopment, Schœlcher depicts what can only be described as the "animality" of the former colonial subjects: "La nation haïtienne est une nation mal vêtue, gardée par des soldats en guenilles, habitant avec indifférence des maisons en ruines, et disputant des rues de fumier aux chevaux, aux ânes, aux cochons et aux poules qui cherchent pâture dans des villes sans police" (*CEH* II, 180). His description only translates further the sentiment that Haiti has deviated from its previous trajectory of colonial progress and now lingers in a state of post-colonial stasis. In Schœlcher's portrait of Haiti, the Revolution is not at all "silenced" in the way that Trouillot has described with regard to its blatant omission from Western historiography until recent decades and the rise of postcolonial, history, Atlantic world history, and global history. Schœlcher both grasps and supports the importance of Haiti's independence. In overlooking the rural *lakou* system in his hope to verify his utopian economic policies for the post-slavery French Antilles, Schœlcher silences the strategies of resistance and survival this system entails. It is less, in the view of Édouard de Lépine, that Schœlcher is unable to think positively about the possibility of black independence than the fact that in the ruined plantations and colonial palaces Schœlcher is blind to a post-slavery society that diverges from the one he would prefer to see created.[234] The same reckoning

[234] Edouard de Lépine, *Questions sur l'histoire antillaise* (Fort-de- France: Désormeaux, 1978), 112.

with the Haitian Revolution that characterizes Dumesle's and Schœlcher's travelogues also works its way into the ruins caused by two important nineteenth-century Caribbean earthquakes.

The Spectacle of Ruin I: Disaster and Violence in Cap-Haïtien, 1842

In the years following the abolitionist's return to France, the two massive earthquakes that toppled first Le Cap in May 1842 and then Pointe-à-Pitre in February 1843 suggest a notable shift in the Caribbean ruinscape that was so central to Hérard Dumesle's and Victor Schœlcher's respective "thinking" or "silencing" of the Haitian Revolution. The product of seismic shifts months apart, both earthquakes wrecked untold terror and destruction onto the respective economic centers of Haiti and Guadeloupe.[235] With estimated magnitudes of 8.1 (Haiti) and 8.3 (Guadeloupe), these "twin" earthquakes reportedly changed the course of rivers, stirred up deadly tidal waves in northern Haiti, and flattened part of the peak of the La Soufrière volcano in Basse-Terre, Guadeloupe.[236] In these small cities of ten (Le Cap) and fifteen thousand (Pointe-à-Pitre) inhabitants, nearly every stone edifice crumbled while fire consumed wood constructions along with many victims trapped under the rubble who might otherwise have escaped injured but alive. While casualties were significant in both cities (initial estimates of 5,000 in Le Cap and 3,000 in Pointe-à-Pitre), the outbreak of violent looting in the ruined streets, homes, and stores of Le Cap constitutes a significant contrast with the reports of docile, duty-bound slaves in Guadeloupe in the days after the cataclysm.[237]

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[235] Cap-Haïtien lies along the septontrional fault line cutting south of Cuba, the northern coast of Hispaniola and eastward to Puerto Rico whereas in the eastern Lesser Antilles Guadeloupe is located near the subduction of the American plate under the Caribbean plate.

[236] These estimated magnitudes are from the National Geophysical Data Center's Significant Earthquake Database, accessed May 19, 2014, http://www.ngdc.noaa.gov/nndc/struts/form?t=101650&s=1&d=1. As a point of comparison, the 2010 earthquake in Haiti had a magnitude of 7.0 while the earthquake that precipitated the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster registered at 9.0.

[237] Contemporary estimates are inexact and rarely systematic. Most contemporary Haitian sources (Beaubrun Ardouin, Thomas Madiou) use this estimation. In Guadeloupe, one systemic re-evaluation of the death toll lowered the initial estimates to 539. See "Rapport du Dr. Dutrouleau," in *"La Pointe-à-Pitre n'existe plus… !": Relations du Tremblement de Terre de 1843 en Guadeloupe*, ed. J. Picard (Gosier: Caret, 2003),107.

Though long linked as important cogs in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century French Atlantic slave system, Haiti and Guadeloupe could not seem more opposed when these massive earthquakes turned Le Cap and Pointe-à-Pitre upside-down in the early 1840s. The Republic of Haiti, ruled by free men of color and composed of a population barely a generation removed from slavery, faced its first large-scale natural disaster since independence. On Guadeloupe, however, plantation slavery still endured despite the onward march of abolitionism and radical transformations to the sugar export market. Yet, not withstanding the geographical and temporal distances separating each earthquake in addition to each island's position on opposite sides of the post-colonial divide, contemporary reactions to both disasters often compressed them into a single, continuous seismic event. For example, Lepelletier de Saint-Rémy, in a treatise on the French re-conquest of Hispaniola writes of the May 1842 and February 1843 earthquakes as if they were one continuous tremor, a "fléau souterrain continuant sa marche" across the Caribbean.[238] Though his account draws the catastrophes together, Lepelletier de Saint-Rémy also makes an important distinction between the two. The contrast that the imperial apologist makes centers on the question of post-quake violence and solidarity. In Guadeloupe, he reports "personne ne songea au pillage; et rapprochés par le Malheur commun, les hommes de toutes les couleurs et de toutes les conditions se prêtèrent le plus sublime et le plus fraternel appui."[239] The Haitian historian Thomas Madiou, quoting Lepelletier de Saint-Rémy, goes further, however, in drawing the same distinction by making it a question of "civilization"in his conclusion that "les populations de la Guadeloupe...étaient donc plus civilisées" than the inhabitants of Le Cap.[240] Cast as foils, the juxtaposition of opposing reactions to disaster frames competing nineteenth-

[238] R. Lepelletier de Saint-Rémy, *Saint-Domingue: étude et solution nouvelle de la question haïtienne* (Paris: A. Bertrand, 1846), 213.
[239] Ibid., 214.
[240] Thomas Madiou, *Histoire d'Haïti* vol. 7 (Port-au-Prince : Editions Henri Deschamps, 1988 [1847]), 404.

century representations of blackness – the obedient "Uncle Tom" slaves in Guadeloupe and the violent, menacing ex-slaves in Haiti – and questions the very order of the colonial and post-colonial Caribbean from the "dis-order" of their ruins.

Picking up on part one of this chapter's interest in the relations between ruins and postcolonial collective memory in Haiti, the twin earthquakes at the center of this second part replace Dumesle and Schœlcher's practice of *reading* ruins with the notion of the *spectacle* of ruin in the wake of the utter destruction of Le Cap and Pointe-à-Pitre. This subtle shift in perspective triggers a greater conceptual realignment as the commentators of the ruinscapes in question make the debris from the earthquakes speak less to the past, as was the case of Dumesle and Schœlcher, and more to the present. Despite this new orientation toward the present, the commentary surrounding the ruins continues to interrogate social and political upheaval, imagined communities, and postcolonial memory. The use of this "theatrical" metaphor is not fortuitous since the ruinscapes in this part of the chapter hint at the way the narratives in question "restage" the Haitian Revolution from the northern plains of Haiti to the plantation slave colony of Guadeloupe.[241] Like the ruins in the preceding part, seismic disaster "thinks" the Haitian Revolution by forcing a confrontation with its (repressed) legacies among the Haitian merchant elite and the French plantocracy in Guadeloupe. In *The Writing of Disaster*, Maurice Blanchot muses on how catastrophe reconfigures language when he writes that "the disaster de-scribes."[242] My argument here takes its impulse from this idea of the "writing of disaster," but instead of

[241] I have not considered here Charles Lafont and Charles Desnoyer's play "Tremblement de terre de la Marinitique" (1840) based on the 1839 earthquake in Fort-Royal, primarily because this earthquake, though present in the contemporary imaginary, rarely enters into the Cap-Haïtien – Pointe-à-Pitre comparative framework many at the time established to "read" these events. See *Tremblement de Terre de la Martinique: drame en cinq actes, suivi de documents inédits*, ed. Barbara T. Cooper (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2012). The same goes for Adolphe Dennery's "Tremblement de terre de la Martinique" staged the same year in Paris. See *Tremblement de Terre de la Martinique*, ed. by Barbara T. Cooper (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2014).

[242] Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 7.

focusing on trauma and the limits of the representable, I demonstrate how catastrophe makes certain "repressed" social orders visible.

In spite of reports of a fiery meteor streaking across the sky at noon on May 7, 1842, auguring for some observers an impending tragedy, the earthquake that occurred five and a half hours later still caught most of northern Haiti by surprise. A result of a tectonic shift along the northern septentrional fault line, whose shallow epicenter lay near Ile de la Tortue about six miles off the island's northwestern coast rather than along the southern Enriquillo-Plantain Garden fault that caused the 2010 earthquake in western and southern Haiti, the powerful earthquake that rippled across Hispaniola was felt across the central Caribbean and the southern United States. Loss and death were greatest in northern Haiti where, for instance, five thousand people – half of the city's population – were said to have perished in Le Cap, a city built primarily of stone. Destruction was not, however, confined to this northern port as the force of the tremor caused a large tsunami that inundated Port-de-Paix, drowning many initial survivors, and changed the course of several nearby rivers, thereby flooding the surrounding countryside.[243]

Surrounded by four major tectonic plates (North American, South American, Nazca, and Cocos), the Caribbean plate has long been a hotbed of seismic activity regularly disrupting life in the region. Rivaling in size and destruction previous powerful Caribbean earthquakes like those of Port Royal, Jamaica in 1692 and Port-au-Prince in 1751, the May 1842 earthquake became known locally for the following decades in Creole as "*eveneman an*," or "the event," for the way it restructured life and society in northern Haiti.[244] Occurring on a Saturday with the population

[243] Beaubrun Ardouin, *Etudes sur l'Histoire d'Haïti, suivies de la vie du général J-M Borgella*, vol 11 (Paris: Dezobry et E. Magdeleine, 1860), 222; His description shares many aspects with Madiou VII: 399-401.
[244] For "the event," see Charles Dupuy, *Le coin de l'histoire* (Brossard: Editions La Périchole, 2006), 107-113. The chronicler of late colonial Saint-Domingue, Moreau de Saint-Méry relates that the 1751 earthquake in Port-au-Prince destroyed three-fourths of the city. See M.L.E. Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description topographique, physique, civile, politique et historique de la partie française de l'isle Saint-Domingue…* vol 1 (Philadelphia, 1798), 418.

swelled by additional merchants and vendors anticipating the following day's market (a detail to which I will soon return), "un bruit sans nom" unexpectedly turned the city upside-down and created horrifying sights of bodiless limbs – even the head of a live horse – protruding through the rubble before a raging fire consumed them in scenes so dreadful that survivors had to look away.[245] In the wake of this disaster, aftershocks were not the only challenge survivors had to confront in a city that had just seen the majority of its infrastructure, including all its schools and public administration buildings, toppled in a matter of instants. The mass of decaying corpses created ideal conditions for a typhus epidemic that would cripple the city's commercial activity for an entire year. Though trade eventually resumed and buildings were slowly rebuilt, decades passed before the city would regain its pre-quake population.[246]

However, like the 1692 Port Royal earthquake before it, none of these tragic details compared to the most striking aftershock of all in the ruins of Le Cap: the days – some accounts say weeks – of looting that took place in the ensuing vacuum of power as most of the local soldiers in charge of law and order were buried alive during the earthquake.[247] Registering this supplemental devastation and trauma, Demesvar Delorme, a prominent journalist, author and writer in late-nineteenth-century Haiti and an eleven-year-old survivor of "the event" recalls more than thirty years later the looters who "tuaient même les malheureux engagés sous les murailles depuis deux jours, implorant secours, afin de les piller sans crainte de revendication ultérieure."[248] The historian Thomas Madiou, despite not being a direct witness to the looters

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[245] For the noise, see Demesvar Delorme, *1842 au Cap*, ed. Jean M. Lambert, (Cap-Haïtien, 1942), 7; for the horse, see Mark E. Bird, "The Earthquake: In Memory of Departed Worth" (Jersey: Le Feuvre, 1870), 37.
[246] For the aftermath see Delorme, *1842*, (corpses) 14-15, (commerce) 15-16, (schools) 31; in 1859, James Redpath estimates the population at about six or seven thousand residents, see "A Visit to Hayti."
[247] For a contemporary narrative of the 1692 Port-Royal, Jamaica earthquake which caused part of the city to sink into the sea, see *The Truest and Largest Account of the Late Earthquake in Jamaica, June the 7th, 1692* (London: Parkhurst, 1693) and "Historic Earthquakes: Jamaica 1692 June 07 UTC," USGS, accessed April 6th, 2013, http://earthquake.usgs.gov/ earthquakes/ world/ events/1692_06_07.php
[248] Delorme, *1842*, 13.

from his location in Port-au-Prince, underscores, nevertheless, the "savagery" of "des hommes transformés en bêtes sauvages,"[249] thus hinting at the larger purchase of this part of the disaster in the narratives that publicized it.

In the carnage of Le Cap, looters did not only target private citizens and their possessions; Madiou explains as well that they made sure to empty the state treasuries located within the city. The looting ceased, depending on the source, either upon the arrival of army reinforcements or the severity of the typhus epidemic that made looters no longer willing to risk their health in plundering the remains.[250] Although varying accounts provide contrasting explanations for the end of the looting, Delorme best captures the cumulative effect of the earthquake, tidal wave, flooding, fire, looting, and disease triggered by the May 7 disaster when he laments that "Jamais calamité n'avait été plus meurtrière, plus complète."[251]

Writing about the modern concept of the "event" and its diffusion via narrative and representation in modern media, Alban Bensa and Eric Fassin posit that "Il est rarement possible d'isoler l'événement de sa médiatisation."[252] Likewise this nineteenth-century telluric event cannot be isolated from the various representations that "mediate" its consumption, that make it known at home and abroad in the Caribbean public sphere. In the discursive wake of May 7, 1842, two distinct, yet interrelated, analytical lenses – one political and one social – emerge to filter this disaster and, in particular, the looting and violence among the ruins. As for the political, Thomas Madiou and Beaubrun Ardouin bring into relief the competing tensions that

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[249] Madiou VII: 403.
[250] Both Ardouin (XI: 224) and Madiou (VII: 401) insist on the role of the state and the army in trying to manage the violence while Delorme suggests it was the severity of the typhus outbreak that made looters no longer willing to risk their health in the plunder (Delorme, *1842*,14).
[251] Delorme, *1842*, 14.
[252] Alban Bensa and Eric Fassin, "Les sciences sociales face à l'événement," in "Qu'est-ce qu'un événement ?" ed. Alban Bensa and Eric Fassin, *Terrain* 38 (2002), 3. Bensa and Fassin arguing against Pierre Nora's definition of the event as uniquely modern and linked to global mass-media write: "On dira plutôt que la médiatisation caractérise la modernité et non l'événement lui-même: d'une part, l'événement n'a pas attendu la naissance des journaux; d'autre part, il n'en fait pas toujours la une," 4.

comprise the crisis's political significance. An instantiation of national unity appears in their narration of the disaster response as the dispatch of relief supplies, additional troops, and doctors along with fundraising efforts by private citizens, merchants, and the government in Port-au-Prince seemingly create the image of national solidarity that transcends class divisions and regional boundaries in a "performance" of the nation.[253]

On the other hand, the drawn-out violence of the looting gives the lie to, or at the very least complicates, such discourses of unity and solidarity. Shifting focus to the looting also reorients attention onto the reaction of (some) citizens and the shortfalls of the state response. After nearly two decades of Boyerism in which state control increasingly fell to an executive who actively censored and muzzled opponents, the disaster helps catalyze renewed criticism and sustained the challenges of a growing opposition. Although President Boyer made a show of solidarity and unity in speeches and by sending relief supplies and personnel, including his chief doctors and political aides, he himself remained in the capital, a detail the liberal opposition quickly seized upon to criticize the president's "inaction" and disconnect. The opposition further sought to politicize the event by arguing that the looting constituted a sign that Boyer had lost complete control of law and order in the country.[254]

Even in the months after the earthquake, the opposition animated by a Les Cayes-based secret *Société des droits de l'homme et du citoyen*, led by Hérard Dumesle and his cousin Charles Rivière-Hérard, would continue to treat the carnage of May 7, 1842 as the ruins of Boyerism. In the group's September 1 manifesto, a mere four months after the earthquake, the catastrophe becomes a theodicean punishment, a divine indictment of Boyer and his imprint on

[253] Ardouin XI: 224; Madiou VII: 401.
[254] Madiou VII: 403-04. Boyer also suspended tax collection in the damaged zones. An article in *Le Patriote* finding Boyer's "inaction" vis-à-vis the looting and violence deplorable wills him to "user de la sévérité des lois," cited in ibid.

Haitian life and politics. According to this document, God spoke on May 7 to withdraw support from Boyer: "Hélas, sous un autre système d'administration aurons-nous l'espoir de réparer les maux que nous laissent les fléaux de la nature, les désastres du tremblement de terre du Nord, dont Dieu peut-être nous a frappés en châtiment de nos crimes?"[255] For the document's liberal signatories the chain of disasters in and around Le Cap associated with *eveneman an*, May 7, 1842 becomes a metonym of the Boyer regime. In the *Société des droits de l'homme et du citoyen* manifesto – the group would prove central to Boyer's ouster in February 1843 – the earthquake symbolically assists the opposition's project of revolution by destroying Boyerism in a *tabula rasa* upon which it projects a new and prosperous Haiti: "Ne nous faut-il pas aujourd'hui plus que jamais asseoir les bases du bonheur général, vivifier l'agriculture, activer le commerce, protéger l'industrie et les arts, propager l'instruction, encourager et favoriser les migrations, enfin augmenter par tous les moyens notre population et nos ressources?" the document's authors ask.[256] Although the earthquake did not oust Boyer directly, it nonetheless aided the opposition's expression of the country's need for urgent change; moreover, the chaos and disorder also created additional conditions on the island for Dominican indepedentists in eastern Hispaniola to organize with the opposition to Boyer and obtain independence upon his fall in 1843.[257]

In spite of the place of the earthquake in contemporary political representations, as either a moment of national unity or a theodiciean destruction of the dictatorship, narratives of the catastrophe often tended to spill more ink on the subject of the looting and, indirectly, reflect on its social implications. Although Le Cap was not the only locale in northern Haiti where looting

[255] Cited in Madiou VII: 416.
[256] Ibid.
[257] Eugenio Matibag, *Haitian-Dominican Counterpoint: Nation, State, and Race on Hispaniola* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 107.

occurred after the earthquake (the public execution of one accused looter in Port-de-Paix effectively stifled further attempts to plunder the town), the near total destruction of the police force in the collapse of Le Cap's army barracks greatly reduced public officials' ability to maintain law and order. Moreover, Le Cap's place in national and international circuits of exchange makes the northern port not only essential to the national economy but also to cross-class interactions between the merchant elite and peasants, especially during the Sunday market. Analyzing the social composition of the looters in contemporary earthquake narratives reveals an "event" representing "une rupture d'intelligibilité," or a failure of usual "grilles de lectures," in making sense of the mid-nineteenth-century Haitian social landscape.[258] As an event, the looting following the May 7 earthquake in Le Cap on the eve of the important Sunday market stages a meeting of sorts between rural and urban Haiti in a critical moment of social indeterminacy that uncovers the tensions of post-revolutionary Haitian society.

The first question that the reconstruction of the underlying social forces and structures that boiled over in this event raises is about the identity of the looters. By and large, the descriptions focus, with some nuance, on the presence of peasants and their significant role in the sack of Le Cap. Beaubrun Ardouin suggests that the peasants only followed the city dwellers who "leur avaient tracé le mauvais exemple de cette coupable convoitise."[259] For his part, Thomas Madiou underlines the participation of some state employees and certain military officers including the two officials brought to trail, the only individuals arrested and convicted for their participation in the looting.[260] But, most important in this quest to assign blame is an awareness on the part of nearly every author of Haiti's liminal status as a free black nation flanked on all sides by slavery and colonialism in the nineteenth century and, by extension, the

[258] Bensa and Fassin, "Les sciences sociales," 4.
[259] Ardouin XI: 223.
[260] Madiou VII: 403, Ardouin XI: 228.

place of Africans and their descendants among the ranks of the "civilized." For instance, describing the looters as "barbarious imps of hell," the English protestant missionary Mark Bird wishes not to cast them as examples of Haitian decadence, but instead as proof of universal human depravity.[261] As for Victor Schœlcher in an addendum on the earthquake to the account of his 1841 visit to Haiti, the abolitionist writes that "La populace de toutes couleurs et les noirs accourus des environs, ravagèrent tout, en voyant quelques autorités elles-mêmes et des blancs, oui des blancs, des Européens leur donner l'exemple et faire leur profit d'un désastre public" (*CEH* II, 339). However, Schœlcher persists in reading this event through a lens that essentializes the black looters by explaining this violent episode as an instance of "caste" warfare in Haiti pitting blacks against mulattos, a response to the "mulatto" oppression of the black masses. Whereas white and light-skinned looters supposedly plunder for the sake of it, Schœlcher only ascribes political agency to looting blacks, declaring that "Les nègres, animés par des ressentiments de caste, ne pillaient point là…seulement pour piller, ils se ruaient sur les mulâtres avec fureur. C'est la vieille histoire du monde, les prolétaires cherchaient leur vengeance contre les nobles, et mille crimes sortirent de ces haines déchaînées" (*CEH* II, 339-40). The categories of race and class that overlap in Schœlcher's account are fundamental to parsing the social implications of the looting in the eye-witness accounts that report on it.

In fact, the issues of class and color are perhaps two of the most charged topics in Haitian historiography with important stakes for legitimating the leadership of the country as the brief discussion of "scribal politics" attests at the beginning of this chapter. Likewise the question has received much attention from modern scholars who generally eschew any fixed binary opposition between the "mulatto" elite and the "black" masses and have increasingly stressed the two groups' long history of collaboration, not to mention the social construction of "color" over

[261] Bird, "The Earthquake," 85-86.

time.[262] Going further, Michel-Rolph Trouillot argues that such color divisions hide in reality class divisions when he writes that "Focusing on this split…we run the risk of masking the exchanges and contacts underlying these oppositions" between elites and the masses called alternatively in the historiography "state" against "nation," "*créoles*" against "*bossales,*" and "*moun lavil"* against "*moun andeyò*" and their conflicting models for nineteenth-century Haiti.[263] In the face of the counter-plantation *lakou* system and their failures to reinstate the plantation economy, elites largely retreated to the ports where, as merchants and state officials, they lived off the largesse of peasant surpluses thanks to a "fiscal policy that persistently siphoned off the meager resources of the peasantry, so that this peasantry came to finance the state while having no control over it."[264] By recognizing Le Cap's status as a symbolic meeting place of these competing rural and urban, popular and elite groups, it is possible to seize the significance of the post-quake looting in terms of the challenge that it poses to the organization of nineteenth-century Haitian society.

To bring this discussion back to events in Le Cap in May 1842, though the political intentions of the looters – if even there were any in the first place – remains obscure, it is still

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[262] This can be seen in the already mentioned "mulatto legend" and the practice of the "politique de la doublure" whereby light-skinned elites would elect a black president whom they thought they could control. Later in the nineteenth century the color and class question would be articulated in national politics in the 1870s with the Liberal Party's slogan of "Government by the Most Competent" (the mulatto elite) and the National Party's "The Greatest Good to the Greatest Number" (the black elite). Demesvar Delorme, Dubois says, "became a major presence in the (…) National Party," see *Haiti*, 131 and 181. Although James Leyburn uses the term "caste," he recognizes the complexity of the class-color situation as an exception to the rule. Caste, for him, then, is much more about the division between elites and the masses than black and light-skinned Haitians, see *The Haitian People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941), 7; On inter-class/color collaboration see Nicholls, *From Dessalines*, 8; On the social construction of color and its diachronic permutations see Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Haiti: State against Nation*: *The Origins and Legacy of Duvalierism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1990), chapter 4 "Culture, Color, and Politics," 109-136.

[263] On these exchanges see ibid., 81; "Créoles" and "bossales" refers to slave differences in Saint-Domingue where "creole" primarily denotes free men and women of color born in the colony and "bossale" the slaves born in Africa. Gérard Barthélemy argues that these divisions continue over into the post-colonial era as the creoles tended to assume the place of the ousted white planters, thereby becoming the new Francophone, Catholic elite and the bossales the creolephone masses imbibed in Vodou largely remained outside the new circuits of power. See Barthélemy, *Le pays*. In Creole, "moun lavil," city notables, and "moun andeyò," peasants "outside" the system captures the spatialization of these divisions for much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

[264] On the *lakou* system and the retreat of elites, see ibid., 59 cited in Dubois, *Haiti*, 115.

possible to explore how the social fault lines of nineteenth-century Haiti come into stark relief in the debris and flames of the post-quake ruinscape by stressing the city's role in varying networks of exchange. On the one hand, from colonial Saint-Domingue up to the earthquake, Le Cap was the territory's most important commercial port and, therefore, a significant point of transit between Haiti and the Atlantic world. On the other hand, Le Cap, like other port cities along the coasts of Haiti, is linked in a network of relations and exchange with the interior. To this end, the correspondent of the American newspaper *The Daily Atlas* describes Le Cap as "the deposit of all the agricultural products of its fine plain" in addition to being "a depot for all the articles imported for the supplies of the interior"[265] As such, Le Cap was also the site of a different type of exchange between urban elites and peasants as the former levied heavy taxes on the latter, thereby controlling and containing them through their access to urban markets where they could sell their agricultural and artisanal goods.[266] Moreover, as Trouillot asserts, urban settings have often been the theater where such divisions between the elites and the masses play out in public, making city markets a symbolically loaded site. In this context, the looting in Le Cap can be read, then, as a violent rupture of festering spatial and economic tensions, of the so-called *moun lavil* and *moun andeyò*.[267]

Already undermined by its own enunciation and bracketing of white and mulatto looting, Schœlcher's account, which should be read as an attempt to ennoble blacks by inscribing the violence into a "universal" context of class warfare, seems further off base in light of Trouillot's classist reading of the color question. In fact, among contemporary narratives of the disaster, Schœlcher's is unique in its emphasis of racial interpretative categories. The eyewitness accounts of Mark Bird and Demesvar Delorme, for example, give little, if any, attention to skin

[265] "The Great Earthquake," *The Atlas*, June 12, 1842.
[266] Dubois, *Haiti*, 115;
[267] Trouillot, *Haiti*, 81.

pigmentation in their focus on the momentary upheaval of the social order and the blurring of distinctions between haves and have-nots. For Bird, it is less the spectacle of black revenge for light-skinned oppression than the struggle between looters and property owners. The title of his narrative poem, "The Earthquake, in Memory of Departed Worth" (1870), ostensibly a homage to his late wife, might also be read as a lamentation of lost and stolen valuables. He notes the conflict between haves and have-nots, evoking the "murd'rous contests" between "foul thieves" and "honest owners" so as to frame them as a series of "dark contests between right and wrong."[268] In a later footnote, Bird repeats this class-informed reading of the violence suggesting that the main looters hailed from the surrounding countryside and mountains and joined with "the surviving low rabble of the Town" to carry the spoils in all directions outside the city.

Yet, in Bird's description even the apparently clear-cut division between "thief" and "property owner" seems to undermine itself: "Fearful contests ensued between them [the looters] and the surviving owners, the latter being frequently taken by the former, for thieves like themselves, hence bloodshed ensued, and in some cases the contest was fearful."[269] In the "dark contests" that Bird depicts, moral certitude along with the bourgeois sanctity of property ownership that it upholds loses a certain amount of clarity. This gathering sense of social indeterminacy in the aftermath of the quake and looting pitting "ceux qui n'avaient rien à sauver" against property holders also informs Delorme's account.[270] Similarly, for Delorme, those who exploited the suffering of others for profit in the ensuing looting only accentuate this

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[268] Bird, "The Earthquake," 73.
[269] Ibid., 85n1. Indeed, according to modern disaster research, oftentimes those taken for looters are in fact property owners collecting their possessions see Eric Auf der Heide, "Common Misconceptions about Disasters: Panic, the 'Disaster Syndrome,' and Looting," in *The First 72 Hours: A community Approach to Disaster Preparedness*, ed. Margaret O'Leary (Lincoln: iUverse, 2004), 340-380. Republished by U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/ emergency_response /common_misconceptions.pdf cited in Jonathan M. Katz, *The Big Truck That Went By: How the World Came to Save Haiti and Left Behind a Disaster* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 82-84.
[270] Delorme, *1842*, 13.

reversal of the social hierarchy: "Des gens de rien, inconnus la veille, sont devenus depuis des messieurs, par la suite du pillage criminel et sanguinaire de la ville du Cap" he charges.[271] The consequences of the earthquake then manifest themselves in the unexpected overturning of the city's social order which transformed in a matter of seconds the rich into "mendiants" and the dispossessed into respectable bourgeois.

Recalling the night of May 7, 1842 that he spent on Morne du Cap, the high mountain overlooking the city, Delorme describes how fire ravaged the already devastated city in "une vraie scène de subite et violente éruption de volcan."[272] From the safety of the mountainside, in the "tableau sinistre des flammes" laid out before his eyes, Delorme frames the catastrophe as a sort of sublime work of "art" so overwhelming that "on fermait les yeux pour échapper à cette horreur," but one which his narrative cannot stop describing in all its morbid detail.[273] In Delorme's aestheticization of the catastrophe via the visual metaphors of painting and stage (*tableau* and *scène*, the latter of which resonates in both) underscore this ruinscape as a morbid spectacle. Here, the ruin of Le Cap forces a public display or show (*spectaculum* in Latin) of Haiti's social fault lines as members of the neo-colonial urban elite, the inheritors of the colonial elites largely living off peasant largesse, and the rural poor, for the most part descendants of the *bossale* slaves born in Africa and tending toward autarky in the counter-plantation *lakou* system of peasant solidarity, clash over wealth and property in the ruined streets of Le Cap. Drawing on Badiou's conceptualization of an "event" as the instantiation of "the existence of an inexistent," I wish to emphasize the way the earthquake, by destroying the elite's ability to maintain order, creates in the temporary vacuum it leaves behind, the conditions for the dispossessed to contest

[271] Ibid., 11. Also referring to the "rabble," Delorme writes "plusieurs de ces scélérats sont devenus depuis des personnages," 14
[272] Ibid., 3.
[273] Ibid., 7.

and violently re-appropriate the wealth amassed in this urban center of power.[274] Brought face-to-face with the structural divisions in nineteenth-century Haiti during their momentary collapse, the disaster obliges the elites to confront the legacy of the Haitian Revolution in the form of the stark economic and spatial divisions between *moun lavil* and *moun andeyò*. In this spectacle of ruin, the latter, those who are "outside" the city and its networks of power, irrupt into the city to dispute the wealth and riches housed there.

As the story of the ruin of Le Cap travelled throughout the Caribbean, its "spectacularization" – to abuse a modern concept closely entwined with the power of mass-communication – underwent significant changes as knowledge of the disaster and, especially, the looting spread beyond western Hispaniola. Seen from elsewhere in the Caribbean, the ruinscape of Le Cap seems to confirm what Mimi Sheller has called the "Haytian Fear" to characterize the continuous denigration of the country as a "barbaric" place, feared for its challenges to whiteness.[275] The image, therefore, is highly mobile, as an equally massive earthquake in Guadeloupe would show at the beginning of February 1843. From the viewpoint of the plantocracy in Pointe-à-Pitre, the Haitian ruinscape loses its local specificity; the ghost of disaster past, it morphs into the specter of colonial apocalypse.

Outside Haiti, the rest of the region largely ignored this disaster according to Mark Bird, who would continue to live in Le Cap for several more decades, and was saddened and humiliated as a "foreign resident in the Haytian Republic at this time, that little or no sympathy was shown to Hayti, in her affliction, by any of the neighbouring islands."[276] This situation not only contrasted with the global outpouring of aid following the 2010 earthquake (see chapter

[274] Alain Badiou, *Polemics*, trans. Steve Corcoran (London: Verso, 2006 [2003]), 286.
[275] Sheller, "Haytian Fear," 286.
[276] Mark B. Bird, *The Black Man, or Haytian Independence* (New York, 1869), 206: Bird continues, "nor was this unfelt by the Haytians themselves."

four), but also with reactions to a similar disaster in Guadeloupe less than a year later. Felt throughout the region and as far away as the northeastern United States, the February 8, 1843 earthquake in Guadeloupe – and its many eye-witness narratives published across the Caribbean and Europe – provoked an outpouring of regional, metropolitan, and international solidarity, collecting some six million francs, two and a half million from private donations alone.[277] Reduced to ruins, initial estimates of deaths soared into the thousands in Pointe-à-Pitre, a city of fifteen thousand, while much of the surrounding infrastructure, including sugar mills and distilleries, incurred considerable damage. The next day Admiral Gourbeyre, the colonial governor, reached the city and frantically solicited assistance from his counterparts in neighboring Martinique, Monserrat, and Antigua as well as from his superiors in France. These missives, written "from the ruins of Pointe-à-Pitre," proved essential to preventing famine as well as to maintaining law and order.[278] The mobilization of a contingent of sailors from Martinique to patrol Pointe-à-Pitre helps also explain the limited number of looters that likely allowed the discourse of racial fraternity to blossom in stark contrast with earlier events in Le Cap. But as much as Haiti functioned as a trope of disorder and savagery, this insistence on slave-master solidarity is a construction of colonial propaganda deployed to buoy the local planter elite against the rising tide of abolitionism.

The local colonial context, as perceived by the planter elite, went far in framing this group's response to the crisis. In fact, these local elites often assimilated the seismic disaster to the rude transformations and evolutions of the sugar export market and to a shifting intellectual landscape in the preceding decades. As one historian of the French West Indies writes, the "belle

[277] According to Auguste Lacour total public and private donations totaled 6,263,806 F see *Histoire de la Guadeloupe*, vol. 5 (Paris, Kolodziej, 1976), 186.
[278] L'Amiral Gourbeyre, "Doc. 12: Lettre de l'Amiral Gourbeyre au Gouverneur de la Martinique" in *Sur les ruines de la Pointe-à-Pitre*, vol. 1, ed. Claude Thiébaut (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2008). In recognition of his efforts, the commune of Dos d'Ane in Basse-Terre renamed itself Gourbeyre in 1846, a year after the governor's death.

époque" of the colonial sugar economy in the 1820s had long since ended, a victim of strong competition from cheaper, metropolitan beetroot sugar, which Creole planters wanted to tax to offset the cost of importing Antillean sugar. In fact, in Guadeloupe alone, over the course of the decade preceding the second abolition in 1848, sugarcane production dropped as much as thirty percent. In response to such pressures, planters sought to modernize and to increase production through the creation of collective processing factories known as *usines centrales*; the first factory on the island became operational in 1843, the same year as the earthquake, which greatly precipitated this process of consolidation. While this innovation increased yields, it represented a challenge to planter autonomy by removing them from the production process and reducing them to simple suppliers. Furthermore, political uncertainty compounded adverse economic conditions as a result of the rise of abolitionism, both in the West Indies with English emancipation in 1834 (not fully effective until 1838) and in metropolitan France in the 1840s with the government's own "Commission pour l'examen des questions relatives à l'esclavage," which resulted however in impasse vis-à-vis this festering *question coloniale*.[279]

All these factors help frame certain planter responses to the catastrophe. Such is the case of Cicéron a lawyer and member of the Colonial Council in Martinique. Cicéron's narrative of the earthquake effectively integrates this natural disaster into a succession of human-created "disasters" striking the French Antilles in recent years: "Ainsi le tremblement de terre, l'incendie et peut-être la peste!…heureux si le vote sur la loi des sucres n'y joint pas pour nous le désespoir!... un quatrième fléau, plus durable, plus général, plus funeste que les trois autres."[280] The haunting presence/absence of the island's non-white majority often appearing in these

[279] Frédéric Régent, *La France et ses esclaves: De la colonisation aux abolitions, 1620-1848* (Paris : Grasset, 2007), 278.
[280] Cicéron, "Tremblement de terre" in *Sur les ruines*, vol. 1, 148. Ellipses in the original. See Docs. 353 and 364 in ibid. vol. 2, 374-75 and 385, respectively.

narratives via this circuitous abstraction to on-going debates on taxes and sugar, offers an intense site of tension and contestation in a zone where people of color (slave and free) outnumbered whites more than nine to one.[281] In the weeks and months following the disaster, both the local and metropolitan press picked up the harrowing stories of several slaves in Pointe-à-Pitre credited with remarkable acts of courage and bravery in the rescue of white Creoles. These stories typically follow the trajectory of a domestic slave named Félix who carried an injured white stranger through the ruins and a "rideau de flammes" to the safety of the port, not for pecuniary gain, but for "l'amour de Dieu." The story and especially its circulation in the local and metropolitan press led the colonial administration to manumit Félix, according at the same time a 1,500F indemnity to his owner and an additional 500F to the ex-slave.[282]

The great uncle of the Nobel laureate poet Saint-John Perse, a notary and mayoral aide in Pointe-à-Pitre, Anatole Léger, tells a similar story about Céline, credited with saving him and his entire family from sure death as fire consumed their home. The importance of this example, however, lies in the rhetorical twist at the end that illuminates the stakes of representing slaves in the colonial disaster zone. Initially drawing upon the contemporary repertory of disaster clichés that, for instance, insist upon the equality of both master and slave in the face of catastrophe, Léger adds a coda that transforms Céline's heroism into material proof of slavery's "benign" nature. In his own words, he writes that Céline's example, "pour qui se dévouer pour ses maîtres a été un acte si naturel et si spontané," infallibly demonstrates "à qui pourrait encore en douter, que l'esclave aux colonies n'est pas toujours nécessairement, comme on a voulu le faire croire,

[281] The 1842 census in Guadeloupe lists 11,000 whites, 24,000 libres de couleur, and 93,000 slaves. See Régent, *La France et ses esclaves*, 335.
[282] On Félix, see Baptise Rivière, "Doc. 59: Le noir Félix, ayant été l'objet d'une récompense coloniale …" in *Sur les Ruines*, vol. 1, 64-65.

l'ennemi naturel de son maître."[283] In the urgency of disaster and crisis, Léger's remark slides between two different registers of the "natural" as alternatively slave essence and climatic event: his shift mobilizes a certain discourse about slave "nature" as an amicable devotion to the master once more revealed in a time of crisis. As the repetition of the adjective "natural" (*naturel*) echoes this play of registers, the entire narrative becomes a way to naturalize slavery and efface the daily struggle of violence and resistance. A different account from the metropolitan press, this time, adds yet another example to this discourse. "La pensée," *Le Globe* posits, "n'était venue à personne d'accuser les esclaves, tant est grande la confiance dont jouissent en général les noirs, et qu'ils méritent pour la plupart, et tant est solide, malgré ce qu'on a pu dire en Europe, l'affection réciproque des maîtres et des serviteurs."[284] Mining the depths of the colony's psychology in its discussion of false rumors about slave looting in Pointe-à-Pitre, the article underscores a climate of racial tension on the island that disaster would not hide despite affirmations to the contrary.

This image of harmonious entente in the face of disaster seems contrary to the very essence of a colonial society ensconced in slavery and racism. Indeed, the French engineer Eugène Berthot, dispatched from 1843-1846 to Guadeloupe to lead the reconstruction process describes strained racialized social tensions there: "C'est une chose singulière que la haine qui existe entre les mulâtres et les noirs et entre ces mêmes mulâtres et les blancs. Ces distinctions de couleur de peau sont véritablement risibles."[285] In spite of this reality, the image of cross-class and color fraternity has proved enduring even among antislavery writers from the post-emancipation period up to this day. In an epic, self-published belated abolitionist novel, *Le Vieux*

[283] Anatole Léger, "Doc 98: Colonies – Guadeloupe" in ibid. vol. 1, 108.
[284] "Doc. 161: Extrait du *Globe*" in ibid., 191-92.
[285] Eugène Berthot to Dame Berthot, Basse-Terre, 28 April 1844, in *Trois ans à la Guadeloupe*, 113. Berthot would also come to publically support gradual emancipation in the colony.

Salomon (1872), the now forgotten Franco-American radical, Charles Testut, who survived the 1843 earthquake in Guadeloupe, recycles the image of colonial solidarity. Testut's flowery sentimentalism casts the disaster as a backdrop for demonstrating the inherent goodness of his slave protagonists who organize the rescue efforts and care for the injured. Just as the writer declares that, "L'égalité se fait devant la souffrance comme devant la mort," his literary treatment of disaster aims to underscore a compassion and sympathy within slaves rendering them equally as human as whites.[286] Given the tendency for inter-group solidarity in the immediate aftermath of a disaster, it is certainly conceivable that the 1843 catastrophe likely produced numerous moments of collaboration and, in doing so, "revealed" to certain *békés* and white Creoles the humanity of a class of people legally traded as property.[287] These flashes of fraternity notwithstanding, the lines and borders of the island's racial and social geography remained largely unchained as if evoking the aforementioned Cicéron's description of the cracks and fissures in the Pointe-à-Pitre ruinscape as "une immense carte de géographie. "[288] One episode, for instance, is telling. Taking advantage of the chaos and disorder in Pointe-à-Pitre and across Grande-Terre, an estimated one thousand slaves fled to freedom in nearby Antigua when opportunity presented itself.[289] What is striking, but not surprising, however, is the frantic

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[286] Charles Testut, *Le Vieux Salomon*, (Shreveport, LA: Editions Tintamarre, 2003 [1872]), 114. After leaving Guadeloupe, Testut moved to New Orleans and then New York City where he composed the novel in 1858. Shortly, thereafter, he returned to New Orleans and due to the Civil War and hostility to the cause of emancipation in Louisiana was unable to publish his novel in French until 1871.

[287] Rebecca Solnit, *A Paradise Built in Hell: The Extraordinary Communities That Arise in Disaster* (New York: Viking, 2009).

[288] Cicéron, "Doc. 128: Tremblement de terre de la Guadeloupe" in *Sur les ruines de la Pointe-à-Pitre*, vol 2, 149: "Partout le sol offre aux regards des lignes courtes, longues, larges, étroites. Droites, tortueuses, innombrables, comme les délimitations d'une immense carte de géographie."

[289] This representation has even impacted the modern historiography of the disaster. For instance, in his multivolume edition of the archival records on the earthquake, Claude Thiébaut argues that the "good behavior" of the island's slave population prevented planters from overtly opposing the slavery reforms of 1845, known as the Lois Mackau, which went largely unenforced in practice. In addition, he suggests that the memory of cross-class and color experience and solidarity further help to explain why Guadeloupe went largely untouched by violence on the announcement of abolition in 1848. See Claude Thiébaut, "Présentation," in *Sur les ruines*, vol. 1, xxxvi. However, his position would change in light of the highly fractured society that Berthot presents in his letters, which Thiébaut

repetition of these images of colonial solidarity, which recalls Bhabha's deconstruction of colonial stereotypes and their need for constant affirmation to suture the inherent instability and ambivalence of the colonial hierarchies upon which they rest.[290] The repeated denial, then, of the very possibility of slave revolt throws the contrary into relief by outlining a white Antillean fear.

Written in the ruins, these exclamations of solidarity and harmony failed fully to contain this boiling trepidation, which ultimately burst through the seams in one literary rendition of post-earthquake Pointe-à-Pitre. In an eighty-three-line poem in alexandrines generically titled "Tremblement de terre du 8 février 1843 qui renversa la ville de Pointe-à-Pitre," an anonymous colonist-cum-poet provides a curious re-imagining of the catastrophe. At the precise moment when a sentiment of hapless exasperation overcomes the poet after a litany of trite clichés about the destruction of the region's most beautiful city and lachrymose scenes of young girls burned alive, the poem erupts into violence and instantly distinguishes itself from the other (literary) renditions of the disaster. Here an imaginary reign of terror, the work of the island's non-white population descending in hordes upon the ruins of Pointe-à-Pitre, strikes down upon the city's beleaguered (white) colonists:

> Aussitôt des corbeaux apparaît la nuée
>
> S'abattant sur le sol pour prendre la curée
>
> Race ignoble et sinistre autant que sa couleur,
>
> Appelant le désordre et flairant le malheur;
>
> Voyez-les, se glissant à la faveur des ombres,

---

helped edit. He explains, "Il semble au contraire, à en juger par Berthot, que rien de fondamental n'avait changé dans les sentiments ni les comportements du plus grand nombre," Présentation," Jacques Résal and Claude Thiébaut, vii; On the Lois Mackau which granted slaves limited judicial status, reduced the duration of the workday to nine and a half hours and instituted the right for slaves to buy their freedom at a reasonable price and their falling onto a deaf ear of slave owners see Régent, *La France et ses esclaves*, 284. On the escaped slaves see ibid., 286.

[290] Homi K. Bhabha, "The Other Question: Stereotype, Discrimination, and the Discourse of Colonialism," in *The Location of Culture*. New York: Routledge, 2005 [1994], 94-120.

Se ruer pêle-mêle au milieu des décombres,

Sur des restes sanglants qui respirent encor,

Arrachant les bijoux, cherchant partout de l'or.[291]

Via a chromatic association of dark skin pigmentation with crows, a pejorative term for looters, and the black hues of their feathers, the poet hints at the "animality" of the island's non-white populations. The parallel gains in pejorative connotations as the poet alludes to a menacing, uncontainable collective presence in the noun "la nuée" with the adverb "aussitôt" emphasizing the group's rapine ubiquity. A crescendo of aggressive verbs further accentuates this *colon*'s sense of horror. In a surge-like assault, the "looters" storm (*s'abattre*) the ruins and snatch, grab or rip away (*arracher*) the jewelry there for the taking.

At this point, it becomes clear, to this poet, that disaster and a particular construction of race are intricately bound to one another; that blackness increasingly portends catastrophe. This movement emerges in the third verse where the poet inscribes the negative valence of the color black in the Western tradition into the racial "essence" of the looters. The adjective-noun grouping, "Race ignoble et sinistre," contains an important transition that hinges on the semantic play of the French word "sinistre;" Used as an adjective it compliments "ignoble" in the task of vilifying blackness whereas, taken alone as a noun, it becomes a synonym for disaster. Thus, the colonist-poet conspires to endow blackness with a catastrophic "essence" that emerges from the following verse (vv. 50) and foregrounds a racialized propensity not only to find tragedy and disorder, but to conjure them as well.[292]

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[291] "Tremblement de terre du 8 février 1843 qui renversa la ville Pointe-à-Pitre à la Guadeloupe," in *"La Pointe-à-Pitre n'existe plus… !"* 168-69, lines 47-55.

[292] On the negative valence of black in the Western tradition, Christopher Miller writes, "Blackness would appear to be a rock of negativity: from Sanskrit and ancient Greek to modern European languages, black is associated with dirt, degradation and impurity," see *Blank Darkness: Africanist Discourse in French* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985), 29.

The chiaroscuro of the rubble and remnants of Pointe-à-Pitre further complicates the poet's intertwining of blackness and disaster, a process literally lurking in the shadows. On the formal level, the end-rhyme pair "ombre-décombre" (v. 51-52) creates a proliferation of shadows through the repetition of "ombre" embedded also in "décombre." On the level of symbolism, however, this same pair provokes a fundamental rupture, both in the poem and in the representation of this disaster. Through metonymy, the looters seemingly lose their corporality in the shadows and become shadows themselves with the powers of flight as well as to conjure catastrophe (v. 50). The metaphysical becoming of this poem's black looters reflects the processes of reduction and essentialization of blackness as the island's non-white population fades into a figural caricature of itself. Like the Africanist discourse Christopher Miller has examined in the same period, the poetic ruinscape here functions as a sort of "blank darkness" onto which "Haytian fears" are projected and in which blackness and disaster not only conjure the violent events nine months earlier in Le Cap, but also re-imagine the nineteenth century's paradigmatic colonial apocalypse, the Haitian Revolution.[293] The effect evokes a colonial hauntology in which the ghostly figures of the slaves from the poem symbolize the sublimated memory of violence and its sudden reversal that subtends but always threatens colonial authority.

The colonist's frantic eschatological verses evince how the specter of black violence in and from Haiti remained readily available and transferable to disaster elsewhere in the region. In the process of transforming the fictional looters into the *idea*, or spectacle, of colonial disaster and upheaval, the poet displaces onto colonial disaster in Pointe-à-Pitre the looting of Le Cap and, in so doing, throws into relief the contours of a repressed colonial fear. Like a Freudian "screen memory," buried beneath the image of Haitian looters superimposed onto the non-white

[293] Miller argues that Africanist discourse in French is a "projection of European desire" and that it is similar to a Freudian dream since "both are made possible by a condition of blankness – of distance and ignorance, of sleep," see ibid., 52 and 62.

population in Guadeloupe lies a memory that reaches far into the past betraying a fear of the destruction of colonial society in a manner similar to the Haitian Revolution. The (spectacle of the) ruin of Pointe-à-Pitre becomes a synecdoche of the ruin of the colonial system itself. Effectively "silenced" or "repressed," the catastrophe "thinks" the Haitian Revolution by forcing, at least this colonist, to contemplate the possibility of a new order in the rise of the black majority and its violent re-appropriation of the wealth and riches that the white minority has extracted from it. In so doing, the colonist illustrates the notion of catastrophe in its most literal sense as an "overturning" of the colonial hierarchy.

Conclusion: Ruin Readers

As the world gazed at the spectacle of ruin during the days of non-stop media coverage of the 2010 Haiti earthquake, experts and commentators rushed to offer their interpretations of what the ruins in Port-au-Prince meant, combining the two modes of apprehending ruinscapes that this chapter has thrown into relief. Reactions to the earthquake illustrate how ruins still have purchase for evaluating Haiti's place in the world among Haitian and international commentators alike. For example, Pulitzer Prize wining novelist Junot Diaz offers the concept of a "ruin reader," a person who looks critically at catastrophe in Haiti to see how the disaster is the result of rising ecological, material, and economic inequalities on a global scale.[294] The nineteenth-century "ruin readers" in this chapter foreground ruins and catastrophe as events that bring into focus the complicated social and political stakes of colonial and post-colonial Caribbean society. As this chapter has demonstrated, the cultural, social, and political sub-text that emerges from these varied ruinscapes is the legacy of the Haitian Revolution. On the one hand, for Haitian intellectuals, it constitutes a dramatic reminder of the world-historic importance of the Haitian

[294] Junot Diaz, "Apcalypse: What Disasters Reveal," *Boston Review*. May 1, 2011, acessed June 19, 2014. Http://www.bostonreview.net/junot-diaz-apocalypse-haiti-earthquake.

Revolution and its radical vision of black equality and post-colonial sovereignty; but it also serves as a stark reminder of the shortcomings of this promise and the failure to create a more equal and socially just society. On the other hand, for the former colonizers and slaveholders, this legacy represents the ruin or the potential for ruin of French colonial dominance and the profits of slave-based colonial commerce in the region. In a different context closer to the present, a number of Haitian intellectuals including Dany Laferrière and Yanick Lahens have enacted similar practices of reading the ruins of Port-au-Prince to counter the uninformed, exoticizing gaze of many in the international media.

Before examining the new questions their narratives raise with respect to ruins as a trope for grappling with Haiti's place in national, regional, and now global histories in chapter four, I turn my attention in the following chapter to a set of ruin readers of a different sort in Martinique. The slow process of rebuilding Port-au-Prince reminds observers that Haitians have always succeeded in reinventing themselves from the ruins of the past, but offers a sharp contrast with the fate of Saint-Pierre, Martinique following the 1902 volcanic eruption that erased the city and killed nearly thirty thousand people in the process. Although the city regained neither its previous splendor nor its economic importance in island life, generations of writers in Martinique have recreated the colonial city and its lost inhabitants in verse and prose. Like the nineteenth-century ruin readers in Haiti and Guadeloupe, the succession of literary re-creations of the volcanic disaster of Saint-Pierre, Martinique unpack to varying extents the social, ecological, and narrative relations that inform both this particular catastrophe and its status as an object of memory in the island’s collective imaginary. More than a chronological transition from the nineteenth century to the present via a belle époque-era disaster and its presence in the work of almost every generation of Martinican writers since, the following chapter brings into relief on

the local level and for a period lasting more than a century the enduring function of the literature of catastrophe as a critical lens for examining articulations of collective identity in a multicultural society. In other words, the ruins of Saint-Pierre metamorphose into a blank slate as Martinican writers interrogate their island's history of creolization and *métissage* with repeated recourse to the catastrophe of 1902.

CHAPTER 3

Creolizing Catastrophe:
Literary Resurrections of the Disaster of Saint-Pierre, Martinique

Les Martiniquais sont un peuple péléen!
- *Aimé Césaire, Interview with Daniel Maximin, 1983*[295]

Catastrophe and its Creole Relations

On May 8, 1902, the volcano Mont Pelée erupted and sent an incendiary *nuée ardente*, a fast moving cloud of hot gas and rock, hurdling toward the nearly thirty thousand people in Saint-Pierre, Martinique. Only ten miles southwest of the volcano, the city's three thousand white Creoles, or *Békés*, half the island's total, ten thousand men and women of color, and more than fifteen thousand blacks along with thousands of refugees from neighboring villages were incinerated in instants. A new eruption on May 20 would complete the destruction of Saint-Pierre by toppling the few remaining stone constructions that still feebly attested to the city's pre-catastrophe wealth. Discovering the ruins shortly after the second eruption, the French reporter Rémy Saint-Maurice wrote for readers of the weekly *L'Illustration* that "Nul vocabulaire humain ne peut rendre l'atrocité du spectacle," going on to describe it as "quelque chose de fantastique, de spectral, d'extra-terrestre, un paysage lunaire."[296]

A turning point in the island's history, the catastrophe of Saint-Pierre, which obliterated Martinique's economic and cultural capital along with the fifteen percent of the island's population, accelerated the centralization of power and authority in Fort-de-France, the

[295] Daniel Maximin and Aimé Césaire, "Aimé Césaire: La poésie, parole essentielle." *Présence africaine*, no. 126 (1983), 10.
[296] Rémy Saint-Maurice, "Le Désastre de la Martinique," *L'Illustration*, Special Supplement, June 21, 1902, 1-5.

administrative capital since 1692.[297] Although it killed nearly half of the island's white Creole population and severely strained, in the short term, sugar production and rum exports, the catastrophe did little to alter the island's underlying economic structures.[298] Instead, the catastrophe of Saint-Pierre, which occurred during the 1902 French legislative elections, marked the shift of political dominance away from wealthy whites to the non-white majority, a process that the advent of the Third Republic and universal male suffrage had already initiated. As for Saint-Pierre itself, the loss of the entirety of its residents and the lack of others willing to rebuild in a zone with such high real and perceived risk in conjunction with the increasingly central role that Fort-de-France assumed in all domains made it apparent that the city would not return to its former state.[299] As a result, the city would become synonymous with the memory of its past; its reconstruction, as the critic Jack Corzani has remarked, would primarily be literary.[300] This chapter is about this literary reconstruction of Saint-Pierre that I demonstrate has been underway for more than a century.

Taking the long view of the disaster and its literary afterlife, I focus on fictionalized accounts of the event to create a diachronic view of the permutations of an enduring site of local collective memory. My argument consists in demonstrating how literary accounts of the catastrophe reflect and refract the island's shifting ideological landscape. From white Creole

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[297] Armand Nicolas, *Histoire de la Martinique: De 1848 à 1939*.,vol 2 (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1996), 172.

[298] On the economic consequences see Christian Schnakenbourg, "Les consequences économiques de la catastrophe," in *1902 et après : conséquences et représentations de l'éruption de la montagne Pelée* (1902-1930), Catalogue de l'exposition organisée par les Archives départementales, Juin/Septrembre 2002 (Fort-de-France: Archives départementales de a Martinique, 2002), 27-36.

[299] On the Martinican centralization in Fort-de-France see Micheline Marlin-Godier, "Fort-de-France et le contrecoup de 1902," in *1902 et après*, 37-44, 40. Over the following two decades, Saint-Pierre ceased to exist administratively from 1910 until 1923. In 1902 Saint-Pierre was attached to Fort-de-France and, then in 1910 integrated into nearby Le Carbet. In 1910 the city counted an estimated 500 inhabitants and five years later, in 1915, this number had grown to between 1,500 and 2,000. See Léo Ursulet, *Le désastre de 1902 à La Martinique: L'éruption de la Montagne Pelé et ses conséquences* (Paris : L'Harmattan, 1997), 402-404.

[300] Jack Corzani, "La fortune littéraire de la catastrophe de Saint-Pierre: Entre commémoration et mythification, le jeu des idéologies," in *Les catastrophes naturelles aux Antilles: D'une Soufrière à une autre*, ed. Alain Yacou (Paris: Karthala, 1999), 76.

dominance to the rise of Negritude to the assertion of multicultural identities like *métissage* and *créolité*, the catastrophe of Saint-Pierre has often lent itself to different attempts to create a "sense of community" in Martinique.[301] Distinct from journalistic and other accounts that simply report on or summarize the destruction, the literary narratives that I examine in this chapter memorialize to varying extents the catastrophe and, in so doing, they critically interrogate the event's place in Martinican collective memory. Together these texts form a sustained, but ever shifting, reflection on Saint-Pierre's status as a symbol of colonial society in all its wealthy splendor, its oppressive racism, and its swift annihilation. The collective force of such narratives points to an on-going interrogation of Martinique's colonial heritage and establishes the memory of the disaster as an important site for reworking collective identity on the island and dismantling colonial epistemologies of identity, space, and culture.

Ecologically speaking, the catastrophe of Saint-Pierre, to the same extent as any other "natural" disaster, poses questions about the relation between human society and the environment. However, from a literary viewpoint, the selected disaster narratives in this chapter largely relegate the relation between the volcano and the city to a symbolic plane. In omitting or minimizing descriptions of the burning horror of the *nuée ardente* available in survivor accounts in their own works, authors after the catastrophe have focused their attention instead on pre- and post-catastrophe society, making the volcano a narrative denouement and the sign of rupture in Martinique.[302] In the void they reproduce around the volcano, their narratives inscribe the impossibility of accessing a traumatic and destructive colonial past and the difficulty of

[301] Celia Britton, *The Sense of Community in French Caribbean Fiction* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008).
[302] One of two known survivors, the prisoner Syparis's account transcribed by le père Méry is reproduced alongside the latter's report in *Les volcans dans l'histoire des Antilles*, ed. Jacques Adélaïde and Jean-Paul Hervieu (Paris: Karthala, 1996), 141-45.

understanding origins. Such literary re-creations are less a looking glass onto a lost city than they are the sum of their writers' concerns critically refracted by the past. Literary mises-en-scène of the catastrophe of Saint-Pierre register an overturning, a catastrophe in the most literal sense, of collective identity by using the symbolic void – a tabula rasa of colonial society – that the eruption left behind in the local imaginary to interrogate Martinique's social, cultural, and ethnic origins at regular intervals during the twentieth century. From assertions of white prestige to reassessments of blackness to articulations of multicultural pluralism, the re-presentations of Saint-Pierre thus re-filter the symbolic political, cultural, and social eclipse of the white minority through Martinique's shifting cultural and identity politics.

As a consequence, Saint-Pierre catastrophe narratives make creolization a valuable critical lens for throwing into relief the stakes of literary resurrections of the "Creole City." The Creole City, to which I refer throughout this chapter in capitals, marshals the ambiguous history and usage of the term creole as an unstable referent of both white and black, colonizer and colonized, the better to denote Saint-Pierre's status as an object of collective memory, the relations between its diverse inhabitants, and its competing mythifications. The Creole City not only situates Saint-Pierre in these opposing conceptions of the city, but it also does so within the "third space" in between the bifurcated worlds of white and black, colonizer and colonized.[303] Saint-Pierre disaster fictions are therefore grounded in what Édouard Glissant calls a "poetics of

[303] H. Adlai Murdoch, *Creole Identity in the French Caribbean Novel* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001), 4. Some of the varying usages of "creole" include upperclass individuals of Spanish descent born in the New World (Peru), locally born black slaves (Brazil), the white and mulatto francophone populations in Louisiana, descendants of former New World slaves and resettled blacks from Britain in Sierra Leone, or native born whites and blacks in colonial Jamaica. See Edward Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica, 1770-1820* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), xv. As for the French Caribbean, Mary Gallagher writes, "From the middle of the eighteenth century onward…the French Caribbean followed Metropolitan French usage, reserving for the unqualified term the exclusionist meaning of white Europeans born in the colonies." See Mary Gallagher, "The *Créolité* Movement: Paradoxes of a French Caribbean Orthodoxy," in *The Creolization Reader: Studies in Mixed Identities and Cultures*, ed. Robin Cohen and Paola Toninato (New York and London: Routledge, 2010), 97. Later, the creolists would open up the term to a less exclusionary identity to account for the region's diverse origins in Martinique.

relation," or the abstraction of the rhizomatic, interdependent totality of elements that are perpetually changed and remade in and through the process of contact, or creolization, and whose implications also explore the narration of the event and the genealogies of the characters who fall victim to it.[304] Relation as a triple synecdoche of narration, filiation, and creolization frames how Martinican writers "creolize" the catastrophe of Saint-Pierre by questioning the real and imagined ties that bind Martinican society together in what some have called a "kaleidoscopic totality."[305]

This chapter separates such representations into three largely chronological parts that bring into focus the continuity and rupture among the texts in question. In part one, I examine how the novel *Cœurs martiniquais* (1922) by Jean Max, the *nom de plume* for a white Creole woman from Saint-Pierre, problematizes *how* to narrate the catastrophe in terms of collective memory and ultimately calls into question the Béké caste's place in relation to the broader island society. In part two, in the work of Aimé Césaire and his lesser-known contemporary Raphaël Tardon, narrating the catastrophe becomes less a question of how than *who* as both writers draw new portions of the island's population into the memory of the event, thus making race a crucial, yet contested, category for re-imaging the disaster in the context of the inter- and post-war rise of Negritude. Finally, I conclude in part three with an analysis of more recent portrayals of the disaster infused with new discourses of hybridity to re-narrate the histories of Saint-Pierre "from below," which complicate the responses to the "how" and the "who" analyzed in the preceding sections. In various ways, the texts from Patrick Chamoiseau, Raphaël Confiant, and Suzanne Dracius place the emphasis on voice and perspective, and create the cumulative effect of

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[304] See Edouard Glissant, *Le Discours antillais* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1981), *Poétique de la Relation* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990), and *Introduction à une poétique du divers* (Paris : Gallimard, 1996).
[305] Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau, Raphaël Confiant, *Eloge de la créolité/In Praise of Creoleness*, trans. Mohamed Bouya Taleb-Khyar (Paris: Gallimard 1993), 89.

multiplying the subjective points of view used to represent Glissant's notion of relation and its sordid undersides.

The Beating Creole Heart: Memorializing the Creole City (I)

Paule Cassius de Linval's novel *Cœurs martiniquais*, written in 1919 and published in 1922 under the penname Jean Max, is an early example of the practice of literary reconstruction in Martinique. Her novel, which views Saint-Pierre's Béké population, which represented around ten percent of all victims, as the real and symbolic "martyr" of the catastrophe, offers an idealized portrait of fin-de-siècle white Creole life. Echoing other colonial accounts of the catastrophe like Charles Lambolez's chronicle of the city's history presented as a textual memorial of Béké achievements, Max's literary reconstruction purifies, as will become evident in all the loaded senses of the term, the city of its social, political, and racial tensions.[306] Yet my interest in her fictionalized account lies in the possibilities it allows readers to interrogate the very narrativization of the catastrophe and, thereby, its early resonance in collective memory. Relocating the focus away from the bohemian revelry that a writer like Salavina recalls nostalgically in his memoires, *Trente ans de Saint-Pierre* (1909), and onto the austere sobriety of the white Creole elite, the novel is both, in the dismissive words of Régis Antoine, the story of "la vie sans problèmes de fillettes aux joues rose," and an important window to this class's reaction to the catastrophe.[307] Set against the discourse of Saint-Pierre as a haven of Caribbean hedonism, Max views her novel as a corrective counter-representation that, in recreating the pre-catastrophe city, will re-animate its heart. In this way, she writes in a short preface: "Qu'il soit permis à moi aussi de pénétrer au sein de ma cité et à travers les scories qui la souillent, de

[306] Charles L. Lambolez, *Saint-Pierre - Martinique, 1635-1902* (Paris: Berger-Levrault et Compagnie Editeurs, 1905).
[307] Régis Antoine, *Les ecrivains francais et les Antilles: Des premiers Peres blancs aux surrealistes noirs* (Paris: G.-P Maisonneuve et Larose, 1978), 307. Salavina's memoirs were later republished as *Saint-Pierre, La Venise Tropicale, 1870-1902* (Paris: Editions Caribéennes, 2002), to capitalize on this popular image of the city.

toucher à ce qui fut son cœur."[308] From the preface to the conclusion, the heart, in both its literal and figurative understandings, and, as I will argue at the end of this section the related trope of blood as a shorthand for delimiting belonging and community in the Creole City, resonates loudly throughout the narrative.

Contrary to many of the other fictional recreations of the catastrophe analyzed later in this chapter, the disaster itself is absent from Max's narrative. Instead, the novel presents the author's attempts to narrate around the catastrophe, what the narrator calls a "tragédie inénarrable" (*CM*, 123), and problematizes the *mode* of remembering the catastrophe before settling on the mythic. In the void of the catastrophe itself, the first half of the novel portrays a Béké idyll in and around Saint-Pierre in which the city's wealthiest residents live by the highest moral standards and in social harmony with the rest of the (largely invisible) population. Not surprisingly, then, Max's Saint-Pierre is decidedly white with the exception of the benevolent Da Ti-Clé, a relatively minor character whose presence ostensibly functions to advance the fiction of colonial social harmony in Béké fiction.[309] The objective of corrective moralistic narratives such as *Cœurs martiniquais* is to refute the charge that the catastrophe was not divine punishment for supposed creole lasciviousness.[310] In this respect the novel fully implicates itself in the process of what Jack Corzani calls the "mystification of Saint-Pierre."[311] Instead of articulating the myth of Saint-Pierre's "gaîté païenne," like in Salavina's text or to a certain degree Raphaël Confiant's *Nuée ardente* (2002), Max consecrates its saintliness and, in this respect, approaches the focus of other post-catastrophe narratives refuting the aura of pagan sensuality that hung over the city

[308] Jean Max, *Cœurs martiniquais* (Paris: Eugène Figuière, 1919), n.p. (hereafter cited in the text as *CM*).
[309] Richard D.E. Burton, *La famille coloniale: La Martinique et la mère patrie, 1789-1992* (Paris : L'Harmattan, 1994), 135.
[310] See also U. Moerens, *Pèlerinage funèbre aux ruines de Saint-Pierre* (Lille: Desclée, de Brouwer, 1903) for yet another example.
[311] Corzani, "Fortune littéraire," 84.

after the publication of the scandalous *Une nuit d'orgies à Saint-Pierre* (1892).[312] Looking at the novel through the frame of moralizing Béké revisionism gives a more figurative meaning to Max's image of digging through the scoria by opening it to the discursive dross that also "covers" the post-disaster city in the author's view.

Set against the Béké idyll of the novel's first half, Max engages with the voided city that is Saint-Pierre's disasterscape through the response of one of the city's native sons residing in Paris at the time of the disaster. In treating this character's discovery of the ruins – the scoria in their literal sense in Max's preface – of his beloved city, the novel problematizes the "empty" disasterscape of what used to be the French Caribbean's most important city as well as its place in Martinican collective memory. Focusing on Roland Fougeras, a young man from a wealthy and well-connected Saint-Pierre merchant family who has exiled himself in Paris after the city's most beautiful and virtuous maiden Ginette refused his marriage proposal to join a convent, provides the narrative the diegetic displacement away from Saint-Pierre that makes the catastrophe unnarratable for the narrator. Thus, Roland learns of the destruction of the city and the death of most of his family and friends from his employer, a close business associate of his father, and from the initial newspaper coverage: "Tous, tous, ils avaient péri, sans qu'on pût trouver trace de leurs cadavres. Broyés, carbonisés, détruits par cette formidable trombe de feu sortie du sein du Mont Pelée, et, cela, en moins de temps qu'on ne prend pour l'écrire ou le raconter" (*CM*, 123). Bringing into relief the difficulty of narrating the catastrophe itself and the immense sense of loss it created, Roland's remark, uttered from the safety of the metropole provides the conditions for his discovery of the disasterscape and for the text to begin processing it on the narrative level as well.

[312] Effe Geache, *Une nuit d'orgie à Saint-Pierre*, ed. Raphaël Confiant (Paris: Arléa, 1992).

As Roland returns to his native land and his boat nears closer to the Martinican shore, the text begins to process the rupture and change in the island's imaginary that the disaster symbolizes. The way the destroyed city remains just out of Roland's sight from the deck of the ship underlines the new absence, or invisibility, of the Creole City he remembers: "Du bord on ne saisissait aucun détail, car le navire passait au large, cependant Roland se découvrit devant cette côte qui fuyait. Le vent d'est lui caressa le front, et ce souffle rafraîchissant lui parut l'invisible accueil des âmes dont les corps mutilés demeuraient là-bas sous la cendre" (*CM,* 124). The way the city escapes – literally flees his gaze – and the invisible welcome of the dead he projects onto the city mark for Roland the passage of an immediate physical rapport with the Creole City to one now mediated by memory and nostalgia. After his landing in Martinique, Roland uses family connections to obtain a pass to visit the ruins whose state of extreme devastation cause him to wonder aloud, overwhelmed by the immense void, "Où sont les richesses amoncelées, les trésors accumulés, monuments, églises, chapelles" (*CM,* 125). In the chaos of debris in Saint-Pierre, the "empty" disasterscape is simply too much for him. As his gaze brings the enormity of the destruction into view, the narrator writes, "Ses regards n'embrasèrent plus qu'une vaste plaine désolée. L'aride steppe s'étendait au nord jusqu'aux confins de l'horizon, et rejoignant les pentes du cratère, semblait se perdre à l'infini" (*CM,* 126). Here the eclipse of the city, wholly erased from view, appears to Roland in what seems an endless lunar landscape extending from the low-lying city to the peak of Mont Pelée.

By confronting Roland with the overwhelming symbol of collective trauma in the ruins of Saint-Pierre, this scene restages a similar episode from before the catastrophe. In an earlier scene, Ginette, the future nun, discovers the Tombeau des Caraïbes during a walk in the countryside with her family's former wet nurse and maid Da Ti-Clé. While Ti-Clé tells Ginette

and her friend Anne-Marie about the collective suicide of the Caribs in this spot, evoking "ces images légendaires du passé" (*CM*, 101), the three women stare into the abyss of another collective trauma in colonial Martinique. In one of the rare readings of *Cœurs martiniquais*, Jack Corzani quite correctly critiques Max's novel as "le roman d'une caste" that omits "la foule vivante des Mulâtres et des Nègres pour ne s'intéresser qu'aux cœurs martiniquais, blancs et distingués."[313] While I agree with Corzani on this fundamental point, I would also like to suggest that the scene presently under consideration also momentarily opens a new line of questioning for the novel. Through and through, *Cœurs martiniquais* is a "Béké novel;" but the brief consideration it offers regarding the Tombeau des Caraïbes initiates a latent interrogation of Martinican postcolonial memory. Coupled with Roland's visit to the ruins of Saint-Pierre, the scenes are useful for thinking through the production and consumption of the memory of the catastrophe among Béké elites. Focusing first on the Tombeau des Caraïbes scene before returning to post-catastrophe Saint-Pierre with Roland, Ti-Clé's brief narration seems, at least, to challenge readings of her character through the lens of the colonial stereotype of the *da* as previously suggested. Certainly her motherly presence throughout the narrative for the novel's young Béké characters reaffirms the white Creole fiction of benevolent friendship and union between the races. In fact, taking this line of reasoning further, her presence bespeaks the symbolic violence of colonial appropriation and control over the colonized: as the repository of the island's popular oral culture, Ti-Clé is a "conteuse" of sorts who serves as a foil for the white religious figures who ridicule her tales as uncivilized superstition.

But to situate the postcolonial ambiguity within the "colonial" representation of Ti-Clé, one must turn to the status of her narrative voice in the Tombeau scene. Similar to Voltaire with the disfigured slave in *Candide*, with the notable exception of the latter's overtly subversive role,

[313] Ibid., 124 and 126.

the author cedes narrative responsibility to a subaltern figure who momentarily troubles the effacing silence in which colonial discourse enshrouds settler violence. Prolonging her association with popular creole culture, Ti-Clé acts as a relay of collective memory for the younger white women. On the one hand, Ti-Clé's status as relay foregrounds an instance of colonial appropriation and consumption of popular memory: the Carib revolt is emptied of the anticolonial resistance their collective suicide symbolizes and made into the site a tourist attraction of sorts that romanticizes indigenous courage when this group is no longer in a position to challenge French hegemony. On the other hand, still a relay, Ti-Clé's telling of the events allows the memory of this collective act of anticolonial resistance to irrupt momentarily into this "Béké novel." In this case, her account signals a relay of sorts between indigenous resistance and that of the displaced Africans and their descendants who replaced them on the island.[314] Read in this way the deep silence following Ti-Clé's turn as narrator evokes the Carib "psychème" lurking in the Martinican collective unconscious that Raphaël Confiant associates with the Tombeau des Caraïbes.[315] But this potential rupture of colonial order here is rather fleeting. Although Ti-Clé, Ginette, and Anne-Marie are united in their silence and outward emotional dispositions, the scene remains marked by their silence as the narrator resumes control and transitions away from this site of memory. Thus, lacking the necessary psychological interiority, the scene falls short of communicating the white Creole women's silence as either

[314] This postcolonial reading of the scene, then, actualizes an instance of what Deborah Jenson calls "traumatic indigeneity" in the case of early nineteenth-century Haitian narrative, referring to the ways early Haitian leaders associated their anticolonial struggle to the Amerindian genocide that preceded the massive influx of African slaves to legitimate, or indigenize, their presence. Jean-Jacques Dessalines' famous declaration "j'ai sauvé mon pays, j'ai vengé l'Amérique" exemplifies this rhetoric. See Deborah Jenson, *Beyond the Slave Narrative: Politics, Sex, and Manuscripts in the Haitian Revolution* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011,) 235. See also my analysis in chapter two.

[315] Raphaël Confiant writes that "Les *psychèmes* caraïbes habitent nos gestes les plus anodins, nos peurs comiques, nos habitudes insolites, nos apparences parfois" and that "Le Tombeau des Caraïbes est le gardien de ces *psychèmes*" in "Le Tombeau des Caraïbes: méditation sur une absence," *Montray Kréyol* (blog), March 15, 2003, accessed June 10, 2013, http://www.montraykreyol.org/spip.php?article6255.

remorse for or rejection of their settler ancestors' violent displacement of the island's indigenous population. The same silence also prevents any definitive confirmation about whether or not Ti-Clé's thoughts truly align with the postcolonial reading outlined above.

Putting aside the ultimately futile task of parsing Ti-Clé's narrative intervention as either the manifestation of the text's postcolonial unconscious or the pernicious white Creole romanticization of the past nobility and courage of a now largely absent indigenous group, the larger question in the scene is the mise-en-scene of collective memory. Returning to the parallel between this episode and Roland's contemplation of the "abyss" of Saint-Pierre raises the question of how to narrate, or "re-member," the catastrophe of Saint-Pierre by submitting it to the necessary logical and sequential ordering that gives narrative meaning. The stories and legends incorporated in *Cœurs martiniquais* and narrated by Ti-Clé – the ghost of Père Labat or the Tombeau des Caraïbes, for instance – hint at romanticized historic figures or events in popular culture and memory in Martinique. Even if the disasterscape of Saint-Pierre was never a fully blank space devoid of meaning in the days and weeks following the catastrophe, its inclusion in the latter half of the novel renews the question of how to narrate, or "relate," it. Like the chronicler Lambolez's attempt to rewrite the city's history in a positive light, Max's narrative articulates an early response to this question of narrating the catastrophe. In the ruined city, the narrator describes Roland's deambulation as a quasi-religious act, treating it alternatively as a pilgrimage (*CM*, 125) – as if the city has acquired the sacred status of a shrine – and a calvary (*CM*, 126) to underline the immense pain and suffering associated with this site of mass death. But for Max, the question of mass death is, indeed, a loaded one due to the conspicuous absence of the city's non-white majority in the narrative's treatment of the catastrophe.[316] However, the

[316] On a similar note the writer Paul Morand recounts a story from his friend Saint-John Perse about the latter's grandmother, a "créole de vieille souche [qui] parlait volontiers de cette catastrophe de la Martinqiue 'où il était

two descriptors, pilgrimage and calvary, together contribute to making Saint-Pierre a martyred city and Max's novel the history of a Béké Passion. But in asserting their purified religiosity, this Passion is not a Béké sacrifice to redeem the majority of the population that perished that day, but rather the articulation of a romanticized, or mythologized, version of the city, the catastrophe, and the decimated ranks of its elites.

Dormant in this discussion of memory in the dueling scene of the Tombeau des Caraïbes and the disasterscape are the concomitant questions of community and belonging, which only further reveal the politics of memory at play in Max's novel. The author, like Lambolez a decade before her, takes up the notion of a martyred city, but unlike her predecessor whose chronicle ends on that fateful day in 1902, Max foregrounds the theme of the renewal of the "decapitated" colony in post-catastrophe Martinique. Thus, exhibiting a certain narrative circularity, the novel becomes once again a *roman sentimental* preoccupied with the themes of white Creole virtue, marriage, and family alliances. The return of these three interrelated themes in the novel's conclusion presents in reality the preconditions for the author's ambiguous attempt to recreate a prelapsarian colonial idyll. These issues first manifest themselves in a letter from his brother Xavier that Roland receives after returning to Paris. A Catholic missionary in Africa continuing the family's "tradition" of service to the French empire during the catastrophe, le père Xavier, reminding his brother of his religious and familial duty of replenishing the white Creole class, urges him to prolong both his family's and caste's lineage: "Ne serait-ce pas un devoir aussi pour toi de penser à en continuer la lignée. Plus que jamais, à l'heure présente, les foyers chrétiens devraient servir de base à la société défaillante…pourquoi n'en fonderais-tu pas un?" (*CM,* 133). Awoken from his melancholy, Roland returns to Martinique and quickly contracts a marriage

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mort sept mille personnes.' On lui objectait qu'il y en avait eu quarante mille victimes: 'Ah! Répondait-elle, si vous comptez les gens de couleur.'" See Paul Morand, *Hiver Caraïbe* (Paris: Flammarion, 1929), 41.

with Ginette's friend Liliane, the daughter of a richer planter near Le Lamentin in the center of the island who descends from one of the "original" *colon* families. Their marriage, then, represents the symbolic union of what amounted to white Creole royalty at that time in Martinique even if, as a consequence of a severe and enduring sugar crisis the bride's family fortune had been greatly reduced.[317] In spite of this hardship, all the family members work diligently alongside the servants to keep the plantation afloat in a scene of bucolic contentment that signals the return of the familial and sentimental idyll previously lost in the disaster. As if enacting the rustic utopia at the end of *Candide*, the narrator explains, "On était loin des jours de deuil et, sous l'influence de la nature heureuse, des joies nouvelles éclosaient, prémices des bonheurs à venir" (*CM*, 151).

Yet similar to the famously enigmatic ending to Voltaire's novel, the Béké utopia at the end of *Cœurs martiniquais* is not without its own ambiguities. Two years after their wedding, the novel, once again in Paris where Roland and Liliane now live with their infant daughter, concludes with a portrait of the new family's apparent plenitude. With the birth of his daughter seemingly dissipating Roland's "dernières tristesses" (*CM*, 157) regarding lost family and friends, these last words in the novel suggestively hint at some newfound happiness resulting from the protagonist's fulfillment of his Christian duty by having prolonged his caste by yet another generation. The ambiguity in this conclusion arises, however, in the perpetuation of the Béké line in exile far from their former colonial fiefdom. Narratively, the conclusion's apparent Béké utopia takes readers back to the initial pre-catastrophe idyll, but with a wholly different symbolic effect.

[317] In fact, since the late nineteenth century, with the rise of beetroot sugar in Europe, sugar cane production found itself severely threatened by overproduction and plummeting market value. See Schnakenbourg, "Les conséquences économiques de la catastrophe," 27-28.

Whereas the white Creole idylls at both the beginning and end might suggest some narrative symmetry, the symbolic rebirth of the caste in exile, figured in the birth of Roland's daughter in Paris, offers a re-reading of the novel's opening image of a sun "disparaissant à l'horizon" that "irradiait de son dernier éclat la Martinique" (*CM,* 5). Linked to the volcano through the common root between the setting sun's diminishing shimmer ("éclat") and Mont Pelée's eruption, or explosion, ("éclater"), the disjunction between the beginning and the end, thereby, suggests that the metaphoric Béké "sun" has set on Martinique by the end of the novel. In addition, therefore, to problematizing collective memory, Max's novel also interrogates, in spite of itself, the place of white Creoles in post-catastrophe Martinique. Thus, Max revives the so-called "Martinican hearts" to signify the Christian devotion she associates with the core of white Creole identity. Going further, in a ludic rearrangement of the word associations the novel's title makes possible, she also evokes the sentimental and the familial, not to say the consanguineous, blood relations linking members of the caste to one another to the exclusion of the island's non-white majority. Yet, to push the heart image further, the Béké heartbeat is much fainter by the novel's end as the catastrophe forever altered the caste's political, social, and to a much lesser extent economic domination of the island.

In light of the novel's ambivalent conclusion and the demographic stakes for the composition of the island's population that the catastrophe and the novel both lay bare, the real "tragédie inénarrable" for the author is the eclipse of the island's wealthy landowning and commercial white elite rather than the unimaginable horror of thirty thousand instantaneous deaths. While the specter of a Béké eclipse is only vaguely and implicitly manifest in the texts produced by this class, the writing, so to speak, was on the wall both before and after the

catastrophe.[318] One need only look to the racially charged legislative elections of 1902 in which the vociferous white conservative protestations against mulatto and black republican "evictionism" were a cover for the former's unease at the prospect of non-white majority rule or to the apocryphal reports of blacks celebrating the annihilation of whites in the European press.[319] Caught in the tensions between myth and reality, legend and history, Max's representation of the catastrophe as a Béké Passion, in the religious sense of the term, completely evacuates the social, political, or even telluric forces that produced the catastrophe. But despite her best efforts to transform the catastrophe into the divine sacrifice of the colony's white elite, Max's novel cannot escape history and the white Creole decline for which the catastrophe is an explosive symbol. Noting the impact of the event among intellectuals in Martinique, Corzani writes that the catastrophe of 1902 was "une tragédie certes mais qui, semblable à bien des égards à ce que fut la Révolution de 1789 pour la société française, allait permettre à d'autres de prendre le relais des disparus, et à la Martinique d'entrer dans la modernité d'une société désormais moins 'castée.'"[320] As a new generation of writers seized upon the symbolism of the catastrophe, the paradox is that literary reconstructions of fin-de-siècle Saint-Pierre would make the city increasingly divided, the symbol of racist colonial society with which successive waves of post-colonial writers have engaged.

Combat in the Creole Arena: Memorializing the Creole City (II)

Nearly two decades after the publication of Max's novel, another Martinican writer, in revisiting the themes of exile, return, and disaster, would significantly change the course of Antillean letters. In his famed *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (1939), Aimé Césaire

[318] One could argue that Lambolez's narrative works similarly in that his need to re-inscribe Saint-Pierre's colonial history and the great (white) men and dates that comprise it flows precisely from the disappearance of the city and half of the island's whites along with it. See Lambolez, *Saint-Pierre – Martinique*.
[319] For one such report, see "Les nègres à la Martinique," *Le Petit Journal*, June 10, 1902, 6; See also Jean Hess, *La catastrophe de la Martinique: Notes d'un reporter* (Paris: Librairie Charpentier et Fasquelle, 1902), 296.
[320] Corzani, "Fortune littéraire," 97.

productively incorporates these themes into his long poem commonly read as an important salvo of the Negritude movement to which the poet is most closely associated along with Léopold Sédar Senghor and Léon Damas.[321] However, in the *Cahier*, Césaire fully reworks the notions of travel and alienation in order to represent the re-appropriation of blackness. But, in so doing, as Mireille Rosello argues Césaire also refashions another important symbol in the Martinican imaginary, arguing that

> Au contraire des auteurs comme Jean Max, la poésie de Césaire peut s'approprier la violence destructrice du volcan et y voir le symbole d'une révolte positive et optimiste, d'une révolte victorieuse qui va bel et bien aboutir à une transformation radicale du paysage antillais.[322]

Bereft of any overly explicit scene of the catastrophe of Saint-Pierre, this traumatic history still lurks nonetheless in the poem's background through the metonymic and metaphoric figures of the volcano: the first as an evocation of Mont Pelée's looming presence in the island's history and the second as part of the poetics of Negritude. Together, they contribute, to use Rosello's terms, a "radical transformation" in the "meaning" of the catastrophe in the present discussion.

To wit, Césaire casts the people of Martinique – he would later go on to call them "un peuple péléen" – as a silent, dormant volcano figured through the local term for hill or mountain, "morne," in the poem's opening anaphoric succession of "Au bout du petit matin."[323] Césaire writes, for instance, "Au bout du petit matin, le morne oublié, oublieux de sauter" (*CR*, 10) or,

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[321] Aimé Césaire, *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (Paris : Présence africaine, 1983). Hereafter cited in text as *CR*.
[322] Mireille Rosello, *Littérature et identité créole aux Antilles* (Paris; Karthala, 1992), 136; Similarly, Jean Bernabé writes, "Nul doute que chez Césaire, la montagne ne soit un substitut, mais emphatique, compensatoire et onirique tout à la fois du poète tout d'abord, puis de l'ensemble des nègres rédimé par l'action poétique d'un seul homme." See Jean Bernabé, "Les implications sociologiques et idéologiques du thème de la montagne dans la littérature antillaise," in *Compte-rendu des travaux du colloque de Saint-Piere, 14, 15, 16 décembre* 1973, Centre universitaire Antilles-Guyane, Archives départementales de la Martinique, 4°H 10558, 80.
[323] Aimé Césaire, " La poésie, parole essentielle," 10.

further binding the eruption to the expression of Negritude in the same sequence, "Au bout du petit matin, l'incendie contenu du morne, comme un sanglot que l'on a bâillonné au bord de son éclatement sanguinaire, en quête d'une ignition qui se dérobe et se méconnaît" (*CR*, 11). Here, the poet evokes a muted cry ("cri") repeating a previous stanza ("cette foule criarde si étonnement passée à côté de son cri," *CR* 9), which equates the self-affirmation of Negritude's black subject to a dormant (or awakening) volcano and which the authors of *Eloge de la créolité* (1989) have perspicaciously described as "the prophetic blaze of speech."[324]

The poetics of catastrophe in Césaire's *Cahier* establish a homology between the destruction of the colonial city (Saint-Pierre) and the de(con)struction of colonial discourse (Negritude), both of which are intricately woven together through the image and history of the volcano in the text. Still at the beginning of the poem and at a moment when the potential of the upright colonized subject seems less than a vague possibility, a cataclysmic event set in an undefined future in the fourth stanza elusively evokes the catastrophe of Saint-Pierre and its slightly more tangible importance in Martinican collective memory:

> Au bout du petit matin, sur cette plus fragile épaisseur de terre que dépasse de façon humiliante son grandiose avenir – les volcans éclateront, l'eau nue emportera les tâches mûres du soleil et il ne restera plus qu'un bouillonnement tiède picoré d'oiseaux marins – la plage des songes et l'insensé réveil. (*CR*, 8)

Read as an allusion to the catastrophe, the temporal setting ("Au bout du petit matin") and the mention of water ("l'eau nue") both possibly recall, respectively, the matutinal occurrence of the

[324] Bernabé, Chamoiseau, Confiant, *Eloge*, 81. The same image also informs the way Césaire conceives of his poetry in general: "Je sens que ma poésie est péléenne parce que précisément ma poésie n'est pas du tout une poésie effusive, autrement dit qui se dégage …. se dégage perpétuellement; je crois que la parole est une parole *rare*. Cela signifie qu'elle s'accumule. Elle s'accumule pendant longtemps, elle s'accumule patiemment, elle fait son cheminement, on peut la croire éteinte et brusquement, la grande déchirure. C'est ce qui donne son caractère dramatique: l'éruption." See Aimé Césaire, " La poésie, parole essentielle," 10.

eruption as well as the tsunami that washed out part of the center city on May 5, a result of volcanic instability along the entire lesser Antillean volcanic arc.[325] The same stanza is also significant in the context of the memory of the catastrophe of Saint-Pierre for the way it evokes a tabula rasa of destruction ("il ne restera plus…") and conjures the image of a ruin-laden empty post-catastrophe disasterscape upon which the poet projects a city reduced to a chimeric beach of dreams of the past in an elliptic mention of the illusions of colonial grandeur that authors like Jean Max continued to nourish. However, the poet, most notably, depicts the disasterscape as not entirely empty when he suggests that the traces of the old city contain a new bubbling presence ("un bouillonnement tiède") making way for the unexpected awakening ("l'insensé réveil") the poet wishes to enact.

The allegory of Césaire's disasterscape in the *Cahier* captures the irruption of Negritude as well as the memory of the disaster in modern Martinican literature, both of which flow from a similar eschatological imperative. Intertwining catastrophe with the invention of a new poetic paradigm, the poet writes:

> Il faut bien commencer.
>
> Commencer quoi?
>
> La seule chose au monde qu'il vaille la peine de commencer:
>
> La Fin du monde, parbleu. (*CR*, 132)

Césaire attaches the ruins of the Creole City, symbolized as the end of the white Creole city, to the dismantling of the power of colonial discourse, figured here as the end of the world of colonial and exoticized representations. As the poem continues and its deconstruction of the

[325] The morning of May 7, 1902, one day before the catastrophe of Saint-Pierre, the Soufrière volcano on nearby Saint Vincent erupted and in the same period reports suggested volcanic activity in the vicinity of Kick 'Em Jenny, the submarine volcano near Grenada. There were also eruptions across Central America in El Salvador on May 10, July 15 in Nicaragua, and in Guatemala later in the same year. See Ursulet, *Le désastre de 1902*, 115. The May 7 eruption on Saint Vincent killed 1,600 people among whom were many of the island's last living Caribs.

colonial epistemic world becomes increasingly evident, creating "the effect of nauseated disgust with the existing [political and aesthetic] order," the muzzled voice described above grows ever louder and, ultimately, surges forth in harmony with the unchained forces of nature.[326]

For both Max's novel and Césaire's poem, exile is inextricably linked to the regeneration of the respective identities each depicts. On the one hand, Max's Béké renewal takes place outside Martinique while, on the other hand, Césaire began writing his long poem before returning to his native island. Exile, both real and represented, across these works does not mean that Césaire's founding of a new identity while away from Martinique fully resembles the end of Max's novel and the continuation of the Béké class outside the same island. Rather, exile is like a mirror in these two works, reflecting a trajectory of possession to dispossession for Max and its reversal for Césaire. Similarly, blood is another intertextual site further linking these two authors. As the poet fully accepts his blackness and celebrates this revalorized identity, he reaffirms his prophetic status in relation to his native land, quite literally holding the broken and injured island in his hand to transform it: "merveilleusement couché le corps de mon pays dans le désespoir de mes bras, ses os ébranlés, et, dans ses veines, le sang qui hésite comme la goutte de lait végétal à la pointe blessée du bulbe" (*CR,* 56). Blood and its circulation through not only the poet's veins but also the collective Martinican body that he holds provide a central image to this part of the poem according to Abiola Irele. The critic writes that:

> The self in this understanding is not so much a unique essence of the individual personality as an instance, a derivation of a collective being in a continuous flow of manifested presence. 'Sang' is thus identity defined as a sensual grasp of the

[326] A. James Arnold, *Modernism and Negritude: The Poetry and Poetics of Aimé Césaire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 136.

> self in a bond with the community that is vital in a literal sense; it denotes the collective existence in its extension over time.[327]

In Max's narrative, as described above, blood was an essential trope for imaging (white Creole) community in Martinique. Likewise, in Césaire's poem, blood re-figures the Martinican collective body. Here, both blood and the metonymic evocation of Mont Pelée, its crater, and its infamous eruption come together in one highly symbolic stanza:

> Et voici soudain que force et vie m'assaillent comme un taureau et l'onde de vie circonvient la papille du morne et voilà toutes les veines et veinules qui s'affairent au sang neuf et l'énorme poumon des cyclones qui respire et le feu thésaurisé des volcans et le gigantesque pouls sismique qui bat maintenant la mesure d'un corps vivant en mon ferme embrasement." (*CR*, 56-57)

For Mireille Rosello, the volcanic imagery is an instance of cultural marronnage in which "l'image du volcan peut devenir la signature d'une culture, d'un imaginaire, d'un capital mythique antillais."[328] Commenting precisely this stanza, Irele writes that it is a "determined reversal of previous evocations of the island's lifelessness" and "the passive disposition of the people" whose objective is "to enact a general awakening."[329] To the manifestation of a decolonized aesthetics of place and a prophesy of cultural awakening, I would like to add here that the combination of blood with the chaotic forces of the island's natural world, most specifically with volcanic eruptions, signals a shift in the place of the catastrophe in the local collective imaginary.

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[327] Abiola Irele, introduction to *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*, by Aimé Césaire, ed. Abiola Irele (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2000), lxv. See also Dominique Combe, *Aimé Césaire, Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1993), 46.
[328] Rosello, *Littérature*, 139.
[329] Irele, *Cahier*, 135.

Again like the Békée Jean Max in *Cœurs martiniquais,* Césaire endows himself with the power to resuscitate the island and its morose inhabitants by harnessing both nature and his poetic voice. Unlike his more obscure predecessor, however, Césaire's resuscitation instantiates a rupture with the colonial world symbolized by Saint-Pierre. While Max's text largely reflects the colonial world that her novel represents with its erasure of the non-white majority from the narrative, the exclusive attention it offers wealthy white Creole points of view, and the exaggerated moral righteousness that characterizes this same group, Césaire's intervention upends Max's poetics and the politics of Béké rule that they subtend. In this reading, the poem then stages the disaster as a representational and aesthetic paradigm shift in the imagined community as the "sang neuf" of a renewed collective body of the island's black majority, now proudly standing upright ("Et nous sommes debout, mon pays et moi," *CR* 57), replaces the Béké bloodlines of *Cœurs martiniquais* to create a new relation between the black population and the rest of the island. Eschewing the supposed pure Béké bloodlines that in part legitimated their authority (a colonial "droit de sang"), Césaire, in the articulation of a postcolonial "droit de sol," re-claims and makes central to his poem the reclaimed Martinican landscape.[330] Although Césaire's Negritude is indistinguishable from revalorized black identity, it is also deeply concerned with re-inscribing Martinique's non-white population back into local representations of space, a process of which the catastrophe of Saint-Pierre is highly symbolic.

Absent in this new period of memorialization of Saint-Pierre that Césaire's work initiates – more so for his revalorization of blacks than his elliptic recreation of Saint-Pierre – is the Béké nostalgia for the lost past that still dissipatedly lingers in the work of some white writers in

[330] I owe this particular observation to Patrick Bray.

Martinique.[331] Instead, Césaire's poem expresses an explicit interest in overcoming colonial nostalgia and in rehabilitating the presence and legacy of the black population in Martinique. Not surprisingly then the writers who engage more deeply with the catastrophe of Saint-Pierre also increasingly extend this new optic to their literary explorations of the last days of Saint-Pierre. What emerges from these works is a multicultural contact zone in which the various groups and inhabitants in Saint-Pierre are increasingly put into "relation" with each other. The theoretician of relation, Edouard Glissant's historical novel *Le quatrième siècle* (1964) exemplifies this new tendency, despite the small place the catastrophe holds in the overall narrative, when he writes about the city as an arena of opposing ethno-classes locked into battle: "Jetant les uns contre les autres, dans l'arène où elle [the city] fermentait, ses mulâtres et ses blancs, ses hommes de couleur et ses maîtres."[332] Constructing a combative image through the metaphor of the arena, which also significantly connotes the theme of spectacle, Glissant brings racial animosity between the various ethno-classes to the forefront. While Glissant and Césaire's literary representations of Saint-Pierre are fleeting and elliptic in *Le quatrième siècle* and the *Cahier*, their respective focuses on color and conflict foregrounds the way racial animosity is put on display in the most sustained literary treatment of the catastrophe in the postwar period.

As Jack Corzani explains, "Les poètes noirs se sont emparés de Saint-Pierre, y ont vu la révolte d'une terre se débarrassant d'un chancre, de la ville blanche pétrie de luxe, de racisme. Tardon s'y est refusé."[333] The notion that the catastrophe was the product of the colonial ministry's refusal to evacuate Saint-Pierre in order to complete that spring's legislative elections originates with the French journalist Jean Hess and still informs popular accounts of the disaster

[331] See Marie-Reine de Jaham, *La grande Béké* (Paris: Laffont, 1989) or in her *L'or des îles* series *Le sang du volcan* (Paris: Laffont, 1998) and *Les héritiers du paradis* (Paris: Laffont, 1998).
[332] Edouard Glissant, *Le quatrième siècle* (Paris: Edition du Seuil, 1964), 221.
[333] Jack Corzani, preface to *La Caldeira*, by Raphaël Tardon (Fort-de-France: Désormeaux, 1977), xii.

to this day even if recent historiography has thoroughly debunked this position.[334] Raphaël Tardon, for his part, displaces Hess's moral opprobrium from the colonial government to the racial quarrel that framed the larger context of the vote as the "parti mulâtre" and white conservatives viciously campaigned against one another. Here the eruption serves as both political and narrative dénouement as Tardon enfolds a critique of racialist discourse into his treatment of the disaster. Returning to the post-catastrophe disasterscape already visited by Max and Césaire at the end of his novel, Tardon makes this site the symbol of racial discourse and antagonisms that divided fin-de-siècle Martinique, and which were not absent from the period in which he was active in the island's intellectual scene. Surveying the catastrophe, the narrator in *La Caldeira* describes the destruction and focuses on the bodies not disintegrated by the *nuée ardente*:

> Un charnier pour un siège au Parlement. La mort gagnait sur tous les tableaux. C'était elle la triomphatrice de la bagarre politique et raciale. Pour le prouver d'irréfutable façon, elle étendit dans les rues, sur la Savane, sur le boulevard, trois mille cadavres. Trois mille cadavres offerts à la médiation des hommes...Aucun de ces cadavres ne put être identifié: ils étaient tous noirs, scalpés, épilés, défigurés; sans nez, sans lèvres, et nus. Blancs, octavons, quaterons, hybrides, mulâtres, chabins, câpres, nègres, ils étaient tous noirs carbonisés, uniformément noir, et sans la moindre caractéristique ethnique.[335]

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[334] Jean Hess, *La catastrophe*, see in particular "Préface," i-xii. For a detailed critique of Hess's view see Léo Ursulet, *Le désastre de 1902*, chapter three "La controverse politique autour du désastre" and chapter four "La question des responsabilités au sujet du désastre," 121-173. Ursulet minimizes the stakes of the legislative elections, recalling the limited state of volcanology at the time, and underlines Hess's personal animosity against the colonial administration after his untimely dismissal from the Navy, 136.

[335] Raphaël Tardon, *La Caldeira* (Paris: Fasquelle, 1949), 258 (hereafter cited in text as *LC*).

Worthy of lengthy quotation for the way it weaves together the various questions of race, identity, and catastrophe that Tardon explores throughout *La Caldeira*, this passage on the ruins of Saint-Pierre frames the transcendence of difference that so strongly demarcated and hierarchized the pre-disaster city. Yet here, however, the population can only overcome the "écran de surdités échevelées" that Glissant calls the *préjugé de couleur* in Saint-Pierre in catastrophe in death;[336] for it is only in their brief reactions to the explosion and the sure death that the denizens of Saint-Pierre found unity. Despite the apparent fatalism embedded in the description, Tardon refuses to equate this catastrophe to theodicy or martyrdom of any stripe. Instead, it is the result of flawed ideological thinking regarding racial difference.

The catastrophe of Saint-Pierre significantly re-ordered life in early twentieth-century Martinique as the destruction of the only other city on the island capable of rivaling the capital Fort-de-France greatly accelerated the concentration and centralization of power and influence there. Although the disaster proportionally was a greater blow to the white economic and social elite, the catastrophe did little to re-organize the distribution of land and wealth. To this day, the wealthiest industrialists remain the descendants of the white Creoles who in addition to large agricultural plantations have invested their holdings into the sprawl of supermarkets, shopping centers, and beachfront hotels. However, the catastrophe also marks a significant shift in politics as educated and middle class mulattos and blacks increasingly occupied administrative and elected positions in the local, colonial, and, after 1946, departmental government. Since the advent of the definitive abolition in 1848 and the Third Republic in 1870, the catastrophe in effect accelerated the rise of majority rule in Martinique, albeit one that was suspended by the wartime rule of Pétain loyalist Admiral Robert, excluded women until after World War II, and remained under the aegis of metropolitan authority.

[336] Glissant, *Le quatrième siècle*, 221.

Symbolic of the rise of non-white political power in Martinique, the 1902 catastrophe anticipates the wholesale re-evaluation of black identity that gained momentum in the interwar period with Haitian indigenism, led by Jean Price-Mars, the Harlem Renaissance by Langston Hughes, and Negritude by Césaire, Senghor, and Damas. In Martinique, Césaire's election as mayor of Fort-de-France and deputy of Martinique in 1945 along with Negritude's consecration abroad by André Breton and Jean-Paul Sartre made it a significant literary and ideological force in the Martinican post-war intellectual landscape in which Raphaël Tardon was present. Born into a wealthy mulatto family from Le Prêcheur near Saint-Pierre and a career functionary in the French colonial administration, Tardon pursued a parallel career as a journalist, essayist, and novelist. The author of novels and essays on historical and contemporary race relations around the world, literary recognition arrived late in life for Tardon who won the Prix des Caraïbes in 1966 a year before his death. As a contemporary of Césaire (Tardon was born in 1911, Césaire in 1913), Tardon maintained a certain hostility toward the ideology of Negritude because of the emphasis the latter gave blackness and Africa, an identity that resonated little with his mixed-race background and bristled his profound suspicion of all racisms (including Negritude, which Sartre called an anti-racism racism in "Orphée noir"). Tardon's second novel, *La Caldeira*, articulates these positions in its thoroughly researched reconstruction of pre-disaster Saint-Pierre and the catastrophe itself.

As the novel's dénouement illustrates above, this work makes the real catastrophe the colony's racial balkanization and the incapacity of the city's residents to transcend these divisions. Although an idealistic humanism motivated Tardon's aversion to racisms of all stripes, he remained deeply conscious of the existence of the color line, which W.E.B. Du Bois proclaimed the great problem of the twentieth century one year after the catastrophe of Saint-

Pierre. Coincidently, Tardon also published *La Caldeira*, a "roman du métissage," the same year Du Bois visited the Warsaw ghetto, an experience that would later lead the activist to broaden the scope of the color line beyond the context of U.S. racism to anti-Semitism or colonialism.[337] In the 1952 essay "The Negro and the Warsaw Ghetto" published in *Jewish Life*, Du Bois recalls the realization in those ruins that "the race problem in which I was interested cut across lines of color and physique and belief and status and was a matter of cultural patterns, perverted teaching and human hate and prejudice, which reached all sorts of people and caused endless evil to all men."[338] Yet the link between the two writers is more substantive than mere chronological happenstance given Tardon's career-long crusade as a writer against human hate and racial prejudice on a global scale in his oeuvre of essays and novels attacking the Atlantic slave trade in *Starkenfirst* (1947), Caribbean slavery in *Le combat de Schœlcher* (1948), European missionaries in Tahiti, and South African apartheid in *Noirs et Blancs* (1961).[339] In *La Caldeira*, Tardon uses the color line, or rather the color lines between the white, mulatto, and black populations in Saint-Pierre to recast the catastrophe as a decidedly human one. In so doing, Tardon wrote what remains perhaps the most captivating novel of the catastrophe to date, which turns the logic of colonial racism on its head and offers a remarkably incisive window into the makeup and function of Martinican racial identity in the setting of turn-of-the-century Saint-Pierre. Casting racial identity as a set of combative performances in the "arena" of Saint-Pierre, Tardon pushes Glissant's image to the extreme even if his novel predates the latter's by a decade and a half. In

[337] Chantal Maignan-Claverie, *Le métissage dans la littérature des Antilles française: Le complexe d'Ariel* (Paris : Karthala, 2005), 322.
[338] W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Negro and the Warsaw Ghetto," in *The Social Theory of W.E.B. Du Bois*, ed. Paul Zuckerman (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2004), 46.
[339] In this way, Tardon's career resembles another French Antillean writer in the service of the French colonial state, the novelist René Maran whose *Batouala* (1921) made him the first black writer to win the Prix Goncourt. See Charles Onana, *René Maran: Le premier Goncourt noir, 1887-1960* (Paris: Editions Duboiris, 2007).

this way, Tardon also remembers the catastrophe as a low-point of prejudice and human folly in a narrative that reads like an allegorical critique of Negritude.

La Caldeira centers on the intertwined and antagonistic relations of a rich, youthful bohemian mulatto Georges Melville, a former teacher and aspiring writer, the white Creole leader the Comte de Saint-Méry, and the young mixed-race Cécilia Laborde the who represents the object of both men's desires. The backdrop for this love triangle is the ebullient social and political cauldron – the novel's real "caldera" – that is Saint-Pierre. The novel begins in Melville's room in the *Hôtel des Deux-Mondes* in the working-class quarter of *Le Mouillage* and offers the standard picturesque presentation of Saint-Pierre as the protagonist follows the sounds of crowing roosters that awaken residents across the city, superlatively described as "la plus belle ville des Antilles" or "le port le plus actif de la mer des Caraïbes" (*LC*, 8). However, Melville's residence, aptly named the Hôtel des Deux-Mondes, alludes to the bifurcated world of segregated neighborhoods that Tardon unveils to readers. Going further, the play contained in the different valences of the name "Deux-Mondes" helps to think through the novel's portrayal of Glissantian relation, or alternatively the lack thereof, and recapitulates the entire gambit of Tardon's reflections on racial identity in the novel and, more broadly, Martinican society. In the lead up to the tragic denouement, the novel's dramatic tension revolves around the author's attempt to bring into relief the dialectic linking these two seemingly opposed "worlds." Here the objective is to show how the "worlds" are inextricably imbricated in one another in an interpretative twist that now places the emphasis on the hyphen bridging the gap between both words and worlds as if the hyphen ("trait d'union" in French) works literally to unite them. Like the mule-drawn tramway that "reliait les deux pôles de la ville," the Hôtel des Deux-Mondes is

itself also the site for such linkage since it draws its clientele from all parts, classes, and ethnic groups in Saint-Pierre for its much-celebrated bar (*LC,* 15).

Tardon's interrogation of the relation between the words and worlds concealed in the hotel's name gives immediately way to a broader question of where to draw the color line. While the question remains purely rhetorical for Tardon, the author nevertheless pushes it even further in order ultimately to obliterate the underlying ideology of colonial racism when he spotlights the performative nature of identity in the narrative. Buried within the larger trope of theatricality in the novel are a pair of scenes of racial passing in which two men who self-identify as white pose for one reason or another as black men. The resulting masquerade reveals racial identity to be the "*appearance of substance*," or a "performative accomplishment," that, just as easily as it can prop up normative categories of identity, can thwart them as well.[340] For Judith Butler, drag shows are a privileged site for the troubling performance of gender identities and the norms on which they rest: "Drag is an example that is meant to establish that 'reality' is not as fixed as we generally assume it to be. The purpose of the example is to expose the tenuousness of gender 'reality' in order to counter the violence performed by gender norms."[341] In the process of decoupling, or at the very least problematizing, phenotype and racial essence, by bluring the "visual signification of what is supposedly racial truth," Tardon draws attention to the role given to narrative for assigning racial identity in his Saint-Pierre.[342]

While Glissant's Saint-Pierre in *Le quatrième siècle* is figured as a combative arena, Tardon's novel adds a Roman touch to this image by consistently referring to the city's residents

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[340] Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (Dec. 1988), 520.
[341] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), xxiii-xxiv.
[342] Nadine Ehlers, *Racial Imperatives: Discipline, Performativity, and Struggles against Subjugation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 52.

as “morituri,” the Latin appellation with which gladiators are thought to have referred to themselves in their pre-combat salute to the Emperor. Adding to the narrative’s sense of theatricality, the term then helps readers imagine Saint-Pierre as an arena and its racial divisions as an inevitable fight to the death between “those who are about to die,” to give one translation of “morituri.” Not limited to figures of speech, the theme of spectacle emerges in a brief scene during Carnival in the city’s theater in which seating was determined by race. The theater, with its costumes, masks, and performance of social hierarchies, was notoriously segregated along racial lines in Saint-Pierre. The theater and Carnival, intricately tied to the visibility of social status, suggest the extent to which the social order can be understood as a performance of itself, as the general examples from the theater and Carnival show, but they also bring to light a critique of this order as the following two scenes demonstrate.

A scene including the disgraced leader of the Béké elite le Comte de Saint-Méry and the novel’s aspiring writer protagonist Georges Melville highlights one significant episode of the performance of racial identity in the novel. In the thick cover of night and the falling ash from Mont Pelée in which “personne n’aurait pu reconnaître sa mère” (*LC,* 141), the narrator establishes the ideal conditions for the novel’s attack on Saint-Méry’s whiteness after he becomes disabused of his previous notions of racial authenticity. The head of Saint-Pierre’s underworld blackmails the Comte with the threat of revealing to the entire city his purported racial “impurity,” which leads Saint-Méry to kill the middleman sent to collect the ransom. Murder proves, much to the Comte’s chagrin, futile in squashing the rumor as the following scene immediately illustrates. There the Comte finds himself excluded from the exclusive Cercle de l’Hermine and shamefully banished from his home by a wife betrayed by his racial “lie.” At a moment when the ash falling from Mont Pelée was turning black residents “white,” the dark of

night in which the Comte finds himself only further lends itself to problematizing identity. In this setting, the Comte collides with the mixed-race protagonist Melville because a "tapis de cendres avait étouffé le bruit de leurs pas respectifs" (*LC,* 144). Startled by the collision, Melville asks "Ça qui là?" in Creole, a question to which the narrator relates the Comte's decision to "taire son identité" as he replies in Creole with a question of his own: "Et ou? Qui nom ou?" (*LC,* 144). Once Melville reveals his identity, Saint-Méry in a split-second decision taking advantage of "l'anonymat de la nuit" in which "ni l'un ni l'autre n'avaient de visage," assumes the identity of "Pétrus," a black farmer from Le Morne Rouge near Mont Pelée. In the scene that unfolds, the two proceed to have an exchange devoid of "le souci de s'observer et de peser ses paroles" required by the prevailing racial and social hierarchy (*LC,* 144).

The scene stages thus a brief suspension of the *préjugé de couleur* that under the light of day would normally determine social interactions between white and mulatto residents in Saint-Pierre.[343] As the scene unfolds, "Pétrus" recounts his day to Melville and his decision to seek refuge from the awakening volcano in Saint-Pierre. The fabricated account of Pétrus's last twenty-four hours produces a strange calming effect on the Comte:

> Peu à peu un grand soulagement le gagnait à la pensée que pour la première et dernière fois de son existence, l'Aurige caracolant, le Comte de Saint-Méry, se trouvait à même de pouvoir oublier rang, préjugé, caste, et fortune, pour jouer, pour se mettre dans la peau de Pétrus, pauvre nègre agriculteur. (*LC,* 145)

The doubling of Saint-Méry in this passage which refers to him twice, first by his nickname l'Aurige and second by his honorific, shadows the doubling of Saint-Méry in the scene when as "Pétrus" he asks about Melville's opinion of le Comte de Saint-Méry. In this way, this nocturnal

[343] Commenting on the contrast between day and night in relation to the observance of the color line, Maignan-Claverie recalls that "La transgression du tabou racial est liée inévitablement à un double jeu où l'espace social, diurne, défait l'intimité nocturne." Maignan-Slaverie, *Métissage,* 14.

encounter and the Comte's subterfuge temporarily suspend the usual coordinates of the colonial racial hierarchy as a "friendship" develops between the two interlocutors, revealing, as Maignan-Claverie writes, in "un renversement baroque" how "cette humanité sans visage devient une humanité sans masques."[344] As Melville exclaims to his new companion, "Pétrus, tu es un frère" (*LC*, 146) and again "tu es un zig" (*LC*, 147), or pal, it becomes apparent to Saint-Méry/"Pétrus" that this new connection most likely saved his life since Melville had intended to grenade his home to punish the Comte for sleeping with Cécilia before the two men collided in the dark. Taken as a whole, the scene foregrounds the possibility of cross-color links that can develop with the suspension of the racist thinking and ideology.

However, the reprieve from the *préjugé de couleur* proves only temporary – much like the delay in the deadly explosion, symbolized by the grenade that only announces the veritable explosion of May 8 – as racial animosity returns with the rising sun. Saint-Méry's "performance" of blackness in the figure of the peasant farmer reveals itself then to be a wise choice for defusing both literally and figuratively Melville's anger and his grenade. Yet the very possibility of his performance, when juxtaposed against his one-time status in the novel as a "God" of whiteness, suggests the extent to which racial identity in *La Caldeira* acts as a mask that can be used to thwart any clear-cut division between "blackness" and "whiteness" given the proper preconditions like intermediary skin pigmentation or the cover of night.

In the second performance of race under consideration, a literal mask conveys the malleability of racial identity in the novel. During the revelry of Carnival, Melville, Professeur Landes, a real-life figure and colonial outsider from metropolitan France who taught at the *lycée* and dominated the local intellectual scene, and two American ship captains discuss racial identity

[344] Ibid., 324.

in the colony.[345] Like in the "Pétrus"– Melville scene, Carnival offers the conditions for playing with identity and social order as the narrator confirms that "La ville entière a pris le masque" (*LC*, 65). Revisiting Mikhail Bakhtin's influential view of Carnival in early-modern Europe as sanctioned social reversal of the sacred and the profane, H. Adlai Murdoch writes that "any understanding or analysis of the social role played by the cultural pluralisms driving the carnivalesque in the Caribbean must be fundamentally at odds with the pre-modern patterns produced initially in Renaissance Europe."[346] Indeed, in Caribbean "oppositional" cultures, play, understood broadly "as simulation and acting," does "in an obvious sense challenge the status quo" but, as Richard Burton adds, it also "reconcile[s] the disempowered to the political, social, and economic inequalities inherited from the past and entrenched in their basic structure in the present."[347] This leads Burton, therefore, to reframe it less in terms of a high/low opposition than an insider/outsider dialectic that means for him that Carnival is "viewed here less as a ludic subversion of society…than…as a 'magical mirror' of it."[348] Disguised as a fox, Landes inserts himself into Melville and the U.S. captains' discussion of the internalization of the *préjugé de couleur* among men and women of color in Saint-Pierre. Although his rhetorical style quickly gives him away to Melville, Landes's intervention yields a long lecture on race in turn-of-the-century Saint-Pierre. The Professeur's sociological analysis posits a confrontation between a

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[345] Tardon describes Landes, who also headed Saint-Pierre ephemeral scientific commission on the volcano as less oblivious to the color divisions as defiant of them: "dans cette ville hiérarchisée selon les différents degrés de pigmentation, [Landes] établissait ses relations indépendamment de la couleur," (LC 21)

[346] Murdoch, *Creole Identity*, 219. See also Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1968).

[347] Richard D.E. Burton, *Afro-Creole: Power, Opposition, and Play in the Caribbean* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 222 and 263. For Burton, the Caribbean (his focus is on Jamaica, Trinidad, and Haiti here) oppositional culture describes the way West Indian cultures oppose "the dominant power on the dominant order's own ground" through strategies of parody and play that themselves are "always likely sooner or later to be 'recuperated' by it," 8.

[348] Ibid., 157. The notion of performance as a magical mirror comes from the anthropologist Victor Turner: "Genres of cultural performance are not simple mirrors but magical mirrors of social reality: they exaggerate, invert, re-form, magnify, minimize, dis-color, re-color, even deliberately falsify, chronicled events." Victor Turner, *The Anthropology of Performance* (New York: PAJ Publications, 1986), 42.

black inferiority complex and a white superiority complex. But, more importantly, the remedies he proposes represent a fundamental critique and overturning of the colonial social order. Facilitated by the temporary suspension of social norms during Carnival, Landes' remarks on racial mimesis and alienation anticipate a similar critique by Frantz Fanon in *Peau noire, masques blancs* (1952), another one of Tardon's Martinican contemporaries.

Although the Professeur largely acts as the author's voice of reason in this scene and throughout the novel, I would also like to consider an alternative function for this character in order to bring into view Tardon's relation to certain intellectual currents of his time. Taken in the context of Carnival, the Professeur's lecture on race becomes a parody to a certain extent of the Martinican postwar intellectual landscape that ultimately holds up a "magical mirror" to the discourse of Negritude. While the text neither offers any direct mention of the term nor the man who coined it, parody, as a mechanism of intertextuality, draws this school of thought into the novel's web of considerations.[349] As an intertextual practice, parody relies on the recognition or awareness by the reader, first, that the author is citing an outside text or discourse and, second, that this citation is a ludic critique or exaggeration meant to reveal its shortcomings or blind spots. Explaining this inferority complex, Landes states, as if quoting from Césaire, that "Ce complexe sera résolu quand un nègre parviendra à articuler posément, en public ou en son for intérieur: 'Je suis un nègre,' et non pas 'je suis noir'" (*LC*, 75). The contours of the Negritude movement come further into focus in several of the "commandments" that Landes articulates including the need to accept and proclaim one's blackness no matter the darkness of one's pigmentation or the importance of fostering racial solidarity under the aegis of this collective identification. Tardon's parody of Negritude – his ludic exaggeration – in this scene lies in the

[349] Simon Dentith defines parody as "one of many forms of intertextual allusions out of which texts are produced." Simon Dentith, *Parody* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 6.

fact that it is precisely a white, middle-class Professeur who urges blacks to proclaim their blackness. Returning to the broader discussion of the novel's engagement with the construction and performance of race, this scene, then, troubles the essentialized claims that Negritude places on blackness by having a white intellectual assume the prophetic role of the poet from *Cahier* within the narrative. The example of a white intellectual prescribing the tenets of black identity reproduces to a certain extent the colonial hierarchy of knowledge and brings into view the larger epistemological critique that Tardon makes with regards to Negritude. In this way, Tardon's parody of Negritude, a "peau blanche, masque noir" of sorts making this identity another mask that can be worn, also stems from his general skepticism of this discourse as a reverse racism.

However, by Landes' fifth commandement, Tardon's voice re-emerges when the Professeur explains the black subject can overcome the racial inferiority complex by ceasing to think about "la coloration de [son] épiderme" in the presence of whites and blacks alike (*LC*, 80). The idealistic racial egalitarianism that Tardon postulates here seeks to transcend entirely the black-white binary that traverses colonial thought and Negritude alike. The distance Tardon establishes via parody between himself and Negritude also foreshadows the position that many later Caribbean intellectuals would adopt regarding this movement, in spite of its paradigm-shifting importance. Increasingly seen as an essentialized version of black identity, more recent articulations of Caribbean identity in Glissant's *antillanité*, Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphaël Confiant's *créolité*, or Maryse Condé's general refusal of theorization explicitly eschew Negritude's binarism in their interrogations of the diverse origins of the region's population.

Despite their differences, Césaire' and Tardon's interrogations of the catastrophe of Saint-Pierre have much less to do with the commemoration of the glory of the Creole City than with its status in the island's history. They raise the question of representation of the island's

non-white populations: in *Cahier,* the poet-statesman inscribes the catastrophe and its significance into the poem through the important trope of the eruption that remains central to the poetic becoming of Negritude that the poem foregrounds while, for Tardon, the catastrophe is the result of the tragically doomed spectacle of the resident's incapacity to transcend racial antagonism. Although one might read Tardon's politics of representing disaster and race – that is to say the danger of reducing Martinican identity to either its black or white elements – as clearly antithetical to Césaire's celebration of blackness and Negritude in the *Cahier,* concern for how the different members and groups of the population enter into "relation" with one another, or in Tardon's case how that relation is denied, ultimately brings together both their literary treatments of the catastrophe. The (re)imagined community embedded to a greater or lesser degree in Césaire's poem and in Tardon's novel and the centrality of racial identity in each work demonstrates the complications of coming to terms with the legacy of the Creole City founded in the colonial matrix of racism, and the forced, unbalanced contact between different civilizations. In this respect, Césaire and Tardon's engagements with the catastrophe of Saint-Pierre constitutes a transition between the different connotations that the "Creole" City assumes between the texts which are more or less contemporaneous to the catastrophe and those which appear around its centenary. By painting a fuller, more inclusive picture of Saint-Pierre and its inhabitants than the colonial narratives analyzed in part one and by problematizing the cohabitation of Saint-Pierre's (and the colony's on the whole) diverse populations, they prepare the foundation for reconsidering the Creole City as a multicultural contact zone. In other words, Césaire and Tardon's mid-century (re)introduction of Saint-Pierre's non-white populations into the history of the catastrophe represents a seismic shift in the stakes of the "Creole" City by peeling away its connotation as a short-hand reference to the white elite and by making room for

the emergence of a newly valorized syncretic society at the approach of the centennial celebration of the catastrophe.

Viewing Catastrophe from Below: Memorializing the Creole City (III)

Officials celebrated the occasion of the one hundredth anniversary of the catastrophe of Saint-Pierre with a grand homage to the disaster and its victims. The festivities for the centenary included, for example, a large historical human fresco with a delegation of Caribs from nearby Dominica, and the display of thirty thousand lights in the bay to honor of the victims in addition to myriad speeches from political figures along with several scholarly conferences. "La Martinique retrouve Saint-Pierre" reads the aptly titled headline of an article in the special issue that the local daily *France-Antilles* devoted to the celebration.[350] One hundred years after the catastrophe, Saint-Pierre still paled in comparison to its former vibrant self whose traces one can occasionally glimpse in the ruins still scattered throughout the city. Hidden in the shadow of Mont Pelée, the centennial celebration, as the article suggests, was the occasion for the French department to rediscover its former capital city and, with it, the one-time symbol of French West Indian colonial power. The articles throughout the special issue announcing the centenary as a turning point in the city's history, the occasion of a new renaissance, reveal the optimistic outlook of municipal and regional leaders at the time.[351] But this discourse of renaissance, the very *desire* itself for renaissance, bespeaks the past's continual hold over the identity of modern Saint-Pierre.

As in the past, however, the most significant reconstruction, or "renaissance," of Saint-Pierre remained literary. In the decade leading up to the centenary and in the years following it,

[350] *France-Antilles*, May 8-9, 2002.
[351] For example, the deputy-mayor Louis-Edouard Virayie states in an interview on this subject: "Notre municipalité souhaite faire de 2002, année du Centenaire, une période de redémarrage tant économique que culturel de la ville," in "Que 2002 nous serve de tremplin pour l'avenir," ibid.

three of Martinique's most acclaimed writers published sustained fictional engagements with the event. The revisitations of the catastrophe in the works of Patrick Chamoiseau, Raphaël Confiant, and Suzanne Dracius breathe several new dimensions into the empty disasterscape the catastrophe left in its wake a century earlier. Under the impulse of new discourses of cultural and ethnic hybridity, these more recent literary recreations of Saint-Pierre use this first capital and its annihilation as the setting to redefine the memory of a city no longer seen exclusively as a Béké stronghold but as an early site of creolization and *métissage*, or "relation" in short. Their interventions into the collective memory of the catastrophe of Saint-Pierre swing the pendulum from one valence to the other in the definition of the "Creole" City, from the white, colonial reproduction of Europe exemplified in the sobriquet "the Paris of the Antilles" often given Saint-Pierre to a key step in the emergence of a hybrid – creole – city in particular and society in general. Taken in chronological order of their publication, the three works in question in this third and final part reflect on the construction and destruction of the Creole City, in the case of Chamoiseau, and on modes of inhabiting or narrating the colonial city and its demise, in the cases of Confiant and Dracius, the latter of which also brings this chapter full circle back to the subject of White Creole prestige analyzed in my earlier reading of Jean Max's novel C*œurs martiniquais.*

Patrick Chamoiseau's imaginative novel of the laborious genesis of the "ville-créole" in his epic novel *Texaco* (1992), winner of the prestigious Prix Goncourt, has been the object of countless readings.[352] Scholars and critics have often parsed the novel's treatment of history, urbanization, and postcolonial identity – the same broad concerns that cross much of Chamoiseau's prolific and, sometimes controversial, œuvre – and how they relate to the literary and cultural project of *la créolité*. Yet, as a seemingly fleeting episode, the catastrophe of Saint-

[352] Patrick Chamoiseau, *Texaco* (Paris: Gallimard, folio, 1994). Hereafter cited in text as *T*.

Pierre has garnered less interest. A brief, but traumatic, moment that provides the impetus for the narrative's transition to Fort-de-France in the longer second and final part, the 1902 catastrophe of Saint-Pierre in *Texaco* has several important implications for the present discussion of the disaster as an object of collective memory. First, the novel's revisionist account of Martinican history brings into the foreground the productive contributions of subaltern groups to the construction of the colony's social and economic capital. Second, the consciously self-reflexive narrative strategies used by both author and narrator alike effectively problematize the relation between the self and the collective as both relate to the memory of Saint-Pierre and feed into the third implication. Again evoking the tensions between the individual and society, between the part and the whole, Chamoiseau's representation of catastrophe in *Texaco* forces one to reconsider his laudatory account of the becoming of the new Creole City, the eponymous Texaco shantytown, in the second part of the novel after the traumatic destruction of Saint-Pierre, the island's original Creole City.

Writing, alongside co-authors Jean Bernabé and Raphaël Confiant, in *Éloge de la créolité* (1989), Chamoiseau effectively articulates his view of the relation between literature and history. For the creolists, literature is akin to testimony, which scholars have posited as a performative act to counter the effects of an event without witnesses.[353] Similarly, the creolists strive to capture a cultural history that they claim is largely invisible to historians as they explain in their manifesto that "our chronicle is behind the dates, behind the known fact," or that the "hidden" history of *créolité* (Creoleness) "happened with no witness, or rather no testimonies."[354] Throughout Chamoiseau's fiction this concern for recovered testimony takes form in the figure

[353] Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992), xvii, see chapter three: "An Even Without a Witness: Truth, Testimony and Survival," 75-92.
[354] Bernabé, Chamoiseau, Confiant, *Eloge*, 99 and 98.

of the *Marqueur des paroles*. Often equated to the author's predilection for "authentic" Creole speech preserved in a written, but "creolized," French, Chamoiseau's penchant for written "oral" speech, or *oraliture*, further foregrounds his brand of *créolité* as a literary act of witnessing that instantiates the very existence of the community it represents. It is also closely related to the project of cultural "renewal." Calling forth another metaphor that directly relates to the treatment of Saint-Pierre in *Texaco*, Chamoiseau likens this literary and cultural "testimony" to a sort of archeology of memory thought to rescue a more "authentic" Creole self from an alienated (neo)colonial, post-departmentalized, assimilated self.[355] The creolist project, then, as its founders describe it, is "something like the process of archeological excavations: when the field was covered, we had to progress with light strokes of the brush so as not to alter or lose any part of ourselves hidden behind French ways."[356] The creolist fixation on the colonial past, while the basis of the staggering literary output of Chamoiseau and Confiant over the last two decades, is also the focal point for many of the critiques of neo-exoticism and historical provincialism that supposedly wall off their works from the concerns of the present that numerous critics have leveled against them over the years.[357] Not surprisingly, as a result, given the vast fresco of Martinican history it provides, the status of history, and the way it is narrated, in *Texaco* has been the subject of contention among critics. The latter have alternatively seen it as a reductive neocolonial mystification of the creole origins of Martinique or as a self-conscious "historiographic metafiction" that reworks the past and the cultural institutions tied to

[355] Elsewhere Patrick Chamoiseau fashions himself as an "archéologue" of the Antillean imaginary. See Patrick Chamoiseau, *Ecrire en pays dominé* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), 131.
[356] Bernabé, Chamoiseau, Confiant, *Eloge*, 84.
[357] See most notably Maryse Condé and Madeleine Cottenet-Hage (eds.), *Repenser la créolité* (Paris: Karthala, 1995); Richard D.E. Burton, "The Idea of Difference in Contemporary French West Indian Thought: Negritude, Antillantié, Créolité," in *French and West Indian: Martinique, Guadeloupe, and French Guiana Today*, ed.. Richard D.E. Burton and Fred Reno (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995), 137-167; Richard Price and Sally Price, "Shadowboxing in the Mangrove," *Cultural Anthropology* 12, no. 1 (February 1997), 3-36.

memory.[358] Underlining testimony as a subjective experience of History, I bring into relief the production and transmission of memory and its relevance to the stakes of representing creole society.

As much as the first part of *Texaco*, titled "Autour de Saint-Pierre," depicts the destruction of this city, the construction of the Creole City in which Esternome plays an integral part is significant to the long genesis of Chamoiseau's *ville-créole*. After his arrival in Saint-Pierre before the definitive abolition of 1848, Esternome, an ex-slave who joins forces with an itinerant carpenter, spends much of his time building and repairing the Creole City. In fact, his daughter, who is also the main narrator, goes so far as to suggest that "On peut dire qu'il construisit la ville dans ses élargissements" (*T*, 103). The relevance of Esternome's hand in the creation of the city to its destruction lies in the traces of creolization Chamoieau rediscovers in the construction of the colonial city. For instance, this occurs in the attempts of the city's wealthy elites to recreate Europe in the tropics, or at the very least its urban forms and styles, and the unexpected contributions of the city's marginal populations, day laborers, or *djobeurs*, and slaves, that resulted in a new syncretic architectural aesthetic:

> Les Békés et blancs-france voulaient toujours construire les maisons de leur province originelle, voulaient des murs épais afin de serrer les fraîcheurs. Les gros-mulâtres reprenaient ces modèles. Mais, sur les chantiers, mon papa Esternome vit comment l'esprit des ouvriers nèg défaisait l'habitat et le réinventait. Ainsi, tout-douce, tout-douce Saint-Pierre dérivait dans "des manières

[358] For its essentialisms see Richard D.E. Burton, *Le roman marron: études sur la littérature martiniquaise contemporaine* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1997), 199-200; For its mythifications see Celia Britton, *The Sense of Community in French Caribbean Fiction* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), 110; For its self-conscious postmodernism see Maeve McCusker, *Patrick Chamoiseau: Recovering Memory* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007), 92-93. Linda Hutcheon coined the term "historiographic metafiction" to capture how "Postmodern fiction suggests that to re-write or to re-present the past in fiction and in history is, in both cases, to open it up to the present, to prevent it from being conclusive and teleological," in *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 110, see also 116.

> et des façons." "Dans une esthétique espéciale," je crois qu'il voulait dire. (*T*, 104)

In this key passage, Chamoiseau proposes a redefinition of the colonial Creole City. Not only does this "special aesthetic" recall the improvised creation, which is part and parcel of creolization for Glissant and his acolyte Chamoiseau, but it also figures how the city's most "invisible" residents – the *djobeurs* and slaves – literally had a hand in fashioning the appearance of the colonial city, transforming it from the mimetic "Paris des Antilles" to the Creole City.[359]

However, the point I would like to stress is that, despite the creolization of urban forms, the Creole City remains a markedly colonial one. As Marie-Sophie explains, "Ville haute. Ville massive. Ville porteuse d'une mémoire dont ils [the slaves] étaient exclus. Pour eux l'En-ville demeurait impénétrable...l'En-ville c'était une Grand-case. La Grand-case des Grand-cases" (*T*, 107). Even after emancipation the Creole City remains impervious to the ex-slaves due in no small part to the concentration in the city of half of the island's white colonial aristocracy. Summarizing Esternome's experience in Saint-Pierre, Marie-Sophie further brings into relief the image of a hermetically sealed colonial En-ville that seems resistant to time when he reflects that "L'En-ville déjà très ancien, avait posé sur chacune de ses chances des volets à targettes et des portes à serrures" (*T*, 156). In response to the impenentrable colonial city, Esternome flees to the nearby hills to create a more welcoming community, Noutéka des mornes, "we used to" in

[359] While Glissant maintains a certain distance from Creoleness, stating that "les créolisations introduisent à la Relation, mais ce n'est pas pour universaliser; la 'créolité,' dans son principe, régresserait vers des négritudes, des francités, des latinités, toutes généralisantes - plus ou moins innocemment" in *Péotique*,103. Chamoiseau, speaking for his fellow creolists refuses this charge of essentalization: "In the *Eloge*, we emphasize how Créolité swallows everything up. Martinican Créolité isn't Guadeloupean Créolité, which isn't Dominican Créolité, and so on…There isn't some Creole essence. There's a state of being Creole: something that can be tracked down historically, and that gives us an intimation of what we are. But this remains permanently in motion, pushing us headlong in a movement of diversity, of change and exchange." See Lucien Taylor, "Créolité Bites: A Conversation with Partrick Chamoiseau, Raphaël Confiant, and Jean Bernabé," *Transition* no. 74 (1997), 142.

Creole, reflecting the collective solidarity that was lacking in Saint-Pierre and a brief experiment that foreshadows the advent of Texaco, but which ultimately fails on the eve of the catastrophe.

The eruption of the catastrophe in the narrative raises the question of the place of this first Creole City in Martinican collective memory. Like Lambolez's much earlier chronicle, Chamoiseau's novel portrays both the creation and the destruction of Saint-Pierre. But in contrast to his earlier counterpart's memorialization of the island's colonial history and its (mostly white) agents, Chamoiseau's narrative of the death and disappearance of the Creole City resists lamentation. When Esternome descends from the hills shortly after the passage of the incendiary *nuée ardente* in the city to search for his lost love, his second concubine Ninon, the post-catastrophe disasterscape becomes central to the narrative. One of the first to arrive in the ruins of Saint-Pierre, moreover, Esternome, at least in his retelling of the disaster to his daughter who in turn narrates it to the Marqueur des paroles, offers a privileged perspective on this event that raises important questions for the way the novel remembers the catastrophe.

Told through a number of filters, Esternome to Marie-Sophe, Marie-Sophie to the Marqueur des paroles, the immediacy of Esternome's voice disappears as it becomes entirely indistinguishable from that of Marie-Sophie whose own birth follows the events she describes. Further creating this effect is the usage of free indirect voice throughout Marie-Sophie's narration of "Autour de Saint-Pierre" which blends together the voices of father and daughter. In a sort of implicit contradiction to the will to recover the absent voices of the colonial past in *Eloge de la créolité*, the additional narrative layers that enshroud Esternome's own narration, conceivably itself a playful invention of the narrator, impose limits to the accessibility of this historical experience in the present. The effect of Esternome/Marie-Sophie's narrative is then less that of whether or not the subaltern can speak than the recognition of the role of collective

memory, one that is inclusive of those at the lowest rungs of the socio-economic hierarchy, in re-creating the scene.[360]

Bringing into focus the obliterated cityscape, Marie-Sophie echoes the sentiment of horror in most accounts of the ruins of Saint-Pierre, "Mon Esternome ne reconnaissait plus ce paysage" (*T*, 193) with people transformed into "machins de chair" (*T*, 195) as if "l'horreur blanche s'étala sous un ciel clair" (*T*, 197). Her description also insists on her father's response to this trauma to frame progressively the question of memory in relation to the catastrophe:

> Mon Esternome ne voulait rien décrire. Il déposait le même silence buté qu'il cultiva sa vie durant sur les antans de l'esclavage. Il voulait peut-être oublier ce qu'il avait vu en entrant dans l'En-ville. Il dut y réussir car même lorsqu'il le voulut, il ne put murmurer que des choses éparses, sans grand sens, mais aussi terribles qu'une bonne description. (*T*, 194)

Further contributing to the sense of the catastrophe as an unsayable event for Esternome is the way it has burned, literally inscribed, itself into his skin, "S'il se fermait la bouche ses cicatrices parlaient pour lui" (*T*, 195) in a reworking of Benitez-Rojo's notion of skin memory.[361] To the extent that *Texaco* is Marie-Sophie's autobiography, the novel acknowledges the classic problem of narrating her birth and other events that took place well beforehand. While the text makes clear that Esternome recounted in bits and pieces the events of 1902 to his daughter, her ability to create a fluid account of the period brings into relief the role of collective memory in filling in the gaps in her father's story.

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[360] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Carry Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 271-313.

[361] Antonio Benitez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective*, trans. James E. Maraniss, 2nd ed. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996): "Every Caribbean person, after an attempt has been made to reach his culture's origins, will find himself on a deserted beach, naked and alone, coming out of the water as through shivering and shipwrecked…without any identification papers other than the uncertain and turbulent memorandum inscribed in his scars, tattoos, and skin color," 216-17.

A manifestation of the novel's magical realism, the "impossibility" of Marie-Sophie as the narrator of the catastrophe of Saint-Pierre represents less an instance of authorial oversight than the fleeting silhouette of the passage of individual, or familial, memory to collective memory. In this way, Celia Britton is right to underline that "just as Chamoiseau is actually inventing the oral narrative of the informant that he claims to be transcribing, so he is in reality *creating* the community of Texaco that he claims to be recording via the 'authentic' testimony of Marie-Sophie."[362] I would like to suggest, however, that Marie-Sophie's testimony, whether authorial invention or ethnographic transcription, to mention an alternative interpretation, makes evident the dual layers of individual and collective memory.[363] Here, Marie-Sophie illuminates Marianne Hirsch's concept of "post-memory" when she channels Esternome's experience of the catastrophe as well as the broader public discourse surrounding it.[364] Foregrounding this collective discourse, or memory, of Saint-Pierre, she twice repeats a variation of the following observation "On a déjà parlé de cette horreur. On a fait des livres là-dessus" (*T*, 194) and cites the usual details pertaining to the catastrophe – the survivors (although Esternome is arguably made a survivor in his own right), the looters, clean-up efforts, etc. – that countless narratives, both popular and scholarly, of the catastrophe never fail to mention. An aside inserted earlier into the narrative calling into question the veracity of her narration only bolsters the sense that Marie-

[362] Britton, *The Sense of Community*, 110, her emphasis.
[363] This is also echoed in Roy Chandler Caldwell's reading: "Her [Marie-Sophie's] story begins not with herself and what she has experience, but with stories she has heard, stories rooted deep in the rural, colonial, slave-holding past. Her father Esternome's long stories had given her access to her heritage." See "For a Theory of the Creole City: *Texaco* and the Postcolonial Postmodern," in *Ici-là: Place and Displacement in Caribbean Writing in French*, ed. Mary Gallagher (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003), 27. See also Wendy Knepper, *Patrick Chamoiseau: A Critical Introduction* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2012), 115-16.
[364] Marianne Hirsch, "The Generation of Postmemory," *Poetics Today* 29, no. 1 (Spring 2008), 103-128: "Postmemory shares the layering of these other "posts" [postmodern, postcolonial, etc.] and their belatedness, aligning itself with the practice of citation and mediation that characterize them, marking a particular end-of-century/turn-of-century moment of looking backward rather than ahead and of defining the present in relation to a troubled past rather than initiating new paradigms. Like them, it reflects an uneasy oscillation between continuity and rupture. And yet postmemory is not a movement, method, or idea; I see it, rather, as a structure of inter- and trans-generational transmission of traumatic knowledge and experience. It is a consequence of traumatic recall but (unlike post-traumatic stress disorder) at a generational remove," 106.

Sophie draws upon the collective memory of the event. In another peritextual note to the Marqueur des paroles in the "archives" of Martinique's Bibliothèque Schœlcher, Marie-Sophie frames the question of narrative verisimilitude and its relation to the history she is telling: "Dans ce que je te dis là, il y a le presque-vrai, et le parfois-vrai, et le vrai à moitié. Dire une vie c'est ça, natter tout ça comme on tresse les courbes du bois-côtelettes pour lever une case. Et le vrai-vrai naît de cette tresse" (*T*, 160). Again returning to the image of construction, here Marie-Sophie suggests the role of narratives in establishing the truth of a subject; how the verisimilitude of a biography can be used to crutch up a larger historical truth or experience. Similarly, memory, and in particular collective memory, is notorious for bending half-truths into truths or substantially transforming the memory of an experience over time. Whether or not Marie-Sophie narrates real or invented events, what matters at such a historical remove from the catastrophe is the verisimilitude of Esternome's experience of the catastrophe with respect to the broader experience of the event in Martinique at the symbolic intersection of the individual, or the familial, and the group, or the collective.

The protagonist's arrival in the disasterscape of Saint-Pierre draws out further this play between the individual and the collective, between Esternome and Martinican society. His arrival in the ruins of his former city is represented as a rupture on the personal level when "Son premier pas dans la ruine dut trancher sa vie d'un avant-ça et d'un après-ça" (*T*, 194). On a collective level, considering the place of the catastrophe in the larger narrative, the rupture lies in the fact that the disaster eventually displaces Esternome, and the narrative with him, to Fort-de-France. The conclusion of "Autour de Saint-Pierre" and the start of a new section "Autour de Fort-de-France" with the onset of modernity signal the novel's transition to the island's new urban center. Thus, in this way, it is possible to read Esternome's trauma as a shock, a rupture, to the

collective imaginary, a move that leads to a different interpretation of Marie-Sophie's line "On a déjà parlé de cette horreur. On a fait des livres là-dessus." Certainly remaining a reference to a collective discourse on the catastrophe of Saint-Pierre that in most cases memorializes the colonial city and the supposed debauchery, bohemian insouciance, or nobility of its wealthiest residents, the line transforms into a refusal of the perpetuation of the colonial myth of the Creole City and exiles such discourses from Chamoiseau's narrative of the genesis of Texaco.

In drawing attention to how one Creole City hides another, Chamoiseau reframes the idea of rupture. His text certainly instantiates a rupture in the collective memory of the catastrophe with his refusal to narrate the city à la Jean Max, but also with Tardon thanks to the focus on the populations living at the margins of colonial and postcolonial society rather than well-off mulattos. Thus, Chamoiseau's account echoes to an extent that of Césaire's in the way he gives visibility to a new segment of the population. Passed over by decolonization to become a prime example of "successful colonization" according to Edouard Glissant, rupture between the colonial past and the "postcolonial" departmentalized present in Martinique is problematic, a reality Chamoiseau does not neglect in *Texaco*.[365] Recounting how in Fort-de-France Esternome constantly relived the catastrophe as if condemend to repeat that first step onto the disasterscape, Marie-Sophie recalls, "Lorsque la nuit je le [Esternome] surprenais à errer dans la case, que je voyais son pas hésitant levé haut comme une patte de canard, cette main passée sur son visage, cet asthme qui lui ouvrait la bouche, je croyais le découvrir au mitan du désastre" (*T*, 194). Chamoiseau's brief but nonetheless profound engagement with the "emptiness" of the disasterscape, the void that the other narratives, colonial and post-colonial included, attempt to

[365] As Glissant puts it in *Le Discours antillais*: "Il faut supposer que la colonisation française de la Martinique risque bientôt de parvenir au stade suprême de toute colonisation, qui est de dépersonnaliser complètement une communauté, de l''absorber' dans un corps extérieur et qu'en ce sens la colonisation de la Martinique se révèlerait alors comme l'une des rares colonisations 'réussies' de l'histoire moderne," 108-09; Chamoiseau reflects more at length on this paradox for the politically engaged intellectual and writer throughout *Ecrire en pays dominé*.

reconstitute with lost people and events remains unfilled so to speak as the novel leaves behind Saint-Pierre and its ruins. Although Saint-Pierre was eventually rebuilt to about a quarter of its pre-1902 size, it remains in *Texaco* an empty disasterscape endowed with a ghost-like presence in Marie-Sophie's tale of the *ville-créole*.

The destruction of the first, colonial Creole City obliges readers to reconsider the status of the past and myth in the novel and the genesis of the second, postcolonial Creole City in Texaco. In *Poétique de la Relation*, Édouard Glissant associates the driving force behind many of history's grand literary epics with a crisis of legitimation and the claim of possessing a territory for the community in question.[366] In this way, he summarizes, "la pensée épique est…très proche du mythe."[367] Returning to *Texaco*, which critics, not to mention the novel's own narrator consider a "creole epic," Chamoiseau's text certainly recounts "les recherches ou les triomphes de l'enracinement que le mouvement de l'histoire exige" in the long gestation of the Creole City from Saint-Pierre to Texaco.[368] Placed side-by-side, the two Creole Cities also embody the opposing valences of the term "creole." But, in this genealogy of the Creole City, one myth displaces another, so to speak, as the rhizomatic postcolonial Creole City fills the urban void created by the destruction of the colonial Creole City in the narrative, albeit a number of decades later.[369] The destruction of the past Creole City, in refusing its white Creole mythifications, also disrupts Chamoiseau's own process of mythifying Antillean Creoleness, what critic Richard Burton calls the search for a "real or imagined creole plenitude of *an tan*

[366] Glissant, *Poétique de la Relation*, 28.
[367] Ibid.
[368] Ibid.
[369] In this way, Chamoiseau troubles Mary Gallagher's critique of *la créolité*: "What is paradoxical about he *créolistes*' mobilization of this term [creole] is that, in an apparent failure of memory, they fail to harness its shifting history, its aura of indeterminacy, and immense semantic variability in space and time, an aura that could itself be said to be the apotheosis of 'creolization,'" in "The *Créolité* Movement," 98.

lontan."[370] Focusing on catastrophe, testimony, and memory in *Texaco* confronts the reader with the imbrications of the postcolonial present of Creoleness in the colonial past. The thwarted Creole City, in Chamoiseau's sense of the term, and its destruction in the catastrophe of Saint-Pierre, thus, haunts the becoming of the Creole City on the fringes of Fort-de-France in *Texaco*.[371] If Chamoiseau delineates a site of collective memory for the island's most modest inhabitants, Raphaël Confiant and Suzanne Dracius use the catastrophe to shed light on the problematic colonial origins of their society's celebrated diversity.

On the occasion of the centenary of the catastrophe, Confiant in the novel *Nuée ardente* and Suzanne Dracius in the novella "Sa destinée rue Monte au Ciel" (2003) re-inscribe the groups made invisible in colonial narratives into the urban and narrative fabrics of Saint-Pierre. As their narratives "re-member" the colonial body politic, Confiant and Dracius dramatize alternative ways of remembering the catastrophe; their revisionist narratives retell the catastrophe "from below" by making voice and perspective a central question to their accounts. Theirs are then significant reflections on inhabiting the Creole City and the (im)possibility of cross-class and color solidarity in a time of catastrophe. To begin with Confiant's *Nuée ardente*, a novel paralleling in many respects Tardon's *La Caldeira* with its focus on the last days of Saint-Pierre, the inclusion of colorful characters from all social castes and the attention given to race and identity effectively stage the becoming of a creole society in turn-of-the-century Saint-Pierre on the narrative level.[372] The inscription of the diverse voices woven into the novel's narrative fabric represents a kind of narrative creolization that not only reflects a markedly multicultural society but gives its diverse inhabitants a stake in (re)telling their story. Consisting

[370] Burton, "The Idea of Difference," 156.
[371] This "haunting" also structures the advent of Texaco throughout the second half of the novel as the oppositional forces from the novel's first half continue to replicate themselves.
[372] Raphaël Confiant, *Nuée ardente* (Paris: Mercure de France, Folio, 2004). Hereafter cited in text as *NA*.

of two protean layers of narration, Confiant's novel regularly alternates perspectives between a "traditional" third-person omniscient narrator and the limited perspective of individual characters. The author's decoupling of the whole from its constituent parts again raises the question of creolization and its representation. Yet where Confiant's treatment of the theme in this catastrophe novel differs from the previous examples considered so far in this chapter is in his focus on voice, that is to say on narrative perspective. Thus, parsing the perspective of the whole (the third-person omniscient voice) and those of its parts (the limited points of view) reflects on what Celia Britton has elsewhere characterized as the "sense of community" in the French Caribbean and that study's guiding concept of "being-in-community," borrowed from philospher Jean-Luc Nancy, in its presentation of a creole cacophony.[373]

This play between the part and the whole is present from the novel's opening chapter which follows "la mélodie des rues" (*NA*, 15), "la mélodie de la mer" (*NA*, 16), and "la mélodie rauque" in the brothels to introduce the city and the diverse cast of characters living in it. Adding to the cacophony of sounds in this first chapter, the novel relies on a plurality of voices and perspectives to narrative the final days of Saint-Pierre by disrupting the omniscient third-person narration with a number of bracketed and non-bracketed first-person interventions from each of the main characters. Not only a way of putting the diverse narratives and the various individual perspectives they reflect into relation, the strategy of narrative fragmentation also plays a role in the novel's plural narration of the May 8 catastrophe. As Celia Britton suggests in her reading of Glissant's *Le quatrième siècle* to explicate the resonance of the thinker's concept of "Relation" as a narrative strategy, "what is 'related' is what is *told*. And it is also what is *relayed* from one

[373] Britton, *The Sense of Community*, see in particular her introduction.

person to another, forming a chain or network of narrative 'relations.'"[374] Narrative fragmentation functions in Confiant's novel as a "strategy of diversity" that pluralizes the experience of fin-de-siècle Saint-Pierre into a "weave" of narrative rhizomes.[375] Yet the idea of relayed language, or narration, can also illuminate the place of the catastrophe in Confiant's text, further problematizing the relation between the part and the whole and, thereby, eroding the clear distinction, as in the case of Chamoiseau's Esternome, between the individual and the collective.

Within the main narration, Confiant, echoing Tardon's own representation of the eruption, creates a rapid succession of scenes that alternates between the progression of the nuée ardente and the actions of various characters as it descends upon them. In order to fragment the main narration here, Confiant focuses on the perspectives of Danglemont, a young writer, and the first-person voice of Syparis, one of the two survivors.[376] Doubling the novel's principal narration of the catastrophe, Danglemont records in his "Carnet de philosophie créole" the eruption of May 8, "J'entends en ce moment même un grondement assourdissant et, de ma fenêtre, je peux aper...," cut off just as he attempts to look at the eruption and as the nuée ardente incinerates him and his notes (*NA*, 341). As for the second first-person narration of the catastrophe, the novel concludes with Syparis's account of the event from the prison cell that saved his life: "Soudain, une détonation formidable, une explosion de fin du monde...se fit entendre au-dessus de ma tête et l'air devint irrespirable" (*NA*, 351).[377] Expressing his own sentiment of immense solitude in the sudden silence that followed the explosion, Syparis's

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[374] Celia Britton, *Edouard Glissant and Postcolonial Theory: Strategies of Language and Resistance* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999), 164.
[375] Ibid.. As she explains later, "What counts is the collective matrix of the *trame* itself: the 'weave' of relayed and transformed utterances, proliferating like Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomes," 178.
[376] Léon Compère-Léanre, a twenty-eight-year-old shoemaker is also sometimes listed as the other survivor.
[377] Syparis's (sometimes written Cyparis, or "Cy baris") account was itself a "relayed" narrative, filtered by le père Méry who recorded the survivor's account in an official report. See Christian Flaught, *Operation Freak: Narrative, Identity, and the Spectrum of Bodily Abilities* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012), in particular the introduction. Syparis's survivor status was also put in doubt as some accounts accuse him of receiving his severe burns while looting the ruins.

remark that "Nul ne répondait à mes appels à l'aide," with the absence of other voices, foregrounds the end of the "creole melody" as the novel ends (*NA*, 352).

Triangulated between three iterations including the main montage as well as Danglemont's and Syparis's first-person testimonies, the catastrophe is thus inscribed into a "series of intersubjective relays [which] break down the separation between their individual identities…Subjectivity...is not seen…as a self-contained autonomous unit but more as a constant circulation of overlapping positions."[378] In this way, the various voices are "united…by the yoke of history," which, in *Nuée ardente*, is to say by the catastrophe of Saint-Pierre.[379] Bringing into relief the braided history or the "kaleidoscopic totality" that Confiant and the other co-authors of *Eloge* describe as the foundation of Creoleness, the narrative creolization shows how the relayed narration of the catastrophe relates, that is to say juxtaposes without imposing one over the other, the whole to the parts, as well as instantiates the narrative being-in-common of these multiple perspectives. But being, in the last days of Saint-Pierre, was a precariously fleeting state, as the narrative implodes on itself, effectively dissolving with the disaster and the destruction of the world it describes. With its creolist revisionism and narrative creolization vis-à-vis the colonial Creole City, *Nuée ardente* creates the possibility for an aggregate of residents to narrate the catastrophe together, not as a unified, cohesive voice, but in a polyphonic "creole melody" that multiplies the perspectives and resists the totalization of the experience wherein, to channel Glissant, the one drowns out the multiple like in Max's novel.[380]

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[378] Britton, *Edouard Glissant*, 169.
[379] Bernabé, Chamoiseau, Confiant, *Eloge*, 87.
[380] Mylène Priam summarizes Creoleness as "a vision that explores the indefatigable resources of the historical object, searches for new links through forced encounters, ruptures, and interrogations, and welcomes the gathering of multiple memories and consciousnesses," in "'*Présence Antillaise*': Hybridity and the Contemporary French Literary Landscape," *French Global: A New Approach to Literary History*, eds. Christie McDonald and Susan R. Suleiman (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 464.

If Confiant's novel substitutes Tardon's stable narrator with a multiplicity of points of view from the Creole City, Suzanne Dracius's novella "Sa destinée Rue Monte au Ciel" offers a double reworking of Max's novel *Cœurs martiniquais* and the white Creole ideal it constructs.[381] First, Dracius's depiction of the last days before the disaster from the point of view of a black *doudou* maid in a Béké family offers a counter-representation of sorts to Max's, with few exceptions, stereotypical *da* figure.[382] Second, building on the first point of Dracius's counter-representation, the author reflects on the relation between master and servant and brings out the disequilibrium of power on which (white Creole) idealizations of turn-of-the-century Saint-Pierre stand. Opposing the intractable Léona employed as a maid in the home of Monsieur and Madame Clément on rue Monte au Ciel in the center of Saint-Pierre to the largely passive *da* figures like Ti-Clé in Max's novel or her *doudou* counterpart in colonial literature in general, Dracius's novella constitutes a feminist revisitation of colonial Saint-Pierre. Like her creolist counterparts, Dracius paints the portrait of a world of intense *métissage*, but eschewing the ideological bents of both Creoleness and creolization, insists on the specifically gendered violence and domination at play in late colonial Saint-Pierre, thus adding a new wrinkle to the discussion of relation in this chapter.[383]

Dracius's fragmented, non-linear narrative brings together two threads throughout the course of the novella's five chapters. As the relation between Léona and Madame Clément, simply called Madame to emphasize power and status vis-à-vis her servant, unfolds, the prestige

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[381] Suzanne Dracius, "Sa destinée rue Monte au Ciel" in *Rue Monte au Ciel: nouvelles*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Desnel, 2013), 17-177, (hereafter cited in text as *SD*).

[382] The complimentary figures of idealized Antillean femininity incarnated in the *da*, the black maid/wet nurse, and the *doudou*, the sexually available mixed-race woman, both present an idealized version of consensual colonial intimacies and relations in order to obfuscate colonial racism. See Burton, *La famille coloniale*, 135-137.

[383] As Françoise Vergès postulates, "Thinking *métissage*, I argue, requires accepting a genealogy and a heritage. In other words, the recognition of a past of rape, violence, slavery, and the recognition of our own complicity with the wicked ways of the world", in *Monsters and Revolutionaries: Colonial Family Romance and Métissage* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 11.

of both characters' family trees becomes an important stake in the narrative. In fact, by ceding a significant portion of the narrative to genealogy to delve into the hidden secrets of the past and valorizing Léona's multiethnic heritage, the narrative steals away the prestige of the "illustrious" family tree from white Creoles and uncovers the unrecorded family histories of African slaves, the island's indigenous population, and the descendants of each. In a veiled manner, the topic of genealogy also couches a reflection on the relation of the part to the whole, the individual to the family, the colony, and the metropole.[384] In this sense, the most important part of the novella is the long scene between Madame and Léona spread over several chapters in which the former reprimands the latter for fighting in public. In spite of the fact that a jealous rival attacked Léona, Madame can only think of her now tarnished reputation among her Békée peers as a lady unable to maintain order and civility among her staff.

Their conversation is, however, less a dialogue than a litany of insults from Madame to an ever-placid Léona whose responses are often conveyed via ellipses. While indicative of an outward silence, the latter never suggests an absence of thought: "Elle laisse dire, mais il faut savoir qu'au fond, Léona n'en pense pas moins" the narrator specifies at one point (*SD,* 67). The place of each character's interiority in the narration inverts the previous opposition between a loquacious Madame and a silent Léona, which gives the reader access to the latter's inner thoughts that often blend into the narrative through free indirect voice. In this schema, Dracius inverts the colonial hierarchy of reason. Entirely bereft of interiority, the author reduces Madame to the repetition of clichés of her white Creole heritage in order to hollow out the colonial discourse she apes while she endows Léona with the narrative authority to deconstruct each of

[384] Dracius also interrogates the relation between "center" and "periphery" in the French literary canon according to Priam who argues that, in the novella "Sa déstinée rue Monte au Ciel", "The epigraphs represent a selective corpus of works that position the West Indian text as much within the French canon as beyond," in *"'Présence Antillaise,'"* 459.

Madame's successive claims. What emerges is a scene of parallel monologues that are synchronous in time but opposed in content: on the one hand, Madame's spoken monologue attacks her servant's character and laments the "failure" to civilize her while, on the other hand, Léona's interior monologue evokes her continuous abuse from both Monsieur and Madame along with acerbic criticisms of their assertions of being "good masters." As a whole, the scene offers a powerful contrast to Confiant's cacophony of voices as one voice in Dracius's narrative entirely silences the other due to the class and color power relations separating the two women in early twentieth-century Saint-Pierre. The stark narrative opposition between Madame and Léona represents not only the dividing power of the color line but also its power to silence; the scene places in view the colonial "*différend*" opposing the two women and their impossibility to dialogue from opposite, and unequal, sides of the colonial color line. As much as Léona could testify to the wrongs Madame and Monsieur have caused her over the years, the latter, imprisoned as they are in colonial logic and discourse, would never comprehend her accusations as torts; in such a discursive system, her voice is always already "silenced."[385]

Léona's prolonged silence only further enrages Madame as the narrative makes clear that a double catastrophe awaits her throughout the novella set in Saint-Pierre at the beginning of May 1902. Linking Madame's rage to that of the volcano, the narrator evokes the servant's silence, "Si jamais elle ouvre la bouche, elle sait déjà que ce sera pire: le simple son de sa voix va déclencher un désastre" (*SD*, 69). Here, in linking Madame's rage to the volcano, Dracius engages with the eruption of Mont Pelée as a trope for revenge in other accounts of the catastrophe, but with a twist. The novella's opening scene, which witnesses the island's Caribs

[385] Jean-François Lyotard, *Le différend* (Paris: Editions du Minuit, 1983). In the relation of French Caribbean literature to the canon in the early 1990s, Rosello posists the concept of the "différend": "Comme la victime des camps de concentration, comme le livre resté *inédit* (synonyme révélateur de non publié), de l'intérieur du canon, la littérature antillaise n'a pas de voix, mais de l'extérieur du canon, si elle a une voix, le canon ne l'entend pas." In Rosello, *Littérature et identité*, 27.

placing their hope for vengeance in the "Montagne de feu" before they leap to their death at the site now called the Tombeau des Caraïbes, joins a similar representation of the volcano as the real and symbolic revenge for the wretched of the earth in Césaire's *Cahier* and to a lesser extent in Confiant's neologism "enrageaison" to evoke the eruption.[386] Here, though, in the context of Madame and Léona's standoff, the trope of the volcano's bubbling rage lies with the master instead of the subaltern servant. In fact, Dracius cements the parallel between the volcano and Madame, called a "montagne de chair" (*SD*, 82), just days before the May 8 eruption of Mont Pelée when the Békée's rage finally boils over as she begins to beat Léona in Dracius's rewrting of Paul Verlaine's poem "Il pleure dans mon coeur " for the fin-de-siècle colonial context: "Il pleut et repleut des coups, comme il pleut des cendres sur la ville" (*SD*, 81-82). By replotting the coordinates of this trope, the effect of Madame's explosion of anger, preceding by only a few days the eruption of Mont Pelée, is to undermine the idealized image of carefree living often associated with Saint-Pierre at this time so often symbolized in the smiling, sexually available mixed-race figure of the *doudou* against which Dracius works.

The narrator's goal of showing the underside of the Creole paradise becomes more explicit in a short biographical passage that links Léona's past to her present situation during one of her internalized responses to Madame's verbal attacks. Attempting to impose her fleeting dominance, Madame, as if sensing the subversive reversal of the colonial hierarchy in Léona's steady gaze, exclaims "Baissez les yeux, fille de rien! Tu n'as pas honte?" (*SD*, 128) To this insult, the narrator offers the servant's unspoken response in free indirect voice:

> Non, elle n'avait pas à rougir, ni de ses actes ni de sa naissance...Toute sa brève histoire, sa jeune vie se dévidaient en cet instant, ce matin-là, comme s'il était le dernier. Conçue, à la veille du départ de Paul Gauguin de Saint-Pierre, dans un

[386] Confiant, NA, 210: "L'enrageaison du volcan sera notre vengeance et il ne laissera pas un mur debout."

> bordel rue d'Enfer, mise au monde parmi tant de souffrances que c'est merveille si elle vécut, Léona vivait un enfer rue Monte au ciel. (*SD,* 128)

This passage significantly frames Léona's life in Saint-Pierre between paradise and hell in the urban and biographical trajectories in which the narrator inscribes her from her birth on rue d'Enfer and her servitude on rue Monte au Ciel. In this way, the novella uncovers the colonial hell of the white Creole "paradise" in Saint-Pierre in its metonymic reference to the way the city is often remembered in popular discourse as the Creole good life.

The significance of the passage also lies in the way that it intertwines genealogy with the relation between Léona and Madame, an aspect that the latter directly attacks with the insult "fille de rien." Here the narrator raises the other important thread of the novella: genealogy and history, or more specifically the history told via genealogy. In fact, the story each woman tells about herself and her family only extends the face-to-face confrontation between them. This time, the white Creole insularity and consanguinity of Madame's family tree opposes the open-ended *métissage* that Léona's progenitors exemplify. On this subject, much of Madame's speech in the scene (and the novella) focuses on the nobility of her *colon* ancestors and the purity of her whiteness: "Nous sommes des grands Blancs véritables, sans une goutte de métissage" (*SD*, 84). Throughout her internal replies to Madame, Léona dismisses the assertions by thinking of all the mixed-race offspring Monsieur has fathered over the years, which includes, as readers learn later, Léona's first-born child. But more importantly, the narrator develops Léona's own family tree whose prestige far surpasses Madame's and includes even more "Grands Blancs." Her maternal grandparents include a maroon slave Léonard and a Carib woman Alexa whereas, on her father's side, she counts not only her father, the painter Paul Gauguin, but also his famous grandmother, Léona's great-grandmother, Flora Tristan, the noted nineteenth-century Franco-Spanish feminist,

not to mention her relation to the prolific mixed-race writer Alexandre Dumas via a distant maternal cousin.[387]

The sustained attention devoted to genealogy and hidden family histories in the novella underlines the contact of civilizations in the Caribbean that marks the history of the region, which courses through Léona's veins. But the fictitious family links between Léona and Dumas also call into question the relation between metropolitan France and its Caribbean colonies and the intimate histories of métissage that inextricably link them.[388] Furthermore, the narrative combines her métissage with the history of resistance – both against slavery and colonialism figured through her grandparents who lived in an Afro-Carib maroon colony and against the oppression of women via Flora Tristan: "Ainsi, sans le savoir, Léona avait le féminisme dans le sang – sans même en connaître le terme" (*SD,* 126) – while her very name recalls her maroon grandfather Léonard and, according to Abderrahmane Baibeche, the letter "L" her status as an upright woman ("*femme debout*").[389] With her family tree, Léona is able to "surpass" Madame though she remains unaware of certain famous relatives like Tristan or Dumas. As if inheriting the double force of feminism and *marronnage* represented in her family history, Léona marshals the fortitude to resist Madame and the colonial power she represents. Thus, early in the morning on May 8, Léona herself "maroons," leaving behind the colonial Creole City, "Léona n'a pas un regard pour ces lieux qu'elle laisse sans regret" (*SD,* 138). Giving new meaning to the novella's title "Sa destinée rue Monte au Ciel," Léona thus takes control of her own life with her departure

[387] Elsewhere in Dracius's *Rue Monte au Ciel*, the Dumas family tree figures in a critique of the politics of inclusion in the French canon. See "Les trois Mousquetaires étaient quatre," 222-62.
[388] As Renée K. Gosson argues, despite some slippage between the distinct histories of Haiti and Martinique, "the "*parenté* between a fictitious (Léona) and an historical figure (Alexandre Dumas) (…) invites readers to participate in the act of resituating the place and role of *métissage* in the complex relation between France and its former Caribbean colony," in "The *Métisse Sage* in Suzanne Dracius's *Rue Monte au Ciel*," in *Métissages et marronnages dans l'œuvre de Suzanne Dracius*, ed. Yolande Aline Helm (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2009), 106.
[389] For Abderrahmane Baibeche, "le theme de la verticalité domine l'œuvre de Suzanne Dracius," see "Mimétique et représentations du vertical dans 'Sa destinée rue monte au ciel' de Suzanne Dracius," in ibid., 37

on the last boat from Saint-Pierre to Fort-de-France: "C'est elle qui, dorénavant, a pris en main son destin. Elle fuit les flétrissures, les viols. Elle fuit la rue Monte au Ciel. Elle s'est embarquée, elle part," the narrator explains, thereby signaling the ultimate step in her transformation from *doudou* to *femme marronne* (*SD,* 139).

It is Léona's experience of this colonial hell that strongly marks Darcius's literary recreation of the Creole City as her protagonist flees without a second thought the racism and oppressive atomsphere of the city never to look back. Years later even, "Elle abhorrait trop cette ville, même décimée" (*SD*, 176). The ending of the novel closely resembles Tardon's portrait of the final moments of Saint-Pierre as the nuée ardente quickly befell it: "Cette Montagne de Feu, le péléen prototype d'une 'nouvelle race de volcans,' avait réglé d'un seul coup, de manière expéditive, quoique très provisoirement, les problèmes de différences de couleur, de classes, de races et d'ethnocastes," the novella confirms (*S,D* 177).[390] Yet the novella's treatment of genealogy continues beyond the destruction of Saint-Pierre when Léona's eldest son later becomes mayor of the new Saint-Pierre in the 1920s or when she names one of her light-skinned daughters Clémence in order to mock the now-deceased Madame Clément by symbolically giving her the "goutte" of the African blood the latter so despised and feared (*SD*, 171). While, following Tardon's treatment of the subject, Dracius underlines the city's festering racial question, her own account of the disaster nevertheless bring a feminist critique to the way the city was inhabited. In this way, she shows beneath the clichés of the colonial Creole City Léon's hellish existence and stalwart resistance in the hybrid mélange of the two stereotyped examples of colonial femininity, the *da* and the *doudou*, she represents. Dracius's postcolonial feminist framing of the question of the catastrophe of Saint-Pierre emphasizes how Léona, rather than

[390] The "nouvelle race de volcans" is a reference to Alfred Lacroix influential study of the 1902 eruptions of Mont Pelée, *La Montagne Pelée et ses eruptions* (Paris: Masson et cie, 1904) in which he argues for the existence of a "peleen" type of volcanic eruption with pyroclastic flow, or a *nuée ardente*, rather than lava.

letting the situation and the colonial discourse Madame parrots define her, defines herself and, to a certain extent, even redefines Madame, as she presumably rolls over in her grave, as mixed-race. Thus, while the creolist literary reconstructions of Saint-Pierre and colonial society that inhabited it integrate this event into their reflection on Martinique ethnic pluralism, Dracius's specific focus on métissage draws attention to the often brutal process of ethnic and cultural mixing of which both creolization and creoleness are the products.

Conclusion: Saint-Pierre*, patrimoine mondial de l'humanité*

In 2010, the president of Martinique's *Conseil Régional*, Serge Letchimy, announced a major urban renewal project involving Saint-Pierre. Mission Martinique 2020 aims to transform Saint-Pierre in the north and Les Trois-Ilets on the island's southwestern coast into "zones d'attractivité régionale majeure" by promoting local historical, cultural, and ecological heritage as well as sustainable development.[391] In creating two new urban poles, organizers hope to re-orient the concentration of economic and cultural activities away from Fort-de-France and provide large-scale public investments in local infrastructure to counter the department's high unemployment rate. The following year, in 2011, Letchimy placed Patrick Chamoiseau in charge of both axes of the project, respectively titled "Le projet Grand Saint-Pierre" and "L'embellie Trois-Ilets," giving the writer the task of defining for each city "un grand scenario culturel qui entraînerait la valorisation dynamique des ruines, du patrimoine bâti, [et] des espaces naturels qui sont associés."[392] More recently, as part of the plan's ambition to raise the island's international profile and attractiveness for tourists, organizers have started the sluggish process

[391] "Les objectifs du projet Grand Saint-Pierre/Embellie Trois Ilet," *Le Grand Saint-Pierre – L'embellie Trois-Ilets,* http://www.gspe3i.fr/objectifs.html (accessed July 1, 2014).
[392] "Pour en savoir plus," *Le Grand Saint-Pierre – L'embellie Trois-Ilets,* http://www.gspe3i.fr/ensavoirplus.html (accessed July 1, 2014).

of adding Mont Pelée and other natural sites in Martinique to the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites.

Mission Martinique 2020 transposes the importance placed on *patrimoine*, or local heritage, in forming regional and national identities in mainland France to this overseas department by placing cultural history and collective memory at the heart of urban renewal. But whose history and whose memory in Saint-Pierre, the bastion of colonial wealth and racism, and Les Trois Ilets, the birthplace of Joséphine de Beauharnais, the first wife of Napoléon I? Only time and the full implementation of the project – a creolist utopia still in its initial stages – will tell. In the meantime, the "projet Grand Saint-Pierre" signals an important shift in Martinican discourse on Saint-Pierre by transforming the reconstructions of the latter from the realm of literature and into the domain of political action and urban planning symbolized by the involvement of Letchimy and Chamoiseau, a pair whose mixture of urban policy and literature date back at least to when the former inspired the *urbaniste* character for the latter's novel *Texaco*. But, the project also brings into focus another rupture in Martinican reconstructions of Saint-Pierre. By making a revitalized Saint-Pierre inseparable from attempts to refashion the island's image at home and abroad, Mission Martinique 2020 also marks an important shift in scale with regards to the stakes of remembering the catastrophe and the city it destroyed as the plan seeks to market the island's local cultural identity globally within the tourism industry. Building on this remarkable shift in scale, I return my focus in the following chapter to Guadeloupe and Haiti to examine in further detail how representations of catastrophe critically reflect on each island's relation to intersecting local, national, and global histories.

CHAPTER 4

"National" Disasters:
Witnessing Catastrophe in Guadeloupe and Haiti

His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet.

– *Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History,"* 1940[393]

Overturning History

Benjamin's view of history as an interminable pile of catastrophes is particularly illuminating for the Caribbean where the sort of political and social disasters to which he refers regularly intersect with devastating natural disasters. This view of history as a long succession of intertwined political, social, and natural disasters resonates with the Haitian writer Yanick Lahens when she wonders shortly after the January 12, 2010 earthquake: "Why the Haitians? Us again, always us?"[394] Yet in this time of disaster, Lahens confers on observers in Haiti and around the world the responsibility to use the earthquake "to rethink the profound causes of poverty" – the deep social divides, predatory foreign encroachments on the country's sovereignty, and environmental mismanagement – that made this particular tectonic shift so devastating.[395] Lahens highlights disaster, then, as an opportunity to rethink the nation in relation to its political, social, and ecological histories. In this chapter, I extend and explore the rethinking that Lahens prescribes in order to examine how writers in Haiti and Guadeloupe

[393] Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn. (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 257-58.
[394] Yanick Lahens, "Haiti, or the Health of Misery," in *Haiti Rising: Haitian History, Culture and the Earthquake of 2010*, ed. Martin Munro (Kingston, Jamaica: University of West Indies Press, 2010), 9.
[395] Ibid., 10.

refashion catastrophe into a critical concept for understanding the intersections of local and global history.

The overarching question that I pose in this chapter is to what extent are natural disasters also "national" disasters? The scare quotes around "national" here and in this chapter's title not only acknowledge disasters as telling moments of critical reflection about the nation and collective identity, but also call into question the nation as the unique frame for considering the social, political, and ecological elements that disaster writing combines. They therefore hint at, in the words of the critic Mark Anderson, the way "disasters force the renegotiation and modification of the individual, collective local, and national narratives that endow social and political life with meaning."[396] As a result, the examples that I marshal from Guadeloupe and Haiti challenge the critical purchase of the nation as an effective hermeneutic category for analyzing natural disaster and highlight two distinct modes of writing catastrophe.

First, Daniel Maximin's novels *L'Isolé soleil* (1981), *Soufrières* (1987), and *L'Ile et une nuit* (1995) are highly intertextual, non-linear, self-referential, and reflexive postmodern meditations on literature, history, and catastrophe in Guadeloupe.[397] While not explicitly theoretical, Maximin's literary project is invested in what Édouard Glissant calls the "voix prophétique du passé" in its quest to (re)write the history of Guadeloupe's multiple origins and their synthesis into an open-ended Caribbean identity.[398] Blending poetics and politics, I examine how Maximin inscribes the unruly forces of nature into a literary cyclone whose effect is to upend, or "overturn to play on the Greek etymology of catastrophe, the way one looks at

[396] Mark D. Anderson, *Disaster Writing: The Cultural Politics of Catastrophe in Latin America* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011), 191.
[397] Daniel Maximin, *L'Isolé soleil* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, coll. Points, 2001 [1981]), hereafter cited in text as *IS*. Daniel Maximin, *Soufrières* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2004 [1987]), hereafter cited in text as *S*. Daniel Maximin, *L'Ile et une nuit* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2009 [1995]), hereafter cited in text as *IN*.
[398] Édouard Glissant, *Le discours antillais* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997 [1981]), 227.

“national” history in Guadeloupe. Specifically, the poetics of destruction and renewal that emerge from *L’Ile et une nuit* illuminate the literary, historical, and eco-critical projects at the heart of Maximin’s other two novels *L’Isole soleil* and *Soufrières.* They also constitute, as I will argue, a two-pronged questioning of “national” history in Guadeloupe. On the one hand, Maximin asserts that the lack of a post-colonial Guadeloupean nation is not the result of a one-way history of French assimilation by foregrounding numerous acts of resistance like Louis Delgrès and his rebels’ decision to blow themselves up in the face of hundreds of advancing soldiers from the Napoleonic forces sent to re-establish slavery in 1802. In this respect, one may read Maximin’s trilogy as a postmodern epic of the Guadeloupean people’s becoming as a nation within the French colonial and post-colonial state. On the other hand, by juxtaposing this historical “eruption” with the volcanic eruption of La Soufrière in 1976, thirty years after departmentalization, Maximin further questions the value of channeling Guadeloupean history uniquely through a national frame. While such a post-colonial eco-critical perspective displaces the centrality of human presence to the island’s history, it also inscribes Guadeloupe into a wider geography of catastrophe, one that also indicates the global scale on which catastrophes, and their political, social, and ecological stakes, should be addressed.

Second, the narratives about the 2010 earthquake in Haiti that I analyze in the latter half of this chapter similarly place the disaster between the national and the international. Of course, the destruction caused by the 7.0 magnitude earthquake that struck Haiti on January 12, 2010, which was primarily localized in the Port-au-Prince metropolitan area, represents a national crisis that killed, by even the most conservative estimates, more than 200,000 people, displaced and injured one million others, and destroyed much of the capital city’s infrastructure. However, given the rapidity with which news and images of the disaster travelled the globe, attempts to

define and explain the catastrophe, like the humanitarian response to it, played out in an international discursive field of trauma representation. Departing from Maximin's lyrical and ludic writing, the accounts that I analyze in the latter half of the chapter bring a documentarian sensibility to the narration of the earthquake and its aftershocks. I use "documentarian" to describe the books *Hidden in the Rubble* (2010) by U.S. humanitarian Gerard T. Straub, *Tout bouge autour de moi* (2010) by the Haitian-Canadian Dany Laferrière, and *Failles* (2010) by writer Yanick Lahens to underline their journalistic realism in documenting and attesting, in other words in bearing witness to the post-quake situation.[399] Though my focus is exclusively on print narratives, I also qualify these three accounts as "documentarian" to underline the concern that each author – none more so than Straub, a filmmaker by trade – exhibits regarding the production, circulation, and consumption of images of trauma in Haiti and abroad. Accompanying their attempts to translate Haitian trauma to an international audience, which superimposes foreign, diasporic, and domestic viewpoints, one also finds an important dose of historicism highlighting the myriad forces that conspired to create what one anthropologist calls "Haiti's 500-year earthquake."[400] Engaging with a diffuse rhetoric of disaster that has swirled around Haiti since independence and which obfuscates the contradictions of Western capitalist modernity that the country's chronic "underdevelopment" reveals, their narratives bring into view the internal divides and neo-colonial binds characterizing Haiti's relation to itself and the

[399] Gerard T. Straub, *Hidden in the Rubble: A Haitian Pilgrimage to Compassion and Resurrection* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2010), hereafter cited in text as *HR*. Dany Laferrière, *Tout bouge autour de moi* (Montreal: Mémoires d'encrier, 2010), hereafter cited in text as *TB.*There is also a French edition of this text, *Tout bouge autour de moi* (Paris: Grasset, 2011), a modified and expanded version of the original Quebecois edition. My reading is based on both editions of the text which despite, some variation, share many of the same scenes and maintain the same line and tone of Laferrière's argument. Yanick Lahens, *Failles: récit* (Paris: Sabine Wespieser, 2010), hereafter cited in text as *F*.

[400] Anthony Oliver-Smith, "Haiti's 500-Year Earthquake," in Mark Schuller and Pablo Morales (eds.), *Tectonic Shifts: Haiti Since the Earthquake* (Sterling: Stylus Publishing, 2012), 18-23.

rest of the world.[401] Read through the lens of humanitarian testimony, these three narratives in their focus on trauma, pain, and suffering reveal both the making and unmaking of Haiti.[402]

Beyond the ways this disparate set of texts reframes discussions of catastrophe between the local and the global, what unites Maximin's "baroque style" and the humanitarian testimonies emanating from post-earthquake Haiti is the imperative to bear witness and a concern for the ethical implications of testimony.[403] The examples from Guadeloupe and Haiti spotlight moments of historical and collective trauma, and together convert the destabilizing forces of catastrophe into a critical idiom for rewriting history on each island, for overturning the neo-colonial epistemes structuring how each is viewed and talked about from within and without. While humanitarian testimony from Haiti grapples with ethical questions about who can speak for whom and how, Daniel Maximin employs the creative license of fiction to question the relation between human and natural histories from the perspective of multiple characters in addition to the imagined viewpoint of Guadeloupe's La Soufrière volcano. In each case, thematically, structurally, or both, catastrophe testimony becomes a way to redefine Guadeloupe's image as a passive, assimilated French *département* and Haiti's as a doomed disaster-ridden island of chaos. By re-asserting various voices of resistance to the exploitative forces of Caribbean history, by re-inscribing political and social forces into the history of natural catastrophe, and by translating natural forces of rupture into epistemic breeches and paradigmatic shifts in local, national, and global histories of subjugation, writing catastrophe in both instances is a task whose stakes are as much ethical as they are political.

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[401] Deborah Jenson, "The Writing of Disaster in Haiti: Signifying Cataclysm from Slave Revolution to Earthquake" in Munro, *Haiti Rising*, 103.
[402] I have borrowed here from the title of Elaine Scarry's *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).
[403] Dominique Chancé, *Poétique baroque de la Caraïbe* (Paris: Karthala, 2001).

In the Eye of the Hurricane: Literature, History, and Catastrophe in Guadeloupe

In the prologue of Daniel Maximin's *L'Isolé soleil*, a group of tired hummingbirds finds refuge on the islands of the French Antilles in the eastern Caribbean. In four brief paragraphs, the passage introduces into the narrative the intersecting forces of nature and history. "Et sur chaque morne," Maximin writes, "des ruines de moulins en sentinelles attendent le prochain cyclone pour balayer les souvenirs de peurs et de sueurs sur l'écorce de nos rêves, comme s'ils savaient que le désir est à l'histoire ce que les ailes sont au moulin" (*IS*, 9). In this novel, aptly described as "une œuvre tournoyante et enchevêtrée…invitant au jeu et aux retournements," I argue that the circularity of the cyclone and the mill offers a way to read Maximin's novels in terms of cycles and repetitions, thereby bringing into focus a discourse, in a faint echo of Benjamin's angel of history, about the repeated destructions of history.[404] The cyclical form of the cyclone and the mill announces Maximin's refusal of linearity in history and narrative. However, focusing on the image of the cyclone in particular, as I will argue, this passage also highlights the key role that Maximin has accorded to the environment and catastrophe throughout his career.

Published nearly fifteen years after *L'Isolé soleil*, the third novel of Maximin's Caribbean trilogy *L'Ile et une nuit* recounts the 1989 passage of Hurricane Hugo over Guadeloupe and closely resembles on the narrative level the windmill figure from the first novel. Mirroring the churning winds of a hurricane, Maximin's narration reproduces the structural overturning of a catastrophe, creating therefore a literary cyclone predicated on cycles of destruction and renewal. In *L'Ile et une nuit*, the first line, "L'autre cyclone du siècle est annoncé" (*IN*, 11), alludes to this cyclical structure by drawing an immediate parallel with the destructive 1928 hurricane, the previous "storm of the century." Yet the earlier hurricane is more than a specter for the later one as Maximin enfolds the narration of one hurricane's destruction into that of the other:

[404] Dominique Chancé, *Poétique baroque*, 60.

> Les maisons culbutées, éventrées, les rues encombrées de débris de toutes sortes, les arbres réduits à leurs troncs, pour ceux du moins qui n'ont pas été déracinés. Le pays devenu méconnaissable. Toute une terre dévastée, roussie. Toutes sortes de choses horribles, de scènes atroces, dont le nombre allaient croissant. Des cadavres arrachés aux décombres. L'isolement, toutes les communications interrompues, la famine et l'épidémie devant soi, parmi les fers tordus, les poutres rompues, les maisons renversées. (*IN*, 26)

Bracketed by upended houses, the passage's cyclical structure foreshadows Maximin's recycling of the same passage for Hurricane Hugo. At first a mirror image of the 1928 destruction, the (repeated) description soon deviates from the original:

> Les maisons culbutées, éventrées, les rues encombrées de débris de toutes sortes, les arbres réduits à leurs troncs, le pays redevenait méconnaissable, horrible, atroce, isolé. Toute l'île était dévastée, roussie, avec une famine d'espoir et une épidémie de détresse à l'horizon pour les survivants calfeutrés sous leurs décombres, parmi les fers tordus, les poutres rompues, les toits arrachés, les armoires déchiquetées, tombeaux d'enfants écrasés sous leur protection. (*IN*, 130)

The juxtaposed passages offer one example of the "permanent 'going-over'" that Maximin's fiction effects by "re-reading and re-staging" history within fiction.[405] The verb "redevenir," evoking both the repetition of the description and the destruction, marks a new point of departure as the passage disassembles and re-arranges the "source" passage. The cyclical style of narration on display here parallels the cyclical occurrence of hurricanes each year, offering yet another resonance with the verb "redevenir" as a return to a prior state (of destruction). But, as much as

[405] Clarisse Zimra, "Can the Empire Really Write Back: Maximin's Unbounded Narrative," *The American Journal of Semiotics* 18, no. 1-4 (2002), 75.

the second passage repeats the first it also adds new details, and in so doing, gives the narrative a spiral-like structure of repetition and difference, of destruction and creation.

This oscillation between destruction and renewal also reflects a key intertext in the title and structure of the novel: *Arabian Nights* (*Mille et une nuits* in French). In Maximin's text, which describes the protagonist of this and the author's other novels Marie-Gabriel as an Antillean Scheherazade (*IN*, 163), the hour-by-hour narration of the hurricane's passage replicates the loop-like structure of the constant renewal of the real Scheherazade's narration to put off her death in order to avoid the apocalypse. In other words, the narration of the hurricane's passage re-conceptualizes the destructive forces of nature as a productive or creative process. By insisting as much on renewal as on destruction, Maximin's "spiral" narrative spins and spins to avoid catastrophe. *L'Ile et une nuit*, and *Soufrières* to a certain extent, "undermine[s] the notion of apocalypse – that is, of a cataclysmic irreversible end of the world."[406] Maximin therefore transforms the apocalyptic mayhem of large-scale natural disasters into a revelation, or un-covering (*apocalypsis*), that I argue can be read as a critical re-visioning of Antillean history. In his novel featuring Hurricane Hugo, Maximin describes "une petite fin du monde à endurer sans forcément mourir" (*IN*, 25), "an apocalypse without apocalypse," to quote Derrida's critique of apocalyptic discourse and to point toward the conceptual re-working that catastrophe undergoes in the novel.[407] For Maximin, catastrophe is not reduced to the destruction, for example, of protagonist Marie-Gabriel's home *Les flamboyants*, the setting of numerous scenes across *L'Isolé soleil* and *Soufrières*. Instead, I suggest that her "unhoming" – the literal destruction of her home – creates an "uncanny" effect, to play on competing translations of the German *Unheimliche*, in the text with important implications for looking at the ruins. Bringing to a head

[406] Celia Britton, *The Sense of Community in French Caribbean Fiction* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), 113.
[407] Jacques Derrida, *D'un ton apocalyptique adopté naguère en philosophie* (Paris: Galilée, 1983), 95.

the visual tropes – the "eye" of the cyclone (*IN*, 71-94) and the hurricane as a mirror (*IN*, 31), in particular – that crisscross the text, Maximin concludes by placing destruction and renewal alongside one another as he evokes, "un pays dévasté mais un pays retrouvé" (*IN*, 155). Thus, Maximin's poetics of destruction and renewal yields an overturning effect that allows one to see space and place anew and to rediscover, literally to find again *(retrouver*), a critical viewpoint.

Christiane Chaulet-Archour describes Maximin's well-known penchant for anagrams and other word play as an "écriture cyclonique" and attempts elsewhere in her analysis to read the writer's Caribbean trilogy as a literary cyclone. In one instance, the critic describes the structure of *L'Isolé soleil* as a cyclone spinning like a spiral around Marie-Gabriel.[408] Chaulet-Archour's image is quite apt since Maximin himself has written that "L'idée de cycle est…le modèle de civilisation pour les Antilles," recognizing along with others "la forme culturelle commune de toute la Caraïbe."[409] In Haitian literature, in particular, the spiral connotes a trio of writers including Frankétienne, Jean-Claude Fignolé, and René Philoctète. To varying degrees, each used the spiral to articulate a poetics of resistance to the totalitarian regimes of Duvalier *père* and *fils* that, by fragmenting the linearity of both narrative and time, "embrace[s] [the spiral's] connotative associations with accumulation, acceleration, tumult, and repetition."[410] However, when it comes to Maximin, Chaulet-Archour's use of the cyclone, or spiral, remains limited to a metaphor for Marie-Gabriel as the novel's events turn around her or to a brief enumeration in a sub-section titled "literary cyclones" of representations of hurricanes in the work of Lafcadio

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[408] Daniel Maximin in Christiane Chaulet-Achour, *La trilogie caribéenne de Daniel Maximin: Analyse et contrepoint* (Paris : Karthala, 2000), 190-91.
[409] Ibid., 26. Antonio Benitez-Rojo in *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective*, trans. James E. Marannis. 2nd ed. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996 [1989]) articulates a similar postmodern Caribbean identity based on the "repetition" of historical experiences and cultural elements across the archipelago.
[410] Kaiama Glover, *Haiti Unbound: A Spiralist Challenge to the Postcolonial Canon* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), viii-ix.

Hearn, Aimé Césaire, Saint-John Perse, Miguel Angel Asturias, and Maryse Condé.[411] Yet Maximin's "spiralist" poetics are more than a metaphor for Marie-Gabriel's trajectory. As the above example from *L'Ile et une nuit* suggests, Maximin inscribes the destructive and regenerating stylistics of the spiral which differ from the Haitian trio's emphasis on generic innovation and opaque political critique. This poetics of catastrophe that associates destruction with renewal subtends Maximin's attempt not only to rewrite his island's history but also to resituate Guadeloupe at the crossroads of the insular and the global.[412]

Toward a History of Catastrophe in Maximin's *L'Isolé soleil*

In *Aimé Césaire, frère volcan* (2013), an essay commemorating the centenary of the Martinican poet's birth, Daniel Maximin explains that his goal in *L'Isolé soleil* was to show that Guadeloupeans come from resistance to slavery, not submission to it.[413] The question I will pursue in this part, then, is how does Maximin's poetics of catastrophe sustain such a project? The answer lies, in part, in the volcanic imagery in the very title of his homage to Césaire, "frère volcan," which serves as a bridge to one of the central leitmotivs in Maximin's trilogy, eruptions. Twice in *L'Isolé soleil*, Maximin links an explosion of Guadeloupean nationalism to the volcano, which tellingly in both cases remains silent. The novel relates the last stand of Louis Delgrès and his fiery suicide at Matouba on the side of the volcano in 1802. More than a century and a half later, another explosion, this time an airplane carrying leaders of a local autonomist movement, seemingly reawakens the memory of 1802 on the island.[414] The first "explosion," Maximin explains in *Les fruits du cyclone*, constitutes a "véritable mythe d'origine" in the popular

[411] Chaulet-Achour, *La trilogie*, 190.
[412] As Glover explains, "A delicate balance of centripetal and centrifugal forces – of opposing pressure to at once collapse inward and release outward – the spiral effectively allegorizes the tensions between the insular and the global" in the fiction of Frankétienne, Fignolé, and Philoctète." Glover, *Haiti Unbound*, ix.
[413] Daniel Maximin, *Aimé Césaire, frère volcan* (Paris : Seuil, 2013), 144-45.
[414] The leaders in question are Albert Béville (known under the pen name Paul Niger), founder with Édouard Glissant of Le Front des Antilles-Guyane pour L'Autonomie, and Justin Catayée.

Guadeloupean imaginary, a brief symbol of justice, revolt, and hope in an otherwise long history of colonial subjugation.[415] Before expanding my focus to the second explosion mentioned above, I will argue here that Maximin overturns this origin myth by passing it through his literary cyclone. His critique resituates the origins of Guadeloupean resistance to French colonialism to another site. Recalling C.L.R. James's characterization of the Haitian Revolution and his own methodological approach to analyzing the event, Maximin's literary cyclone redirects attention away from the "meteoric flares and flights" above the volcano (Delgrès) to examine the "projections of the sub-soil from which they came" (the long history of "silent," "anonymous" resistance).[416] Maximin's project therefore reclaims a history of postcolonial resistance in the absence of a post-colonial nation and becomes an act of literary "witnessing" that explores subjective experiences of history inaccessible to the historian via the creative license of fiction.

The eruption of Delgrès and his followers is linked metonymically to the eruption of La Soufrière through the explosion of mines on the side of the volcano. This double association contrasts, however, with the silence of the volcano itself, which Adrien laments in *L'Isolé soleil*, speculating that "Nous aurions été un peuple libre à la même date que Haïti si la Soufrière avait explosé sur Basse-Terre en 1802" (*IS*, 88). Rather than focusing on the failed intersection of historical and geological eruptions, Maximin proposes an alternative avenue for reconsidering Deglrès's explosion. In *Les fruits du cyclone*, Maximin revisits the image of the volcano and underscores the invisible potentiality that it contains when he writes that "L'éruption est un possible mais en même temps elle est cachée dans la montagne" (*FC*, 103). The author redirects

[415] Daniel Maximin, *Les fruits du cyclone: une géopoétique de la Caraïbe* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2006), 29 (hereafter cited in text as *FC*).
[416] C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, 2nd ed. (New York: Random House, 1963 [1938]), x.

attention away from the spectacular image of the explosion to the unseen work of the magma, which nevertheless represents the potential of the former.

Maximin's distinction between the spectacular eruption and the unseen work of the magma participates in broader discussions of the dialectic between overt and covert resistance to slavery and colonialism in the Antilles. Caribbean postcolonial writers have regularly revisited and explored the theme of resistance through the spatial associations of maroon communities and plantations. Édouard Glissant's *Le quatrième siècle* (1964) is exemplary of this trend in its narrative of two family lines associated with, on the one hand, the "plaine" (the plantation) and, on the other, the "morne" (maroon slave communities) across several generations to underline the contributions of both to Martinican collective identity.[417] Similarly, Maximin also actively participates in this revisionist project via the opposition he establishes between fire and water, using two of Marie-Gabriel's revolution-era ancestors, the twins Georges and Jonathan, to deconstruct the binary in *L'Isolé soleil*. Jonathan, as a maroon slave, symbolizes the overt refusal of colonial slavery while his brother Georges, a musician in the city, is associated with the sea and hidden resistance before joining his brother in the fight to expel Richepance's forces. In a letter Georges writes to his brother, he explains their division between fire and water, "Tu as choisi d'habiter les arbres et le volcan. Moi, j'ai préféré l'eau et le rivage" (*IS*, 41). Yet he refuses to oppose these places, "Bien que nos lieux de bataille soient en apparence si différents et si éloignés, toi dans la petite Guinée inviolée, si près du soleil et du volcan, et moi ici, à la Pointe-à-Pitre, si près des chiens et des compromissions, je sais que nous restons deux frères d'affection" (*IS*, 44). As Richepanse's troops sweep into the island, "fire" and "sea", Jonathan and Georges, are united in the last stand with Delgrès and die together (*IS*, 61). Thus, in this historical eruption, Maximin synthesizes active and passive forms of resistance and, thereby,

[417] Édouard Glissant, *Le quatrième siècle* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1964).

reconciles the volcanic island's dual origins out of the multi-millennial accumulation of magma and fire arising from the sea. Maximin's goal in eschewing these oppositions (active vs. passive, plaine vs. morne, fire vs. sea) is to return to a collective identity and memory expressed as a "dépassement des contradictions et non creusement des différences" (*FC*, 27).

The revision of the Delgrès myth involves confronting the stakes of historical representation on which, for instance, Marie-Gabriel and her friend Adrien in Paris reflect in their correspondence. In a letter from Marie-Gabriel to Adrien, the myth of Delgrès collides with the overturning effects of Maximin's literary cyclone. In a telling mise-en-abyme of the writing process, Marie-Gabriel explains to Adrien how she would represent the events of 1802:

> Parfois, j'ai le désir d'abandonner cette éruption d'héroïsme comme vous dites, qui fait tant de bruit comme si c'était l'exception utile pour confirmer la règle de notre servilité, et de la remplacer par une seule question en titre du chapitre laissé en blanc: que s'est-il passé le 28 mai 1802? (Puis, à la fin du livre, je délivrerais la réponse: ce jour-là, Delgrès a eu juste trente ans). (*IS*, 108)

Marie-Gabriel's comment effectively turns Delgrès' act into a "non-histoire," but not as a result of "la ruse feutrée de l'idéologie dominante, qui parvint pour un temps à dénaturer le sens de son acte héroïque et à l'effacer de la mémoire populaire," to quote Glissant.[418] In her comment to Adrien, Marie-Gabriel uses this "non-history" to suspend and question the supposed "éruption d'héroïsme," first with the question "que s'est-il passé le 28 mai 1802?" and next with a deferred response accompanied by the silence of the blank page. The answer, delivered at the end, undoes the linearity of the proposed narration by delivering the answer ("Delgrès a eu juste trente ans")

[418] *Glissant*, *Le discours*, 224. For a critique of Glissant's argument about the "silencing" of Degrès's memory in nineteenth-century Guadeloupe see Nick Nesbitt, *Voicing Memory: History and Subjectivity in French Caribbean Literature* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003), "The Vicissitudes of Memory: Representations of Louis Delgrès," 49-75.

at the end of the book she outlines rather than immediately after the question itself. The fragmentation, thus, challenges the relation of cause and effect in the narrative and in history. That May 28, 1802 was Delgrès' thirtieth birthday – a variation of the expected answer about his martyr-suicide – displaces the historical import of that day from the actions of one single individual "hero." Marie-Gabriel does not erase Delgrès' action by making it a "non-history," but rather questions its place as *the* example of resistance in order to connect it to a series of long-term histories of resistance.

Marie-Gabriel fills the blank space cleared around that historic date with a reflection on another blind spot in the martyr myth: the role of women in the revolution and, more broadly, in resisting colonialism. An essential part of Maximin's literary project, Anne Donadey argues, is "re-centering women into his narrative" in response to "male-dominated versions of this history."[419] As Marie-Gabriel writes to Adrien, "Si on écoute nos poètes, nos révolutionnaires, nos romanciers et leurs historiens, la seule fonction des femmes noires serait d'enfanter nos héros" (*IS*, 108). This tendency, which fellow Guadeloupeans Simone Schwarz-Bart and Maryse Condé not to mention Suzanne Dracius in Martinique, among others, have worked to counter, also begs the question of the intergenerational transmission of history and memory. In a twist on the image of childbearing that Marie-Gabriel cites, Adrien remarks that history is like a leash with which ancestors hold following generations back, suggesting that "Il nous faut…nous dégager de leur ventre paternel" (*IS*, 86). For her part, Marie-Gabriel echoes this statement when she says that history is "la manière dont les pères s'attachent aux enfants" (*IS*, 109). Marie-Gabriel further develops her reflection in the same passage, writing that "Il faudrait l'invention

[419] Anne Donadey, "Beyond Departmentalization: Feminist Black Atlantic Reformulations of *outre-mer* in Daniel Maximin's *L'Isolé soleil*" *International Journal of Francophone Studies* 11, no. 1-2 (2008), 50. Lydie Moudileno comments that "le roman de Maximin redessine, plus que tout autre, une historiographie antillaise redonnant présence et voix à la femme," in *L'écrivain antillais au miroir de sa littérature* (Paris : Karthala, 1997), 196.

d'une femme qui refuse de jouer le jeu (héroïsme et écrivain)!" (*IS*, 109). As both the protagonist and a writer through the trilogy, Marie-Gabriel describes herself in this statement which positions the novel as a feminist rewriting of island history. Moreover, Marie-Gabriel is childless; rather than giving birth to the hero, to borrow the cliché of writing as childbirth, the story that she offers is skeptical of the very idea of heroism. In her attempt to "refaire la chronique de l'épopée de Louis Delgrès (*IS*, 85), she writes "pour [se] libérer du paternalisme, de la loi du retour des pères et des enfants prodigues, et de tout ce qui revient au même" (*IS*, 19), a stance that the text imposes on her as well when her father perishes in the beginning of the novel.

Marie-Gabriel and the other women in *L'Isolé soleil* play an active role in transmitting and shaping the history of Guadeloupe. The reversal of the point of view from which history is narrated takes full form in a passage from Marie-Gabriel's mother Siméa's journal during the interwar period in Paris. Siméa's text adds yet another fold to the discussion about women in Caribbean letters by articulating a feminist critique in her journal that Marie-Gabriel extends and enacts herself both as a woman protagonist and writer. Commenting on the interwar literary renewal of Caribbean letters, Siméa challenges the Haitian novelist Jacques Roumain, the Cuban poet Nicolás Guillén, and the Negritude poet Léon Damas: "Où sont les femmes dans ton *Bois d'ébène*, Roumain? Où sont-elles dans ton *West-Indies*, Guillen? Que faisons-nous, Damas, dans tes *Pigments*?" (*IS*, 137) A revisionist stance in relation to Caribbean historiography accompanies her critique of the gender imbalance of modernist Caribbean literature. Returning to the central theme of revolt and nature, Siméa writes, "Vous faites le tri parmi nos ancêtres esclaves pour ne chanter que les révoltés. Vous faites le tri parmi nos paysages et taisez les mangroves au profit des volcans" (*IS*, 137). In order to bridge the apparent divide between

resistance and submission upon which this hero mode of history rests, Siméa dismisses entirely the hero as "l'arbre qui cache la forêt de résistance" (*IS*, 186).

The process of rewriting, or writing back to and against, dominant versions of history in *L'Isolé soleil* is not the unique domain of meta-fictional commentaries. Alongside these elements, Maximin also employs in the novel tactics that "pirate" colonial historiography.[420] General Richepance's landing in Guadeloupe illuminates this scribal piracy by drawing on a repressed voice to destabilize the colonial archive. "It is," as H. Adlai Murdoch notes, "in fact, the very basis of the discursive context through which the Caribbean has historically been defined that Maximin effectively interrogates and relocates."[421] In this way, the colonial chronicle, symbol of metropolitan history and authority, is re-filtered through the same voice that it once stifled. The campaign to re-establish slavery in Guadeloupe is told in eleven staggered stages which Maximin appends with a creole proverb that critically glosses each episode. This instance of what Chamoiseau and Confiant call *oraliture*, for Murdoch, "inscrib[es] the oral trace of an indigenous collective memory" while acting as "a hybrid site of narrative transformation."[422] For example, in the first episode, the text recounts Napoleon's decision to send Generals Leclerc and Richepanse to Haiti and Guadeloupe respectively to re-establish slavery. Rather than countering the narration of the re-conquest, Maximin simply adds the first proverb in capitals at the end: "LÀ OÙ IL Y A DES OS, LÀ IL Y A DES CHIENS..." (*IS*, 45). In commenting on the "official" history as it unfolds, the creole proverbs replies to the chronicle in a twist of the call-and-response of the creole tale that juxtaposes a local oral archive with the

[420] In *L'Isolé soleil*, Antoine comments on Marie-Gabriel's unfinished manuscript, telling her that "Il nous faut pirater l'histoire et l'écriture" (IS 273). I use "tactics" here in the sense that Michel de Certeau gives the term in his discussion of poaching and how spectators resist dominant ideologies in the popular media and culture they consume. See Michel de Certeau, *L'invention du quotidien: 1. les arts de faire* (Paris: Folio, 1990 [1980]), 62.
[421] H. Adlai Murdoch, *Creole Identity in the French Caribbean Novel* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001), 115.
[422] Ibid., 116. See also Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphaël Confiant, *Lettres créoles: tracées antillaises et continentales de la littérature, Haïti, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Guyane, 1635-1975* (Paris: Gallimard, 1999), 73.

written colonial archive. This textual bricolage, deconstructing colonial discourse to reconstruct a postcolonial point of view, also defines the character Jonathan's notebook as it is passed from character to character down through history. This collection of fragments of articles, decrees, and treatises all pertaining to racism becomes, for example, the "textbook" with which his sister, Ti Carole, defies the interdiction to teach slaves to read and to reflect on the very discourses that legitimated their enslavement in the early nineteenth century.

Building on the attempts in *L'Isolé soleil* to unite the parallel histories of active and passive resistance, notably through the examples of Georges and Jonathan and the dialectic of fire and water, Maximin has revisited this motif in his more recent *Les fruits du cyclone*. Instead of viewing the events of 1802 as a complete failure, he contends that Delgrès and his allies sacrificed themselves to instill an unflagging spirit of resistance in those who would once again become slaves. In this way, the men and women of 1802 were, according to Maximin, "certains qu'une autre éruption victorieuse aurait bien lieu et abolirait *pour toujours* leur esclavage rétabli" after their death (*FC*, 95). Here, Maximin frames the passage as a sort of spiral of history as one eruption summons another nearly a half century later, detaching the events of 1802 from the association with failed post-colonial revolution, a historical step backward, to recast them as an unexpected step forward toward abolition in 1848. Instead, another type of revolution – in the sense of a full turn, or completion of a cycle from freedom to slavery (again) to freedom (again) – occurs in the way that Maximin inserts Delgrès's explosion into the *longue durée* of quotidian resistance to slavery, a diachronic point of view that avoids another Great Man myth of Antillean history attributing abolition to the actions of European abolitionists like Victor Schœlcher.[423]

[423] On this matter, Laurent Dubois writes that "Rather than focus on Schœlcher, Antilleans made clear their desire to focus on their own heroes and did so by insistently talking not of 1848 but of the earlier period of insurrection, revolution, and re-enslavement." *A Colony of Citizens: Revolution and Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean, 1787-1804* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 429. See also Nesbitt, *Voicing*

It is toward this continuous resistance embedded in the everyday cultural practices of slaves on the plantation and in towns that Maximin directs the reader's attention. For instance, in *L'Isolé soleil*, following a massacre, the narrator insists that from that day on "il ne se passa plus une seule année sans une révolte d'esclaves, jusqu'à ce qu'ils imposent l'abolition de 1848, par leurs luttes intenses et brutales comme le volcan, et patientes comme la mer" (*IS*, 41). Again Maximin insists on showing the dialectic of volcano and sea as complimentary modalities of revolt and resistance. In *L'Isolé soleil*, Maximin writes to decenter the fiery explosions of history that often garner the most attention and to showcase the slow, steady work of the magma. In so doing, he establishes a framework for viewing resistance to colonialism beyond revolutionary eruptions in the hidden work of everyday resistance and survival. His juxtaposition of historical eruptions with the volcano itself also provides a new frame for viewing human history in relation to natural history on the island.

Catastrophe between Geology and Geography

Anticipating by three decades Adrien's comment about a deferred revolution/eruption in *L'Isolé soleil*, Frantz Fanon tempers the revolutionary potential of the recently departmentalized French Antilles at the beginning of *Peau noire, masques blancs* (1952). There he writes that "L'explosion n'aura pas lieu aujourd'hui. Il est trop tôt…ou trop tard."[424] This view of a revolution deferred, or a "dream" to echo Langston Hughes, in the French Antilles resonates as well in Chris Bongie's reading of Maximin's novels *L'Isolé soleil* and *Soufrières* as an allegory for the "post/colonial." In this interpretation, the (un)erupting volcano symbolizes the way

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Memory, 62. Nesbitt, however, interprets renewed historiographical interest in Delgrès in the mid-twentieth century in the larger project of departmentalization and cultural assimilation: "Renewed interest in Delgrès during this period has often served to assure not the eruption of history into the experience of his descendants but rather the disappearance and erasure of that experience behind monuments and commemorative speeches that merely freeze the experiential core of his gesture," *Voicing Memory*, 71.

[424] Frantz Fanon, *Peau Noire, Masques Blancs* (Paris: Editions Maspero, 1952), 5.

post/colonialism describes an uneasy state of reaction and repetition in which one awaits a revolution that will not come.[425] Yet Adrien's statement ("nous aurions été libres à la manière d'Haïti, si La Soufrière avait explosé…") along with its echoes in Maximin's other novels, I argue, require a more literal reading of the volcano and its relation to the island. This is not to deny the volcano's function as symbol, but instead to take seriously the way Maximin's inscribes the historical (Delgrès' act) within the geological (La Soufrière). In articulating this relation between society and nature, Maximin opens his questioning of the "post/modern, post/colonial condition," to borrow Bongie's turn of phrase, to an interrogation of the text's "environmental imagination."[426]

The apparent disjuncture between the failed revolution and the absent eruption in Adrien's remark triggers a questioning of time and duration in Maximin's work. Time, or rather the representation of it, constitutes a fundamental stake of any revolution, a way to mark the implementation of a new order to displace the old. The French revolutionary calendar represents perhaps the starkest example of the temporal stakes of a political upheaval as time, at least for the French, was reset, so to speak. The significance of Adrien's observation resides then in the way it draws historical time into the same frame as geological time. To find, or to question, the intersection of historical and geological time is to propose a view of history that encompasses the postcolonial but also infuses it with an ecological sensibility, thus adding another twist to Maximin's literary overturning of history by reframing the question of Delgrès's "eruption" in relation to Guadeloupean geological history. The question of how to represent a (non-)eruption

[425] Chris Bongie, *Island and Exiles: The Creole Identities of Post/colonial Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 349.
[426] I quote the title of Lawrence Buell's seminal eco-critical text *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995).

of history in *L'Isolé soleil* becomes in *Soufrières* that of representing the (incomplete) eruption of the volcano. Such a transformation only further binds human history to natural history.

Set during the 1976 partial eruption of La Soufrière, the eponymously titled novel accordingly places the volcano at the center of the text. But before the volcano erupts partially onto Basse-Terre and fully into the narration, Maximin questions the meaning of the erupting volcano in terms of time and duration in Marie-Gabriel's apocalyptic dream that opens the novel:

> Que signifie ce feu de terre? Ni feu du ciel tombant en punition divine ni déluge maternel pour laver les péchés du monde. Même le fatalisme a au moins besoin d'un rythme régulier pour justifier les catastrophes. Les cyclones le savent, fidèles tous les trois ans à leur saison d'août-septembre. Mais que veut dire ce magma qui met vingt ans, trois siècles, ou vingt mille ans à faire signe du prochain rendez-vous, le temps pour l'île d'oublier qu'il est inéluctable? (*S*, 11)

Contrary to the cyclical occurrence of hurricanes, the time between volcanic eruptions remains less certain. The immediate effect of Maximin's comparison here is not only the establishment of two temporal planes at work in the novel but also the displacement of humans as the principal historical agents on the island. Human history is capable of registering the short periodicity between hurricanes, for instance, whereas the significantly slower cycle of volcanic eruptions greatly supersedes human history on the island. As Maximin writes elsewhere, "Le volcan est le créateur de l'île, et le phare qui éclaire ses formes et son histoire…[L'éruption] vient comme le séisme rappeler à l'homme contemporain les traces de l'origine du monde" (*FC*, 103). "Reckon[ing] with the ways in which ecology does not always work within the frames of human time and political interest," Maximin decouples the human from the natural to demonstrate that

the latter is not necessarily aligned with the former.[427] The effect is yet another attempt to displace the island's (colonial) recorded history, by subsuming the latter to a millennial ecological history and pointing to the environment's role in political and social history.

The examples of human and environmental disjuncture so far beg the deeper question about the extent to which one can write the volcano as a historical force, a natural force, or as a combination of each. In *L'Isolé soleil*, the volcano is also the site of another explosion with implications for Guadeloupean independence or autonomy more than a century and a half after Delgrès and his followers' last stand. At the beginning of *L'Isolé soleil*, a Boeing 707 carrying Marie-Gabriel's father and the leaders of *Le Front des Antilles-Guyane pour l'Autonomie* slams into the flanks of La Soufrière in a mini-eruption that the text relates to the historical eruption of Delgrès and his companions. The shock of the explosion awoke "tout un peuple qui cro[yait] revoir la Soufrière éclater d'un seul coup, cent soixante ans après l'éruption-suicide des rebelles de Louis Delgrès" (*IS*, 14). Though neither a suicide nor an act of resistance, the technological disaster on the side of La Soufrière, described as a far-off echo of the events of 1802, throws into relief the constant role of the volcano in these two instances: "Cette fois non plus, il n'y a pas un grain de soufre ou une goutte de lave pour rendre le volcan coupable de ce charnier…Pour la seconde fois de son histoire, le volcan sert de témoin muet à une éruption éphémère d'hommes et de femmes" (*IS*, 14). By once again revealing a disconnect between historical and geological eruptions, the text reframes the volcano as the "other" of Guadeloupean history, an enigmatic natural force that Maximin's writing questions further.

[427] Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George B. Handley, eds., *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 4. In her reading of *L'Ile et une nuit*, Britton makes a similar argument that "Human beings…have no absolutely privileged status in comparison with the rest of the natural world." See Britton, *Sense of Community*, 112.

Whether as a discursive construction that is both the tool and product of Western imperial encroachment or as the performative site for resisting empire from within, otherness has proved central to analyses of the colonial encounter.[428] Similarly, a dominant current in Western thought has long posited the environment as separated from and subordinate to human society, a trend however that environmental history and criticism have increasingly challenged. In the recent interventions that have sought to bring eco-criticism into dialogue with postcolonial studies, scholars have underlined the extent to which imperial and colonial power are entangled with both constructions and uses of the environment and natural resources.[429] Furthermore, these critics have also amply demonstrated the profound "environmental imagination" that informs postcolonial thought to decenter Anglo-American genealogies of eco-critical sensibilities.[430] Without explicit reference to postcolonial studies or eco-criticism, Daniel Maximin's environmental imagination acknowledges the entangled relation of these separate but related Western discourses of alterity. In *Les fruits du cyclone*, Maximin establishes this connection through the metaphor of nature as a (unruly) slave. Detailing the Euro-colonial relation to the Caribbean environment, Maximin evokes "une nature en apparence accueillante et esclave consentante, extrêmement fertile et productive, et derrière[,] la capacité de révolte violente,

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[428] See, for example, Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994 [1979]) and Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994).

[429] Albert Crosby's important *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1972) and *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) are important precursors. In recent literary and cultural criticism, in addition to DeLoughrey and Handley's *Postcolonial Ecologies*, these include Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin, eds., *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment* (London: Routledge, 2010) and Bonnie Roos and Alex Hunt, eds., *Postcolonial Green: Environmental Politics and World Narratives* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010).

[430] DeLoughrey and Handley recall the importance that Frantz Fanon, for instance, places on "land as a primary site of postcolonial recuperation, sustainability, and dignity" in their effort to demonstrate that "the global south has contributed to an ecological imaginary and discourse of activism and sovereignty that is not derivative of the Euro-American environmentalism of the 1960s and '70s." *Postcolonial Ecologies*, 3 and 8. It should also be remarked that in an earlier work, the same critics recognize another Martinican, Edouard Glissant, as an important postcolonial "eco-critical" thinker, alongside Derek Walcott and Wilson Harris. See Elizabeth M. Deloughrey, Renée K. Gosson, and George B. Handley, eds., *Caribbean Literature and the Environment: Between Nature and Culture* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2005).

imprévisible dans le temps et dans l'espace" (*FC*, 99). With a faint trace of Bhabhian mimicry, Maximin recalls that the Caribbean environment enriched colonial planters and capitalists as much as it destroyed crops and plantations while nourishing and sheltering runaway slaves.

Located between cycles of creation and destruction, both the product of the island's volcanic origins, Maximin underscores a postcolonial ecological contact zone to borrow Mary Louise Pratt's concept.[431] Adapting Pratt's description of the colonial encounter as one that is mediated by hierarchies of power, gender, and culture, among others, Maximin's metaphor of nature as an ambivalent slave complicates the "traditional" anthropocentric view of the contact zone with an additional ecological layer. The ecological contact zone that Maximin suggests also registers the performative nature of the contact zone that challenges the stability of not only the hierarchies between colonizer and colonized but humans and nature as well, questioning the assertions of mastery that subtend both colonizer and human control over the colonized and nature respectively. In linking the environment and the colonized, these two colonial "others" in the region, Maximin highlights both the colonized and the environment's ability to disrupt and overturn the colonial order. The homology between the postcolonial subaltern and the unruly environment allows Maximin to enact an important shift in narrative focus that mirrors the overturning of historical and cultural perspectives that constitute his larger literary project. In so doing, he returns to the site of the volcano and employs La Soufrière as a non-human narrator in order to articulate a different way of thinking about catastrophe and history in Guadeloupe.

Maximin's ecological contact zone places the environment outside the domain of human control. There is no question that human societies have always shaped and transformed their environment, but often without control over the consequences, a fact that (natural) catastrophes illustrate starkly since it is by definition only when humans are present that the forces of nature

[431] Mary Louise Pratt, "Arts of the Contact Zone," *Profession* 9, no. 1 (1991), 34.

are qualified as "catastrophic." In fact, implicit in Maximin's articulation of natural catastrophe as a "modèle élémentaire" for postcolonial revolt is a reworking of the human-nature hierarchy that thwarts the dominance for the former in its "imitation" of the environment.[432] But Maximin also challenges the limits of explaining human events through environmental ones and vice versa in *Les fruits du cyclone*. "La nature vit sa vie et n'est pas là pour fournir des métaphores et des symboles classifiés des folies et des tourments des humains" (*FC*, 105). The critique of the anthropocentric notion that geography or the environment are in the service of advancing history is illustrated during the partial eruption that is the subject of Maximin's second novel, *Soufrières*, to which I now turn my attention.

Though each of Maximin's three novels interrogates the contours of this postcolonial ecology, *Soufrières* has the particular distinction in the trilogy of reproducing this ecological contact zone in its own narrative structure. In this novel Maximin calls upon his cast of recurring characters as well as the volcano itself to narrate the (partial) eruption on the island. In this way, Maximin's human and non-human narrators imaginatively weave together these respective points of view into the history of this event that spurred the complete evacuation of Basse-Terre for over three months. The result is an eco-critical narrative that prolongs the interrogation of the meaning of the volcanic eruption with which the novel opens. However, to narrate this eruption, Maximin cedes the narrative reins to the volcano in a chapter titled "La rumeur de la terre." During this chapter, the imaginative voicing of the earth and its unsettling tremors unmoors the narrative from its anthropocentric perspective and refocuses it on and through the volcano.

[432] In *Les fruits du cyclone*, Maximin writes on this subject that in the Caribbean "[l'histoire] s'est acharnée à imiter en tout point les quatre cataclysmes [hurricanes, tidal waves, volcanic eruptions, and earthquakes] de la géographie" (*F*, 14) and that "Les modalités de révolte des quatre éléments ont servi de *modèle élémentaire* pour le combat des opprimés (*F*, 93).

No longer a silent witness to history, the volcano via its personification as narrator erupts into the narration to question the meaning and function of the eruption. The effect of the chapter is to transform the volcano into an enigmatic text that enacts a double displacement of an anthropocentric history of the island. First, contrary to the attempts throughout the text to master and control the catastrophic forces of nature (e.g. the neo-colonial French functionary from *renseignements généraux* who hopes to use a volcanic disaster to reinforce French power in Guadeloupe), the power to narrate the eruption – textual control over the eruption itself – is the sole domain of the volcano. Second, the undecipherable "speech" that makes up this "rumeur" conceals an impenetrable truth, a volcanic "Real," so to speak, beyond human representation.

The allusion that I make here to the volcano as writer and producer of a text (the eruption) whose opacity confounds human attempts to assign meaning to it is not only hinted at in the plural "Soufrières" of the title, but also at the beginning of this same chapter.[433] There the volcano begins its narration by framing the question of language and comprehension in response to the cacophony of voices, the "rumor" in the title of the chapter. "A coup de phrases primitives et de mots copeaux échappés aux langues établies, j'aspire à retourner mon pays natal" the volcano-narrator writes (*S*, 137). Before looking closer at the intertextual play with Césaire in this passage, it is necessary to examine how Maximin's volcano constitutes itself as a text. The "phrases primitives" and "mot copeaux" that signify beyond the limits of established languages manifest the difficulty that certain characters experience in deciphering the volcano. In addition to the French functionary, other characters in *Soufrières* also attempt to interpret the volcano.

[433] There is a particular resonance here with Glissant's concept of *opacité* which offers an ethics for representing others without subsuming their subjectivity to totalizing universal concepts of identity or culture. Yet here Maximin foregrounds this *opacité* as it relates to the limits of human control over and knowledge of the environment. See Édouard Glissant, *Poétique de la Relation* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990), 129.

For example, Rosan, the peasant-activist and "homme-plante" deeply rooted in local ecology, keeps a detailed record of the volcano's activities.[434] Similarly, Maximin also alludes to the Tazieff–Allègre debate regarding the evacuation of Basse-Terre, the stakes of which rested on the ability to "interpret" signs, or the "rumors," of the volcano.[435] But as the volcano-narrator writes, "Ma parole est terre. Une terre lourde à la bouche des êtres qui peinent à déchiffrer mes images" (*S*, 137), these attempts to read and write the volcano yield no definitive mastery over it. Rosan's notes (I will comment more about this example later) are simple observations of seismic activity placed into relation with an archive of regional and global catastrophes. As the character Professeur Roux explains to the nameless French functionary from *renseignements généraux*, despite scientific advances in the detection and prediction of volcanic activity, "les volcans n'obéissent qu'à leurs propres lois" (*S*, 177). The opacity of this volcano-text which thwarts all attempts to read it throughout the novel is also echoed here in the layered composition of the volcano doubled in its "peaux de montagne" and "chairs de volcan" (*S*, 137), two coverings that use two ways to refer to La Soufrière (montagne/volcan). The fragmented "speech" that the volcano disseminates also adds to its textuality to complicate the message that it produces: "J'habite une peau si spacieuse que j'ai la vertu de parler par d'autres corps, et d'embrasser d'un seul regard tous les recoins de ma grande case" (*S*, 137).

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[434] "L'homme-plante" is Suzanne Césaire's response to the question "Qu'est-ce que le Martiniquais" in her essay "Malaise d'une civilisation" that first appeared in *Tropiques* 5 (April 1942) and has been re-published in Suzanne Césaire, *Le grand camouflage: Écrits de dissidence, 1941-1945*, ed. Daniel Maximin (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2009), 70.

[435] Called in by the Préfet in Guadeloupe in the summer of 1976 to assess the recent activity of La Soufrière, Haround Tazieff, the director of volcanology at the Institut de physique du globe, offered a reassuring assessment that excluded any risk of eruption. Despite Tazieff's confidence and in the face of continued activity from the volcano, the Préfet turned to the newly named director of the Institut de physique du globe, Claude Allègre, for a new analysis. Allègre and his team found a greater risk of eruption than Tazieff, which prompted the Préfet to evacuate seventy thousand people from Basse-Terre, Guadeloupe until December 1, 1976. Although the volcano partially erupted that summer, it was not the large-scale eruption on the scale of Mont Pelée in 1902 that many feared.

In the association throughout the chapter between, on the one hand, writer and volcano and, on the other hand, text and catastrophe, Maximin aligns the volcano along the intertextual site of Aimé Césaire's *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (1939). By linking the volcano to Césaire, a poet he refers to as a "frère-volcan," Maximin references the epistemological shift that the poetics of Negritude enacted in the Antilles and the larger black Atlantic world that is echoed in the overturning of the verb "retourner." In *Cahier*, the noun "retour" in the title alludes to the discursive claim on space that accompanies Césaire's re-appropriation of blackness. Instead of viewing Maximin's modernist intertextuality as a questioning and commemoration of the "(im)possibility of an explosive identity politics," the transformation of the noun "retour" into the verb "retourner" suggests the will to reset, or overturn, the way history and the environment are thought in the French Antilles.[436] Thus, resisting interpretations of Maximin's intertextuality as postmodern parody, the overturning to which the volcano aspires is the very inscription of Maximin's ecocritical, or geo-poetic, gaze on Guadeloupe and its history into his representation of both. In an example of a novel in which both human characters and the natural elements say "I," Maximin places history and the environment alongside one another. Resonating with his spiralist geo-poetics, the writer intertwines both into a postcolonial ecology that reconsiders the island's natural history as inextricable from the island's (lack of) national history. A geo-poetics of relation, or postcolonial ecological contact zone, emerges from Maximin's insistence on the need to think dialogically about the relation between history and the environment. It is precisely this sense of hierarchy that Maximin (once again) suspends when the volcano-narrator states, "Je suis une bouche de chair en feu, mais je ne maîtrise aucune langue de dévoilement" (*S*, 137). What the volcano aspires to "reveal" in its overturning, then, is not a deeper "truth" hidden under nature's proverbial veil, but a different way of thinking about history and disaster in Guadeloupe.

[436] Bongie, *Islands and Exiles*, 362-63.

In instantiating a geological or climatic mode of witnessing, Maximin's imaginative geo-poetics reveals an ecologically grounded mode of conceptualizing history, identity, and culture. It is a move that also brings into focus a certain ethical stance that clears a space for ecology in the pages of what the author calls "une histoire d'archipel, attentive à nos quatre races, nos sept langues et nos douzaines de sangs" (*IS*, 11).

The overturning that his geo-poetics enacts also provides a way both for (re)thinking his texts spatially to consider Glissant's affirmation that "la Relation est mondiale" as well as to bring contemporary post-departmentalization politics back into the equation.[437] In other words, the re-presentation of catastrophe and history in the author's fiction offers a way to read the island in terms of intersections between the insular, the regional, and the global.[438] The attention to the geography of catastrophe in Maximin's work, I argue, resembles the function of the myriad literary and musical intertexts littered throughout his novels. Critics have identified the significant roles that poetry and jazz, for example, play in opening the reflections at the heart of Maximin's texts to wider transnational histories of contact and exchange.[439] These layers contribute to the inscription of Guadeloupe into the cultural nexus of the African diaspora and the black Atlantic. Maximin, through these literary and musical intertexts, recenters Guadeloupean identity by focusing on its rhizomatic connections across the Atlantic world.

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[437] Edouard Glissant, *Traité du tout-monde: Poétique IV* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), 213.

[438] Bongie, *Islands and Exiles*, 377; Christine Chaulet-Achour et Daniel Maximin, "Sous le signe du colibri: Traces et transferts autobiographiques dans la trilogie de Daniel Maximin," in *Postcolonialisme et autobiographie*, ed. Alfred Hornung et Ernspeter Ruhe (Amsterdam-Atlanta: Rodopi, 1998), 213.

[439] See Donadey, "Beyond Departmentalization," 56 for how Maximin inscribes feminist black Atlantic thought into *L'Isolé soleil* to place "Guadeloupean history in the broader context of Black Atlantic liberation struggles." Several articles and book chapters also explore the ways Maximin's use of jazz inscribes his novels into wider shared Caribbean or Black Atlantic experience and identity. See Nick Nesbitt, *Voicing Memory*, chapter 5 "Dreaming of the Masters: Jazz and Memory in Daniel Maximin's *L'Isolé soleil* and *L'Ile et une nuit*," Jason Herbeck, "'Jusqu'aux limites de l'imporivisation': Caribbean Identity and Jazz in Daniel Maximin's *L'Isolé soleil*," *Dalhousie French Studies* 71 (Summer 2005), 161-175 as well as two articles from Martin Munro: "Listening to Caribbean History: Music and Rhythm in Daniel Maximin's *L'Isolé soleil*," *International Journal of Francophone Studies* 10, no. 3 (2007), 393-405 and "Rhythm and Blues: Music and Caribbean Subjectivity in Daniel Maximin's *L'Isolé soleil*" *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 46, no. 1 (November 2009), 43-57.

As a coda to Maximin's poetics of catastrophe, I will argue that, in the same way that music and literary culture reveal a rich transnational network of Atlantic world exchange and encounter, catastrophes orient Maximin's work toward a recognition of the global scale of this issue. Superimposing the eco-critical and global frames in his work, Maximin anticipates subaltern historian Dipesh Chakrabarty's recent remark that "climate change spell[s] the collapse of the…humanist distinction between natural history and human history."[440] The awareness of catastrophe on a global scale connects the Caribbean to disparate geographical sites to suggest that the ecological contact zone that Maximin frames in Guadeloupe is neither unique to this island nor to the archipelago of which it is a part. My contention is that this geography of catastrophe recognizes a common experience of catastrophe that resituates the Caribbean in an "ecological" transnationalism that resembles, but is distinct from, the usual black Atlantic lens used to apprehend the Caribbean experience. Instead, catastrophes, which ignore national borders and distinctions between rich and poor, are increasingly becoming an inescapable part of life across the global North and South as climate change and rising economic disparities conspire to augment vulnerabilities and new media technologies project images of destruction around the world with growing celerity. In his work, Maximin articulates catastrophe as a worldwide experience that eschews broad binaries like center and periphery, local and global.

The 1976 volcanic crisis focused for a time the world's attention on Guadeloupe in anticipation of the final eruption precisely thirty years after the island became a department of mainland France in 1946. The symbolic anniversary, optimistically celebrated by French ministerial officials, also coincided with a local economic context marked by high unemployment as well as strikes and contestation from unions and representatives in agriculture, construction, education, and tourism. These economic and political contexts soon combined with

[440] Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Climate of History: Four Theses," *Critical Inquiry* 35 (Winter 2009), 201.

environmental circumstances as the danger of a serious eruption grew and threw into relief the links between the Antilles and France, thereby revealing to Guadeloupeans, according to Éric Lepointe, their island's dependence on metropolitan France.[441] While Lepointe's detailed reconstruction of the crisis and its management is highly useful for re-situating the (partial) eruption in the local and national, in other words departmental, context, Maximin's re-presentation of the disaster pushes the discussion beyond this very frame by "globalizing" the catastrophe. Although Maximin writes in *Soufrières* during the July partial eruption that "C'était maintenant dans le monde tout entier que la Soufrière faisait parler d'elle" (*S*, 171), his treatment of the catastrophe works to undo the center-periphery binary that dominated French management of the crisis and scholarly analyses like Lepointe's.

Catastrophe, for Maximin, is always already a violent articulation of near and far, here and there. Following the trajectory of hurricanes, the ripple of aftershocks outward from the epicenter of an earthquake, and the eruptions from the ring of volcanoes surrounding the archipelago on the Caribbean plate, Maximin posits an outward looking, connective experience of these forces of nature. "L'île n'est jamais un lieu d'enfermement," he writes, "Tous ces bouleversements cataclysmiques ou historiques proviennent d'ailleurs. Par exemple, la conscience collective caribéenne se nourrit de la circulation des éléments: tout grand séisme envoie ses ondes au-delà de l'épicentre, toute éruption notable est visible de l'île voisine à l'œil nu" (*FC*, 99). Without denying the real suffering and death each of these unchained natural forces wreck, Maximin's linking of catastrophe from island to island captures the pan-Caribbean impact of such major disasters. But it is Maximin's brand of spiralist poetics that I want to

[441] Éric Lepointe, "Le réveil du volcan La Soufrière en 1976: La population guadeloupéenne à l'épreuve du danger," in *Les catastrophes naturelles aux Antilles: D'une Soufrière à une autre*, ed. Alain Yacou (Paris: Éditions Karthala, 1999), 35.

underline in this respect before moving on. Significantly, from the destruction of catastrophe, Maximin creates a collective identity of cross-island solidarity in the face of such cataclysms.

The axes of destruction and creation in Maximin's literary cyclone also weave the Caribbean into a wider global consciousness of postcolonial catastrophe that pushes the framework of this analysis beyond the scope of the nation-state. The wide-angle lens that Maximin casts to inscribe Guadeloupe into a larger geography of catastrophe and the larger context of postcolonial and antiracist action reaches beyond the French empire and the black Atlantic. In *Soufrières,* Maximin recalls a number of events that coincided with the complete evacuation of Basse-Terre and its more than seventy-three thousand inhabitants on August 16, 1976, in anticipation of the volcano's final, destructive eruption. Rosan, who has decided to stay behind, listens to a news bulletin from France Inter. The radio announces on the same day the largest earthquake in the history of the Philippines, the eruption of a volcano in Ecuador, and a series of earthquakes in China that, since February of that year, have caused 650,000 deaths. "La série noire des catastrophes naturelles n'avait fait que s'amplifier au cours de cette journée de folie à la surface du globe," the narrator explains (*S*, 235). The trauma of the initial eruption in Guadeloupe and the evacuation of Basse-Terre pale in comparison to the seven thousand dead in the Philippines or the 650,000 in China.

The point, however, is not to compare the magnitude of suffering, but to underline the play between scale and perspective that this geography of catastrophe brings into view since as Maximin explains catastrophes "sabotent le micro et le macro" (*FC,* 105). Inscribing the author's focus on the overlap between ecology and history in Guadeloupe into a larger frame, catastrophe connects Maximin's texts rhizomatically to other geographical sites and histories. To use a Glissantian term, then, catastrophe places Guadeloupe in relation to the wider world: the

experience of catastrophe therefore has no "center." Extending his poetics of catastrophe into an ethics of catastrophe, by overturning the "micro" with the "macro," Daniel Maximin reminds us that the question of disaster cannot be thought through properly in isolation. Instead, it forces us to think dialogically between the local and the global, or in other words transnationally, about issues of climate change and inequality – factors that are significant in creating the conditions for catastrophe when they intersect with a natural hazard. The capacity for catastrophe to instantiate cross-cultural and transnational links reappears in the many accounts of the 2010 earthquake in Haiti as the attempts to bear witness to the devastation and suffering there became a way of parsing Haiti's tangled web of domestic and international relations.

Traumatic Encounters: Bearing Witness in Post-Earthquake Haiti

At the end of Rodney Saint-Éloi's English-language short story, "The Blue Hill," the police inspector Simidor awakes from a hallucinatory nightmare about environmental disaster and foreign occupation at 4:53pm on January 12, 2010 as the 7.0 magnitude earthquake is about to strike Haiti. Set between imagined destruction and the very real nightmare of the earthquake, Simidor reflects on the duty to record and remember in a time of catastrophe. "Lying there dying from the blue fog that is killing everyone," the narrator explains, "Simidor wishes he could tell his compatriots to pay attention, for the last days seem to be coming nearer: Write down the spectacle of the last hour…[R]ecord all the details…Describe everything you feel."[442] Whether or not the poisonous blue fog constitutes a veiled criticism of the UN's MINUSTAH security force, present in Haiti since 2004, the massive foreign NGO community that operates in Haiti for which the UN is but a symbol, or both, the conclusion to Saint-Éloi's story nevertheless posits an ethical responsibility binding survivors to victims in the act of bearing witness.

[442] Rodney Saint-Éloi, "The Blue Hill" in *Haiti Noir*, ed. Edwidge Danticat (New York: Akashic Books, 2011), 308.

The testimonial imperative that Simidor expresses in this early fictional account of the earthquake illustrates what Haitian-American writer Edwidge Danticat singles out as the primary difficulty for authors of fiction in the post-disaster context during a 2011 lecture. The challenge, Danticat tells her audience, is "to create a character invested with emotions that are still being processed."[443] For Danticat, the process of working out these emotions proved particularly difficult each time the media solicited her viewpoint on the catastrophe. Laying bare her attempts to write about the earthquake in the days and weeks that followed, Danticat recalls how "it was too soon to even try to write, I told myself. You were not there. You did not live it. You have no right even to speak – for you, for them, for anyone. So I did what I always do when my own words fail me. I read."[444] Danticat's comment raises three principal questions that I wish to consider as my attention on "national" disasters shifts from Guadeloupe to Haiti in the wake of the 2010 earthquake. First, Danticat calls into question her own status and legitimacy as a "witness" in the US during the disaster. Second, as a renowned Haitian-American writer, the media casts her as a spokesperson for Haitian suffering; her "reluctance to speak for the collective" in newspaper op-eds and media interviews highlights the stakes of who can speak for whom in the context of post-catastrophe testimony.[445] Third, her decision, rather than claiming to speak for Haitians as a whole, to read "hundreds of first-person narratives, testimonials, [and] blogs" speaks as well to the question of reception and the circulation of Haitian trauma narratives in a transnational discursive arena.[446]

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[443] Edwidge Danticat, "Provost Lecture Series: Edwidge Danticat, "Writing Tragedy, Writing Hope," *Duke On Demand.* February 2011, accessed April 15, 2011, http://ondemand.duke.edu/video/27090/provosts-lecture-series-edwidg (site discontinued).
[444] Edwidge Danticat, *Create Dangerously: The Immigrant Artist at Work* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 159.
[445] Ibid., 157.
[446] Ibid., 159.

As the glare of the international spotlight settled on Haiti, relief workers and journalists rushed into the country while images and accounts of the destruction garnered worldwide attention. Attesting to Didier Fassin's remark that "Testimony, which is embedded in a global media space, is…as essential an element of humanitarian activity as is providing assistance," I interrogate in this part of the chapter how post-quake testimonies fill in the contours of a humanitarian contact zone in which trauma becomes a language for (re)presenting Haiti and its history.[447] Testimony, both as a literary genre and a category of study, hinges on the emergence of the figure of the Holocaust survivor-witness à la Primo Levi, Charlotte Delbo, and Paul Celan, among others, as well as on the theoretical model of a speech act that instantiates the speaker as a witness to an event without witnesses. As Dori Laub explains, "Testimony is…the process by which the narrator (the survivor) reclaims his position as a witness: reconstitutes the internal 'thou,' and thus the possibility of a witness or a listener inside himself."[448] This inherent relation to the self as well as to the other also informs subsequent contributions to trauma theory. Cathy Caruth, for example, posits trauma as a cross-cultural relation when she speculates that, "In a catastrophic age, trauma itself may provide the very link between cultures."[449] Indeed, histories of recent genocides in the Balkans, Rwanda, and Darfur in addition to growing interest in colonial genocides in the Americas have extended the borders of trauma beyond the Western psyche.[450] But as Stef Craps argues in *Postcolonial Witnessing* (2013), exporting trauma theory beyond the Euro-American context of its genealogy is a problematic enterprise that "risks

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[447] Didier Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason: A Moral History of the Present*, trans. Rachel Gomme (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 206.
[448] Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 85.
[449] Cathy Caruth, "Introduction," in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory Unclaimed Experience*, ed. Cathy Caruth (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 11.
[450] See A. Dirk Moses, ed., *Empire, Genocide, Colony: Conquest, Occupation, and Subaltern Resistance in World History* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009).

assisting in the perpetuation of the very beliefs, practices, and structures that maintain existing injustices and inequalities" between "metropolitan and non-Western or minority traumas."[451]

This uncertain hierarchy is further complicated by the problematic subject position of the humanitarian witness in relation to trauma. In fact, the humanitarian "witness," by subsuming the voice of the victim into his or her own, displaces the traditional survivor-witness model that Laub puts forward. As Fassin argues with Richard Rechtman in an earlier book, the process of rendering external the internal landscape of the victim of trauma is wrought by the politics of representing the other.[452] Specifically, these scholars point to the reification of suffering and victimhood as humanitarian testimony tends to efface or displace the recognition of the "victim's" own subjectivity and agency into a fixed form of victimhood.[453] Representations of trauma and catastrophe enact an unbalanced relation between spectator and victim. Whether theorized as "distant suffering" or explored through the question of what makes certain lives "more grievable than others," the politics of such representations lie nonetheless on the activation of cultural divisions often opposing the "First-World" spectator to the "Third-World" other.[454] The utility of Fassin and Rechtman's approach to humanitarian testimony and trauma is manifest in its introduction of politics into the category of the "witness" and their attempt to account for the positionality of the respective actors within the humanitarian encounter.

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[451] Stef Craps, *Postcolonial Witnessing: Trauma out of Bounds* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 2. In spite of trauma's post/colonial legacy, "discussing large-scale phenomena of trouble and suffering *without* having recourse to discourses of psychic wounding is difficult, even though such discourses may be implicated in infringements of sovereignty." See Warwick Anderson, Deborah Jenson and Richard C. Keller, eds., *Unconscious Domains: Psychoanalysis, Colonial Trauma, and Global Sovereignties*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 10.
[452] Didier Fassin and Richard Rechtman, *The Empire of Trauma: An Inquiry into the Condition of Victimhood*, trans. Rachel Gomme (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009 [2007]), 198.
[453] On this subject, Fassin and Rechtman write that humanitarian testimony offers "histories with history," ibid., 214. See also Craps, *Postcolonial Witnessing*, 28 for a discussion of this broader tendency in trauma theory.
[454] See Luc Boltanski, *Distant Suffering: Morality, Media, and Politics*, trans. Graham D. Burchell (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Judith Butler, *Precarious Life*: *The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (New York: Verso, 2006 [2004]), 30; Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Picador, 2003).

In the five years since the earthquake, a growing number of novels from inside and outside Haiti have taken stock of the catastrophe and its lingering effects.[455] My objective here, however, is to return to a number of testimonial narratives published between 2010 and 2011 in the aftermath of the disaster to interrogate early attempts to understand the catastrophe when the emotions that Danticat refers to were still raw. By now it has become somewhat of a truism to decry the lingering tendencies to stereotype Haiti as a hedonistic Caribbean "heart of darkness" in post-quake representations, as attested by the heavily condemned remarks by Pat Robertson about "Haiti's pact with the devil" or by David Brooks about its "progress-resistant" culture.[456] Faced with widespread destruction and witnesses to intense moments of pain and suffering, the authors of these narratives – foreign humanitarian workers, members of the Haitian diaspora, and writers based in Haiti – all struggle to come to terms with the meaning of what they see. By superimposing three differently situated narratives of trauma that negotiate the three related questions of witnessing, testimony, and reception raised by Danticat, I demonstrate how the language of trauma and suffering work to situate Haiti in a transnational web of relations. At their core, the three narratives that I read here conceal a critical discourse on Haitian history and culture that overturns them, to recall Daniel Maximin's use of catastrophe in the first half of this chapter. They also articulate three separate responses to the ethics of representing and speaking about the pain of others that I work through in close readings of scenes of filming and

[455] Among Haitian writers these include Évelyne Trouillot's *Absences sans frontières* (Montpellier: Chèvre-feuille étoilée, 2013), Kettly Mars's *Aux frontières de la soif* (Paris: Mercure de France, 2013), Yanick Lahens, *Guillaume et Nathalie* (Paris: Sabine Wespieser, 2013), Gary Victor's *Soro* (Montreal: Mémoire d'encrier, 2011), Makenzy Orcel's *Les Immortelles* (Montreal: Mémoire d'encrier, 2010) and *Les Latrines* (Montreal: Mémoire d'encrier, 2011), and Marvin Victor *Corps mêlés* (Paris: Gallimard, 2011).

[456] Dan Flectcher, "Why is Pat Robertson Blaming Haiti?" *Time*, January 14, 2010, http://www.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,1953379_1953494_1953674,00.html); David Brooks, "The Underlying Tragedy," *New York Times*, January 14, 2010, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/15/opinion 15brooks.html. See also Gina Athena Ulysse, "Why Haiti Needs New Narratives Now More Than Ever," in Mark Schuller and Pablo Morales, 240-244; "The Haiti Earthquake of 2010: The Politics of a Natural Disaster," ed. Garvey Lundy, special issue, *Journal of Black Studies* 42, no. 2 (March 2011); Toni Pressley-Sanon, "Lucid Cameras: Imaging Haiti After the Earthquake of 2010." *Journal of Haitian Studies* 17, no. 2 (Autumn 2011), 6-32.

photographing suffering in each narrative. In the accounts written by US humanitarians and Haitian writers including Gerard Straub's *Hidden in the Rubble*, Dany Laferrière's *Tout bouge autour de moi*, and Yanick Lahens's *Failles* witnessing catastrophe in Haiti is a highly charged site. Together their narratives try to see Haiti through a different frame.

Humanitarian Missionaries: The Perils of Bearing Witness

Unlike the other professionals – doctors, nurses, and engineers – with the needed life-saving and technical skills who rushed to Haiti after the earthquake, Gerard T. Straub traveled to the disaster zone as a purveyor of images of poverty and suffering for his Franciscan Catholic charity. Straub, however, anticipating the stances taken by Dany Laferrière and Yanick Lahens that I analyze later, asserts that his more intimate, compassionate way of looking would counter sensationalist disaster coverage in the news media. The resulting film, *Mud Pies and Kites* (2012), available for purchase on Straub's website and distributed through church and grassroots networks uses arresting pre- and post-quake footage to raise humanitarian interest in the form of donations and volunteers for missions in Haiti.[457] Yet, it is ultimately his print narrative account of filming in post-quake Haiti that most sharply questions his foundation's, Pax et Bonum Communications, motto of "serving the poor through the power of film." Contrary to other missionary testimonies whose Christian worldview it nonetheless shares, Straub's text unwittingly dissolves the missionary narrative of spiritual conquest that his film enacts while calling into question its very mode of production. Hidden in the rubble for Straub, so to speak, is a destabilizing confrontation with his own position in the disaster-humanitarian complex.

[457] *Mud Pies and Kites: Death and Resurrection in Haiti*, dir. Gerard T. Straub (Burbank, CA: Pax et Bonum Communications, 2012), DVD.

Straub, contrary to most popular, mainstream media accounts, understands contemporary Haiti as a long history of domination and suffering.[458] In spite of his awareness of the underlying forces of colonization, isolation, debt, foreign occupation, and dictatorship, Straub's overview creates a pernicious division of Haitian history in terms of paradise and hell despite his compassion for the Haitian people. In this retelling, the Haitian Revolution with its racially and politically charged violence, what Straub hyperbolically calls "the darkest history of any nation on earth," represents the proverbial Fall: "Empires came and went, flourished by exploiting that small island parcel [Haiti], once paradise, today hell" (*HR*, 42). On the one hand, hell represents an image that translates the extreme conditions encountered by Straub on the ground. The contrast, on the other hand, with a prelapsarian paradise gives voice to the religious and moral undertones that seep into his account and structure his narrative as a search for redemption.[459] Straub's, however, is not a quest to redeem the "natives." On the contrary, it quickly becomes evident that he bears witness to their trauma in order to redeem himself. Near the beginning of *Hidden in the Rubble*, Straub, who has made documentaries about misery and suffering in Africa, the Caribbean, and the United States, explains that in the face of poverty "I find myself looking into the very mystery of life, a mystery so profound that it can't be spoken" (*HR*, 1). It is, then, in coming into contact with poverty that Straub seeks a more authentic spiritual experience: "As I walked with the poor, I encountered my own true poverty and the radical truth of the gospel: only empty hands can hold God. My encounter with the bloated belly of poverty revealed the radical nature of Christianity" (*HR*, 164).

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[458] Gina Athena Ulysse, "Why Haiti Needs New Narratives," 240.

[459] It should be noted that Straub does not participate in the Evangelical Spiritual Mapping movement, which Elizabeth McAlister demonstrates is behind Pat Robertson's idea of Haiti's blood pact with Satan. This movement has worked, according to McAlister, for decades inside and outside Haiti to recast the 1791 Vodou ceremony that launched the slave insurrection that would become the Haitian Revolution as a pact with the devil. See Elizabeth McAlister, "From Slave Revolt to Blood Pact with Satan: The Evangelical Rewriting of Haitian History," in *The Idea of Haiti: Rethinking Crisis and Development*, ed. Millery Polyné (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 203-242.

In this way, Straub's text is very similar to, yet radically different from, other humanitarians who weave Haiti's plight into a narrative of spiritual encounter and conversion. For instance, in his *Unshaken: Rising from the Ruins of Haiti's Hotel Montana* (2011), Dan Woolley, a filmmaker for a U.S. evangelical NGO, recounts being trapped in the elevator shaft of the Hotel Montana and his conversion of a Haitian hotel employee in the rubble. Similarly, Russell P. Maroni, a radiologist from Ohio, who rebuilt a damaged orphanage near Port-au-Prince several weeks after the earthquake tells of his experiences in a travel narrative *After the Haiti Earthquake: A Healthcare Missionary's Personal Journal* (2011) framed by religious opposition, struggle, and perseverance. The proselytizing evangelicalism that subtends both Woolley and Maroni's narratives, which in effect reproduce the script of spiritual conquest harking back to colonial missionary accounts, is wholly absent from Straub's own. But this twist of the missionary script does not exempt him from the perils of humanitarian testimony.

Underneath the humanitarian gesture – whether one makes a charitable donation after a natural disaster, participates in disaster relief efforts, or relays eyewitness accounts – lies a recognition of global inequalities and divisions, and the fleeting desire to transcend them. Bearing in on this "fantasy of a global moral community," Didier Fassin writes that, "This secular imaginary of communion and redemption implies a sudden awareness of the fundamentally unequal human condition and an ethical necessity to not remain passive about it in the name of solidarity."[460] With respect to Straub, in inscribing the humanitarian tropes of communion and redemption into the context of his own spiritual quest for fulfillment, the filmmaker's text "fugaciously and illusorily bridges the contradictions" of a world where "inequalities have reached an unprecedented level."[461] In contradistinction to the examples of

[460] Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason*, xii.
[461] Ibid.

Woolley and Maroni, Straub arrives on site not in possession of a truth to impart on Haitians but instead seeks a more authentic relation with God that he and, by extension, his North American audience lack. Implicit in Straub's discourse and search for spiritual redemption and fulfillment among the Haitian poor is a hierarchy of cross-cultural interaction that resembles a neo-colonial model of resource extraction. In a spiritually bankrupt West, Straub looks to materially poor but spiritually rich Haiti, a view that in effect exoticizes Haiti as the locus of spiritual authenticity.

Apparently unaware of the cultural hierarchy on which his position as a humanitarian witness hinges, Straub considers his identity as a filmmaker essential to a more ethical representation of Haiti. "I felt this deep need to be one with the suffering people of Haiti…I felt [I] would film people differently than the network cameras would, and that I could express myself on camera more powerfully because I was right in the middle of the horror," he explains to readers (*HR*, 50). On one level, Straub evokes here an international public arena composed of competing representations and witnesses, a discursive field in which he must situate himself to "authenticate" his testimony and "remain credible."[462] In explicit opposition to what Straub describes as the objectivizing, dehumanizing gaze of media outlets like CNN that flocked to the country after the catastrophe, the filmmaker proposes a more compassionate view from his position on the ground-level of the destruction. Precisely by immersing himself into the "middle of the horror," Straub seeks to experience the "shaking" and "trembling" of the quake, to hark back to horror's Latin etymology, as a strategy for authenticating his narrative. In other words, he hopes to "feel" and "connect" to the Haitian suffering that the networks' pornography of destruction overlooks. Yet on another level, that of humanitarian testimony, Straub's statement obfuscates the power relations that subtend his privileged position as beneficiary of a wealthy network of donors that finances his intervention into the post-disaster context to establish

[462] Fassin and Rechtman, *The Empire of Trauma*, 196.

himself, a U.S. NGO documentarian without any long-term connection to Haiti, as a spokesperson for the Haitian experience of disaster.

One way to think about Straub's intervention is in terms of what anthropologist Erica James calls "compassion economies" or "the political economy of trauma."[463] In James's ethnographic study of the "uses" of trauma by NGOs and the Haitian patients they serve, trauma emerges as both a tool for humanitarian patients to gain access to costly treatments as much as a way for NGOs to move their donors to open wider their pocketbooks through a strong injection of pathos from the photos and stories included in annual reports and communications. Straub's testimony, therefore, constitutes an integral part of the humanitarian-disaster complex as trauma, on one side, and compassion, on the other, help sustain a steady stream of donations for NGOs. Straub's knowledge of Haiti's long entanglement in an international web of political, economic, and military domination makes his own lack of awareness of his position in the political economy of disaster all the more striking.

Yet I argue that Straub's narrative is worth reading not for the blind spots that I have just identified but for the way it inadvertently calls into question the narrator's own privileged subject position as a witness and spokesperson for supposedly voiceless Haitians. In other words, Straub's text contains a telling passage in which this absent ethnographic self-reflexivity unexpectedly overtakes the narrative during one particularly taxing encounter on the author. At one point, Straub briefly contemplates his place in Haiti when a medical team he has been shadowing questions the usefulness of his cameras to their attempts to diagnose and treat the injured. Later, though, the ethics of filming and viewing disaster fully emerge when Straub observes a team of doctors change a Haitian woman's bandages. He writes:

[463] Erica Caple James, *Democratic Insecurities: Violence, Trauma, and Intervention in Haiti*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 26. Likewise, all the narratives under consideration in this part of this chapter promise to donate most or all proceeds to NGOs and charities for Haiti disaster relief.

> I filmed it, but I am not sure I can watch it. Before they began, I went up to the woman and put my hand on her shoulder and asked her permission to film the doctors at work. She said yes…The unexpected sight of blood pouring out from the exposed end of her amputated leg stunned and disturbed me…It was painful to watch. At one point, I put the [two] cameras down and stood next to the woman and tried to comfort her as best as I could. To add to the drama of it all, there was a little girl about seven years old,…[who] was heavily bandaged…and crying. Her tearful eyes had a truly frightened look to them between the girl's loud crying and the blood from the amputated leg, I felt as if I were in the midst of a cruel nightmare. (*HR*, 76)

The scene, which does not figure in his documentary film *Mud Pies and Kites*, offers a rapid, yet profound, reflection on the politics of the humanitarian gaze.

As Bill Nichols explains in *Representing Reality* (1991), the mechanized gaze of the camera is inseparable from the politics, ethics, and ideology of the filmmaker whose vision this instrument is essential to creating.[464] Though not a documentary as such, *Hidden in the Rubble* being the written memoir of the author's experience filming *Mud Pies and Kites*, the scene conceals nevertheless Straub's axiographics to borrow the neologism that Nichols coins to describe the tripartite relation among politics, ethics, and ideology in documentary film.[465] While Straub, who seeks his subject's permission to film, attempts to reduce the distance between the woman and himself, his decision to put aside both his still and hi-def cameras suggests a fundamental reworking of the asymmetrical power relations of the humanitarian gaze. The gushing blood from the woman's leg, on the one hand, to use Straub's own terms authenticates

[464] Bill Nichols, *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 88-89.
[465] Ibid., 77-78.

his status as a witness by living a "cruel nightmare." On the other hand, the scene demonstrates the way the idiom of trauma can facilitate the recognition of the subjectivity of the other as Straub, no longer an unattached spectator, lowers the camera to comfort the woman. His action almost acknowledges Jonathan Benthall's observation that disasters are often reduced to a single "iconic" photograph and the "mythological" effects, in the Barthesian sense of the word, of such images to decontextualize, reduce, and further obfuscate the other.[466] In this way, the scene registers the momentary transformation of "the detachment of a gaze into the involvement of a look."[467] As a synecdoche of the humanitarian encounter, the scene portrays the desire, if not the possibility, to shift the paradigm away from the spectacularization and commodification of suffering, to recognize the subjectivity of the other in the filmmaker's comforting gesture, and to establish a relation beyond the hierarchy of rescuer and victim. However, the scene, not unlike the highly charged cross-cultural encounter of which it is a product and which it interrogates, dissipates into a humanitarian aporia whose effect is to re-actualize the same hierarchy that Straub wishes to transcend.

In *Distant Suffering* (1999 [1993]), French sociologist Luc Boltanski examines the power of the media to create proximity between the often disparate points on the globe that separate the "spectator" from the "victim" in contemporary representations of disaster. Noting an impasse, similar to the humanitarian aporia that Fassin and Rechtman have questioned, between viewers of suffering and the objects of their gaze, Boltanski writes, "There must be sufficient contact between these two classes for those who are fortunate to be able to observe, either directly or

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[466] Jonathan Benthall, *Disasters, Relief and the Media* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1993), 179; Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (Paris: Seuil, 1957) especially Part II, "Le mythe, aujourd'hui," 181-233. A U.S. volunteer nurse similarly writes in her own memoir after the earthquake, "I was glad I did not have a camera…I need no photograph to remember." Susan M. Walsh, *Walking in Broken Shoes: A Nurse's Story about Haiti and the Earthquake*, (Larkspur, CO: Grace Acres Press, 2011), 85.
[467] Ibid., 85.

indirectly, the misery of the unfortunate, while at the same time the classes must be sufficiently distant or separate for their experiences and actions to remain clearly distinct."[468] However, the example here involving Straub and this anonymous Haitian woman is one of direct, unmediated proximity that forces the humanitarian to question the ethical implications of his position. Going further, it also challenges his role as the producer and consumer of an archive of suffering. In the momentary malaise this proximity to the suffering of the other causes him, Straub seeks a human connection away from the mediating frame of the camera. Although the acknowledgement of her trauma fosters in him recognition of this woman as subject, she nevertheless remains anonymous and mute in this text. As Boltanski explains, "Through the eyes of the painter or exhibitor the spectator contemplates the unfortunate who is put on view, but this does not mean that the unfortunate, confined within his destiny and thereby having the status of an object, has the ability to do likewise."[469] Ensnared in her anonymity and silence, the woman remains a symbol of the displacement of the voice of the other within the humanitarian's own as the space for a critique of the humanitarian encounter in this text vanishes almost as quickly as it had appeared.

Reframing Trauma: Re-imagining Haiti through Catastrophe

Despite the silence of the woman in Straub's account, Haitians do look back at the Westerners who come to interview, film, photograph, and study them. Michael Dash, for instance, has analyzed Haitian intellectuals' long-term engagement with representations of their country and culture in the United States.[470] After the earthquake, reporter Amy Wilentz reports that some Haitians have become "more used to photographers than they used to be" and "ask

[468] Boltanski, *Distant Suffering*, 5.
[469] Ibid., 131-32.
[470] J. Michael Dash, *Haiti and the United States: National Stereotypes and the Literary Imagination*. 2nd ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997).

[them] for money, to make the business arrangement fairer."[471] Sometimes, they refuse all together to pose for voyeuristic photos, which celebrity culinary travel writer and television host Anthony Bourdain discovered first hand while shooting an episode in Port-au-Prince in 2010 for his now defunct Travel Channel show *No Reservations*. The episode begins with a shot of a young man in the street pointing back at the camera with a hand made into a gun followed by a succession of shots of men and women looking aggressively toward, shaking their heads at, or turning their backs to the camera's intrusive presence. Bourdain, reflecting on the images he has collected in Haiti, remarks that people "do not want to be on camera." His guide answers, "People are always getting their picture taken, they're always getting filmed. Now people are getting smarter. Now they're thinking: these guys are always here to take pictures but there aren't any changes being made here." As the exchange concludes, Bourdain reveals that, by his very presence in post-quake Haiti, he fears being "part of the problem," part of the "circus show."[472] While Bourdain's and Wilentz's comments raise questions similar to Straub's about the ethics of representing the pain of others, they more importantly underscore a wariness about, if not resistance to, the way the international media has appropriated Haitian suffering on the part of Haitians themselves.[473]

A number of studies in recent decades have deconstructed the hierarchies of looking inherent to media representations. These interventions offer necessary and thorough ideological and political critiques of representations of war, catastrophe, and suffering. Yet these incisive critiques by Luc Boltanski, Judith Butler, and Susan Sontag, for example, of Western ways of

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[471] Wilentz, *Farewell, Fred Voodoo*, 209.
[472] *Anthony Bourdain's No Reservations*. Episode 108, first broadcast 28 February 2011 by the Travel Channel.
[473] One of the most egregious cases is in an article by journalist Mac McClelland who after witnessing first-hand a Haitian gang-rape victim's PTSD episode when she sees one of her rapists – a scene McClelland tweeted live – becomes traumatized herself. After returning to the US, she is unable to work through her PTSD until she asks a friend to simulate raping her. See Mac McClelland, "I'm Gonna Need You to Fight Me on This: How Violent Sex Helped Ease My PTSD," *Good*, June 27, 2011, accessed July 3, 2014, http://www.good.is/posts/how-violent-sex-helped-ease-my-ptsd.

looking at crisis and disaster across the global South implicitly reinforce the North – South hierarchy they critique by ignoring the gaze of the other. Following this paradigm, Western spectators consume images from the disaster zone through a grammar of representation that maintains cultural distance and reinforces otherness.[474] But the study of the transnational circulation of such images must also account for multidirectionality by recognizing that the object of the gaze is not without his or her own way of looking or writing back. Conceptualizing disaster representations through the lens of humanitarian testimony offers therefore the methodological advantage of seizing the multidirectionality of the testimonial narratives that emerged in the wake of the 2010 earthquake in Haiti. Although they are not humanitarian aid workers, writers Yanick Lahens and Dany Laferrière, a newly elected "immortal" of the *Académie française*, have both published narratives that openly engage with the representations of trauma in post-quake Haiti. As such, their testimonies circulate as what Gillian Whitlock calls "soft weapons" that "can personalize and humanize categories of people whose experiences are frequently unseen and unheard."[475]

In their texts, both writers crisscross the bourgeois neighborhoods of Pétion-Ville on the edge of Port-au-Prince with forays into the city's most devastated zones and tent cities. Their texts, published in France and Canada and, in Laferrière's case, translated into English target the same Western audiences as the popular media accounts that their own counter-representations critique.[476] The choice of French, a language in which only between ten and twenty percent of the population is literate, further signals their intention to target an international audience, an arena to which Haitian Creole has limited access beyond the diaspora. Despite Lahens and

[474] See Boltanski, *Distant Suffering*, Butler, *Precarious Life*, Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*.
[475] Gillian Whitlock, *Soft Weapons: Autobiography in Transit* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 3.
[476] Dany Laferrière, *The World Is Moving Around Me: A Memoire of the Haiti Earthquake*, trans. David Homel (Vancouver: Aresenal Pulp Press, 2013).

Laferrière's privileged intellectual statuses in Haiti proper, in the diaspora, and francophone literary circles, their testimonies are no less fraught with the uneven relations between witness and victim and the open-ended ethical question about what it means to be "à la hauteur de ce malheur" without exploiting it (*F*, 18). Lurking around their interventions is the risk of effacing the voices of their compatriots who lack their status as privileged witnesses with international platforms.

Laferrière's intervention as a public voice for Haiti is, thus, bound in a continual reflection on images as well as their transnational circulation or confrontation in a "guerre sémantique" (*TB* 2010, 91). On the one hand, references to disaster films (*TB* 2010, 20), B-movie zombie films (*TB* 2010, 23), or the carnival-like chaos of Fellini (*TB* 2010, 52) set film as a medium through which Laferrière's text processes the enormity and surreal quality of the disaster. The "danger," on the other hand, of images and their circulation manifests itself when, during the quake, TV sets become literal and fatal projectiles: "Dans les chambres d'hôtel souvent exiguës, l'ennemi c'est le téléviseur. On se met toujours en face de lui. Il fonce droit sur nous. Beaucoup de gens l'ont reçu sur la tête" (*TB* 2010, 22). Connecting viewers from their living rooms to far-off disaster zones, television, and now the Internet, is essential to creating the illusion of proximity.[477] Laferrière's remark plays on this reality but transforms the television from a medium of entertainment and information into an instrument of death to dramatize the dangerous, crushing potential of certain types of images. For her part, Lahens speaks of the shock of the tremor as "une impression à la fois de film au ralenti et d'une accélération des images" (*F*, 18). It is, precisely, the warped images of Haiti crushed by disaster and poverty traveling across TVs around the world like projectiles that in Laferrière and Lahens's view are an injustice to the Haitian people that both writers must combat.

[477] Boltanski, *Distant Suffering*, 7.

After the earthquake, representatives of the Canadian embassy offer to repatriate Laferrière, a naturalized Canadian citizen, back to Montreal. Recalling his decision to stay or leave, Laferrière underlines the testimonial imperative that his friend and editor Rodney Saint-Éloi articulates in "The Blue Hill." Deliberating the decision with Saint-Éloi, also present with him during the earthquake, Laferrière underscores his position as a witness and engaged writer:[478]

> Je n'ai pas envie de me retrouver coincé ici, alors qu'à Montréal je peux agir. Il faut rectifier tout de suite les choses, dans quelques jours ce sera impossible. Le mot 'malédiction' va se métastaser comme un cancer et pourrir la collecte pour Haïti. Et tant qu'on y est on parlera de vaudou, de sauvagerie, de cannibalisme, de peuple buveurs de sang. J'ai assez d'énergie pour contrer ça et ce foutu Médicis doit bien servir à quelque chose. (*TB* 2010, 87)[479]

Laferrière's trajectory here reverses that of Straub and other humanitarian witnesses; finding himself in the middle of the catastrophe, a position reflected in the titled *Tout bouge autour de moi* which places his own subjective experience at the center of the narrative, Laferrière chooses to leave Haiti in order to serve his native country. Thus, in a significant departure from the humanitarian script of arrival and service, Laferrière, drawing on his literary and media fame in Canada and France attempts to "succor" Haiti from the outside. Alluding perhaps to his status as one of the most visible writers of the diaspora alongside Edwidge Danticat, he writes that "Il ne suffit plus d'être en Haïti pour lui être utile" (*TB* 2010, 131). Reversing Straub's need to provide

[478] As Holly L. Collins observes, Laferrière is "no stranger to committed writing," recalling the author's opposition in Papa Doc as a journalist in Haiti, which forced him into exile in 1976 after the assassination of his close friend and journalist Gasner Raymond, "The Semantic War: The Pen as Sword in Rewriting Western Representations of Haiti in the Media" *International Journal of Francophone Studies* 16:1-2, 191-207, 199.

[479] In the French edition, Laferrière rewrites this passage appears in modified form: "Il suffit qu'une personne lance le mot 'malédiction' sur les ondes pour qu'il se métastase comme un cancer. Avant qu'on se mette àparler de vaudou, de sauvagerie, de cannibalisme, de peuple buveurs de sang, je me sens encore assez d'énergie pour contrer ça" (TB 2011 79).

more “authentic” images of Haiti from the “middle of the horror,” Laferrière proposes to accomplish a similar task abroad through the more than one hundred brief scenes and portraits that make up his “chronicle,” to borrow the book’s subtitle which stresses the author’s proximity to history, even if he does return to Haiti on several occasions during the following year.[480]

From his home in Montreal, Laferrière comments on the international media coverage and the repetition of images that wash over viewers’ eyes. In particular, he writes how in two hours he saw more than a dozen times the same little girl standing in the crowd, the same young boy emerging from the rubble with a giant smile, and the same US reporter holding a baby in his arms. In response to this repetition, Laferrière wonders if “tout le monde puise dans la même banque d’images” (*TB* 2011, 87), echoing Lahens’s observation that in images, “Les malheurs du monde se ressemblent” (*F*, 42). Their remarks also beg the question of the choice of images with regard to the larger cultural and semiotic stakes. He writes, for example, that “Ce sont des images si puissantes qu’elles cachent le reste. Comment font-ils [the journalists] ce choix? Ces images sont-elles naturellement accrocheuses ou est-ce la répétition qui nous les rend si familières? Je sens qu’on est en train de nous confectionner une mémoire” (*TB* 2011, 87). Reflecting on the visual impact of these repeating images, Laferrière highlights two consequences of this process. First, he underscores photography as a medium of abstraction that imposes a frame on the real while, second, he identifies the production of meaning as these images and other like them become symbols of the 2010 earthquake.

[480] This particular subtitle refers only to the Canadian edition. The subsequent French edition foregoes any subtitle whereas the U.S. edition calls the narrative a “memoir,” thereby “packaging” the narrative as a personal narrative in contrast to the original text’s emphasis on collective identity and history. For more on the politics of translating francophone writing, see Richard Watts, *Packaging Post/Coloniality: The Manufacture of Literary Identity in the Francophone World* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005) and Nadège Veldwachter, *Littérature francophone et mondialisation* (Paris: Karthala, 2012).

A deeper questioning of the ethics of representing disaster is couched within Laferrière's reflection on disaster photography. As he observes, recalling Straub's disgust with the images from CNN, "Le pire n'est pas l'enfilade de malheurs, mais l'absence de nuances dans l'œil froid de la caméra" (*TB* 2011, 82). A fortuitous meeting with a photography student from Miami furthers Laferrière's interrogation of this question by juxtaposing photography with the author's own *écrivain primitif* style.[481] In downtown Port-au-Prince near the ruins of the Cathedral, Laferrière encounters a man frenetically photographing everything and everyone who crosses the field of his lens. "Pourquoi ne prend-on pas le temps de regarder au moins celui qu'on photographie? D'où vient ce goût de mitrailler les gens?" he asks rhetorically (*TB* 2011, 120). As Laferrière and the amateur photographer – the author reveals little else about this person – discuss their respective methods, the author places the cold mechanical rapidity of the lens in opposition to his nuanced, "artisanal" pen and paper approach: "Nous découvrons une femme debout, les bras largement ouverts, devant la grande croix noire (tout ce qui reste de la cathédrale). Je m'installe sur un muret pour écrire. Comment décrire une pareille scène? Il n'a fait qu'une photo" (*TB* 2011, 121). With her extended arms, the woman seemingly doubles the large black cross that remains as a Christ-like figure of suffering, the unexpected punctum that makes the woman an allegory of representation whose stakes play out between writing and photography.[482] Against the undiscerning camera, Laferrière asserts his open-ended scribal gaze ("Comme décrire une pareille scène?") in contrast to the man's point-and-shoot approach that fixes and aggresses – Laferrière employs the verb "mitrailler" – the subject of the photos.

In her silence the woman offers a productive comparison with the hospital patient

[481] This style, which Laferrière develops in *Pays sans chapeau* (1996) follows "a series of object-description, object-description, object-description, etcetera" that "recalls the primitive artist who paints his surroundings as he sees them, an art of simplicity in representation with, at times, a skewed sense of perspective," Holly L. Collins, "The Semantic War," 194n1.
[482] Roland Barthes, *La Chambre claire* (Paris: Cahiers du cinéma, Gallimard, Le Seuil, 1980), 49.

described above by Straub regarding questions about the status of post-quake victims. Both authors in these scenes seek to different extents to preserve what Martinican theorist Édouard Glissant calls opacity by suspending or calling into question, on the one hand, the act of photographing suffering while interrogating the interpretive act of framing both literally and figuratively the real in order to create meaning, on the other hand.[483] Laferrière's question "Comme décrire une pareille scène" registers the author's awareness of his own position in the field of humanitarian testimony by acknowledging the pitfalls of transforming the real into representation, conveyed by his dismissive remark about the photographer ("il n'a fait qu'une photo"). In other words, Laferrière's open-ended question refuses to impose a definitive frame on how the woman is seen. His gesture becomes, then, a way of preserving the woman's subjectivity by at least not imposing his own on her; it also relates, more broadly speaking, to the question of Haitian agency by refusing to transform the woman into a helpless victim.

The tacit question in Laferrière's comparison, which privileges his own logo-centric approach over a visual medium like photography, remains that of the almost allegorical woman, the "victim" that both writer and photographer attempt to represent. Laferrière extends his interrogation to the entire category of victim in an emerging discourse about post-quake trauma:

> Le mot 'traumatisme' revient ces jours-ci dans la bouche des spécialistes internationaux en pensant à ceux qui ont vécu le tremblement de terre…Les gens accepteront-ils de recevoir ces soins? Sachant que l'humour occupe une place importante dans la culture haïtienne et qu'il a pour fonction première de dédramatiser une situation trop intense, on se demande si on ne devrait pas l'utiliser comme mode de guérison. (*TB* 2010, 137-38)

[483] Édouard Glissant, *Poétique de la Relation* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990), 129.

While one can legitimately question the efficacy of humor as the unique panacea to mass trauma, which the author appears to have done himself by suppressing this passage in the French edition, Laferrière's question nonetheless has the merit of highlighting local, cultural-specific strategies of coping alongside the concept of PTSD. I underline this particular passage not for the oppositional stance to trauma that Laferrière assumes there but because of his insistence on the dignity and agency of Haitians as active participants in both the healing and reconstruction of their country. By foregrounding a local prophylaxis, in this case humor, Laferrière argues that Haitians are themselves as capable as humanitarian science to address mental health issues in the local idioms of vernacular culture without pathologizing them.

Lahens likewise eschews the reification of victimhood that saturated the international coverage of the disaster in a country often pejoratively called, even before the earthquake, the republic of NGOs. The world responded to the earthquake with an outpouring of generosity from private citizens, governments, and even Somali pirates.[484] Lahens and others have criticized the focus on foreign aid not to diminish its importance during the emergency phase but to recall that Haitians, in great solidarity across class lines, began helping themselves before outsiders could arrive. As the novelist Évelyne Trouillot writes, "In Haiti, the foreign press was from the start focused on the arrival of international aid and paid little or no attention to the actions of Haitians themselves."[485] Against characterizations of Haiti as a place in perpetual need of rescue by outside saviors, in both senses of the term, she reminds readers that "Les Haïtiens ont été les premiers sauveteurs d'eux-mêmes, on ne l'a peut-être pas assez dit. Que de choses non dites ou

[484] Private U.S. citizens donated an estimated $275 million in the week after the earthquake in Haiti and $87 million in the week following the earthquake that trigged the Fukushima nuclear crisis. See Mark Schuller and Pablo Morales, "Introduction" in Schuller and Morales, *Tectonic Shifts: Haiti Since the Earthquake*, 2. Through a spokesperson, the Somali pirates "announced plans to donate some of their loot to Haitian relief. 'The humanitarian aid to Haiti cannot be controlled by the United States and European countries; they have no moral authority to do so. They are the ones pirating mankind for many years,'" quoted in Beverly Bell, *Fault Lines: Views across Haiti's Divide* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), 103.
[485] Evelyne Trouillot, "Abse Sou Klou: Reconstructing Exclusion," in Schuller and Morales, *Tectonic Shifts*, 103.

pas assez! Cette entraide toutes catégories sociales et toutes couleurs confondues" (*F*, 46). Echoing this sentiment, Edwidge Danticat recalls her surprise at learning "that fewer than two hundred people had been rescued by professional rescuers. The rest…had been saved by their Haitian friends and neighbors" since foreign rescue teams focused their efforts on luxury hotels and NGO headquarters.[486] Lahens very explicitly challenges the label of victim and the cultural and political hierarchies the term perpetuates in the humanitarian encounter by rewriting Haitians as the actors of their own recovery rather than passive recipients of international aid.

The concept of trauma, though, is central to the way both Lahens and Laferrière conceptualize the earthquake as an unexpected return of the repressed that thrusts Haiti into the center of global consciousness. This move draws on a view of disaster as a revelation of the social, economic, and political fault lines that traverse contemporary Haiti and which, as Lahens puts it, "constituent des failles mortifères [qui] sont des lignes structurelles tout aussi meurtières que les séismes" (*F*, 32). Following this framework, according to Dany Laferrière, the "people" long ignored by a Western gaze too intently focused on corrupt institutions appeared after the earthquake front and center on the world stage: "Ce désastre aura fait apparaître, sous nos yeux éblouis, un peuple que des institutions gangrenées empêchent de s'épanouir. Il aura fallu que ces institutions disparaissent un moment du paysage pour voir surgir, sous une pluie de poussière, un peuple digne" (*TB* 2010, 40). Under no one's control, the earthquake revealed to the world a "forest of remarkable people" instead of tired stories of cannibalism, Vodou, or political

[486] Edwidge Danticat, "*Lòt bò dlo,* The Other Side of the Water," in Paul Farmer, *Haiti after the Earthquake* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2011), 254-55. Beverly Bell describes this in detail, writing that "several days passed before the UN, foreign governments, and international agencies began sending in search-and-rescue teams. When they did arrive, many were posted to collapsed UN headquarters, upscale hotels, and supermarkets where foreigners were trapped. The professional international teams were required to be accompanied by armed foreign troops, severely limiting the pace of their response…Though they worked very hard and under great risk, in the first two weeks they pulled out only about 130 survivors." See Bell, *Fault Lines*, 20.

dysfunction.[487] The key image here for Laferrière is the chiaroscuro of the forest and its shadowy overlapping zones of light and dark that stand for the play between the visible and the hidden, between the Haiti that is and the Haiti that is shown, or between "the invented place that is Haiti" and "the place created by Haitians, for Haitians."[488] In both its imagery and epistemological import, Laferrière's forest subtly recalls Maximin's critique of the Delgrès myth in relation to a "hidden" history of resistance as "l'arbre qui cache la fôret de la résistance." Read against David Brooks' distinction between the Dominican Republic and Haiti "with trees and progress on one side, and deforestation and poverty and [sic] early death on the other," Laferrière re-casts the people as an important source of potential overlooked by elites at home and abroad.[489]

The division between the "people" and the "state," or "elites," that emerges through Laferrière's rich image of the forest has profound implications for how long-standing cleavages in Haitian society are (re)mapped through accounts of the earthquake. Early on in *Tout bouge autour de moi*, Laferrière refers to one way the earthquake (momentarily) effaced material and social divisions in the urban landscape as people abandoned their cars thinking they were safer on foot: "Deux groupes de gens se sont toujours côtoyés dans cette ville: ceux qui vont à pied et ceux qui possèdent une voiture. Deux mondes parallèles qui ne se croisent que lors d'un accident …Pour une fois, dans cette ville hérissée de barrières sociales, on circule tous à la même vitesse" (*TB* 2011, 23-24). While Laferrière focuses on certain leveling effects of the earthquake and ends his narrative on an optimistic note, remarking that even after the journalists will have left "Haïti continuera d'occuper longtemps encore le cœur du monde" (*TB* 2011, 179), for Lahens the disaster is an occasion to take stock of the profound overlapping spatial, linguistic, class, and

[487] Dany Lafferrière, "Une forêt de gens remarquables," in *Haïti parmi les vivants*, ed. Sarah Berrouet (Paris: Actes Sud/Le Point, 2010), 24.
[488] Wilentz, *Farewell, Fred Voodoo*, 241.
[489] Brooks, "The Underlying Tragedy."

color divisions in Haiti the better to transcend them by using the earthquake to enact, however unsuccessfully in the final analysis, a revolution vis-à-vis dominant world-views regarding Haiti.

After an initial period of solidarity that saw Haitians band together, the country's deep divisions re-emerged as the dust settled in western and southern Haiti. In Port-au-Prince, for instance, people of all classes were affected as Laferrière observes, but wealthier residents, if their property was destroyed, largely avoided ending up on the street or in camps. They could sleep in their courtyards, at family members' homes, in rented apartments, and hotel rooms while repairs were made to their homes to avoid ending up on the street or in the hundreds of camps for the displaced.[490] Rural Haitians took in an estimated six hundred thousand family, friends, and strangers in the days and weeks after the earthquake. Despite the aid and solidarity they provided, rural Haiti saw the majority of aid and development projects that soon flooded the country focus on urban zones, reinforcing the centralization of Port-au-Prince that made the effects of the earthquake so overwhelming in the first place.[491] The underlying rifts in the social fabric between, on the one hand, classes and, on the other, urban and rural zones inform Yanick Lahens's reading of the disaster and the "images" that she offers. These divisions, which evoke long-standing urban-rural divides (the so-called "*créole-bossale*" divide discussed in chapter two, for example) and more recent transformations of them in the rural exodus, environmental

[490] Bell, *Fault Lines*, 119.
[491] Peasant activist Chenet Jean Baptiste offers an incisive critique of the disaster response with regard to rural Haiti. "The…debate about the earthquake and its consequences focused on three main areas: life in Port-au-Prince, the causes of the earthquake, and the situation of victims and the responsibilities of the state." However, he remarks that "Two fundamental questions are not discussed too often: what was the importance and the cost of solidarity that Haiti's peasantry demonstrated after January 12? What place should Haiti's rural-peasant zone have in today's reconstruction bonanza," "Haiti's Earthquake: A Further Insult to Peasants' Lives" in Schuller and Morales, *Tectonic Shifts*, 97.

degradation, and unemployment represent a few of the numerous socio-political fault lines that intersected on January 12, 2010 with the Enriquillo-Plantain Garden fault line.[492]

The plural in the "failles" of Lahens's title conceals the intersection of history and geology, to recall the two axes of Daniel Maximin's interrogation of eruptions in Guadeloupe. Similar to Maximin's focus on the visible and the hidden in the image of the volcano, Lahens divides these fault lines between surface (the historical) and subterranean layers (the geological). Addressing her compatriots, Lahens explains, "Nous ne sommes pas plus attentifs en effet à ces phénomènes en surface que nous ne l'avons été à ceux qui se déroulaient en profondeur" (*F*, 32). Using the earthquake – this crash of geological and socio-historical factors – to draw attention to the ignored fault lines, Lahens discusses the separation of haves and have-nots in Haiti with long citations from social scientists like Jean Casimir and Gérard Barthélemy known for their historical and anthropological work on the créole-bossale dichotomy. This opposition, pitting a (mostly) mulatto, urban, bilingual, and political elite against the (mostly) black, rural, creolephone masses largely outside the spheres of power, represents for Lahens perhaps the most important socio-historic fault line in Haiti.[493] In her words, it has fostered "L'exclusion depuis plus de deux siècles. Elle nous traverse tous, Bossales comme Créoles. Elle structure notre manière au monde. Elle façonne notre imaginaire, ordonne nos fantasmes de couleur de peau, de classe. Bloque notre société en deux modèles indépassables: maître et esclave" (*F*, 77-78). Completing her post-quake snapshot, Lahens argues that such important social and historical fissures structured Port-au-Prince's "urbanization without industrialization" before the

[492] See Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Haiti: State against Nation: The Origins and Legacy of Duvalierism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1990); Gérard Barthélemy, *Le pays en dehors: essai sur l'univers rural haïtien*. 2nd ed. (Port-au-Prince: Imprimerie Henri Deschamps, 1989). See also chapter 2 in this dissertation for a discussion of these divisions during the 1842 earthquake in Cap-Haïtien.
[493] See Gérard Barthélemy, *Créoles – Bossales, Conflit en Haïti* (Petit-Bourg, Guadeloupe: Ibis Rouge Editions, 2000); Jean Casimir, *La culture opprimée* (Delmas, Haïti: Imprimerie Lakay, 2001).

earthquake and the class and color composition of the post-quake tent cities that are still home to many of the displaced (*F*, 78).[494]

If Lahens is wary of over-generalizing such broad categories as "créole" and "bossale," she also works to move beyond them. Throughout her commentary on the country's social fault lines in her chapter on the new camps "Les camps, ou la fin d'un système?", a subtle shift in the narration effectively signals the author's desire for a new social contract firmly rooted in solidarity and national unity. Here, Lahens's predominate use of the first-person singular "je" momentarily expands into its plural counterpart with a rapid succession of "nous," "notre" and "nos" whose effect is the instantiation of a collective consciousness summoned by the author to move beyond the lines that divide and to "enfin vivre ensemble sur ce territoire dans une considération mutuelle" (*F*, 79). This appeal also takes concrete form in an important reflection on the production of images from inside the tent cities, the latest avatar of Haiti's socio-spatial divisions, which in the summer of 2010 were home to as many as 1.3 million people in 1,300 sites, 800 of which were in the capital and surrounding areas.[495] Although some camps have been evacuated and disassembled, such as those that cropped up around the ruined National Palace or the *champ de mars* in downtown Port-au-Prince, others might be considered "embryonic neighborhoods"as they are rapidly undergoing a "process of permanentization."[496]

For Lahens, the camps offer the most recent spatial inscription of the divisions between haves and have-nots, bringing the latter out of *bidonville* invisibility and into public spaces in the

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[494] Jean-Germain Gros, "Anatomy of a Haitian Tragedy: When the Fury of Nature Meets the Debility of the State," in Lundy, ed., "The Haiti Earthquake, 142.
[495] Schuller and Morales, "The Camps and Being Displaced," in Schuller and Morales, *Tectonic Shifts*, 111.
[496] Wilentz, *Farewell, Fred Voodoo*, 101 and 99. She explains this permanentization of camps as follows: "Reason number one: the housing, such as it was, was free. Reason number two: there was, in most cases, nowhere else better for them to go," 105. In the beginning, many camps also had better services (e.g. access to water and health care) than many had prior to the earthquake, which attracted a number of people from minimally affected neighborhoods.

city to confront the upper- and middle-classes with their presence.[497] Such is the case of the tent city that now stands on the former site of Haiti's only golf course in Pétion-Ville, the country's wealthiest city. It is through the very representation of these spaces that Lahens sees a possibility to transcend the important social divisions they symbolize according to her text. Near the end of *Failles*, Lahens recounts a film workshop she was part of in the tent city that occupies the former Pétion-Ville Golf Club, run by Sean Penn's J/P Haiti Relief Organization. Offering a group of teenagers the opportunity and means to express themselves, the workshop puts into practice Lahens's call to rise above the country's divisions. In so doing, it also implicates camp youths from a variety of backgrounds in the production of post-quake images, making them the creators of their own short documentaries. As Lahens explains the project:

> C'est un choix, dans un pays ou ceux d'en haut, ceux d'en bas et ceux du milieu s'ignorent les uns les autres. Parce que je crois que les mettre ensemble en situation d'apprentissage sur des sujets d'intérêt commun les transforme. Parce que je crois que les images et la parole projetées sur un écran sont un fantastique moyen de communication. (*F*, 136)

As for filming in the camp, Lahens recounts how "L'accueil dans le camp est positif, bienveillant, enthousiaste même, parce que ce sont des adolescents du lieu qui sont aux commandes. Et cela fait une différence" (*F*, 141). Later after the two groups of teenagers finished their respective ten-minute documentaries, their films, titled *N ap viv kan menm* (*We're Still Alive*) and *Jodi pa demen* (*Today is Not Tomorrow*) were screened in the camp. "Les

[497] Translating this phenomenon for her North American audience, Wilentz compares the installation of camps in some of Haiti's wealthiest neighborhoods to the Occupy movement in the U.S. "The camps could be called Occupy Port-au-Prince…Haiti has its own wealthy 1 percent, or maybe its own .001 percent, and its own 99.999 percent of the rest," ibid., 130-31.

spectateurs ne cachent pas leur bonheur de voir sur l'écran un monde qui est le leur, et porté par des enfants du lieu," the author writes about the reception of both films (*F*, 141).

Beyond the symbolic unity this episode constructs by involving upper-, middle-, and lower-class members of Haitian society in a shared project, I wish to draw attention to the stakes of their collective enterprise for the larger discussion of testimony. Although the two documentaries in question do not fit the mold of humanitarian testimonies, or testimony in the strictest sense of naming a trauma, they nevertheless bear witness to a post-quake reality the camp inhabitants recognize as their own as Lahens's remarks about the reception indicate. Rechanneling the challenges of post-quake life "en énergie vitale, en créativité lumineuse" (*F*, 68) in other words, turning destruction into creation with help from the bright lights of the film projector, the films that Lahens describes break down the production, consumption, and circulation of post-quake images, a circuit that largely excluded the majority of Haitians, even in the francophone narratives of Laferrière and Lahens inaccessible to most for a combination of linguistic and economic reasons. Instead, the exercise implicates Haitians at each step of the process as both the manipulators and consumers of their own representation in the language of the majority (Creole) and in a medium (film) that does not exclude the illiterate. Even if the camp films lack the same international audience as the other texts considered here, they check the implicit and explicit hierarchies of humanitarian testimony by instantiating the symbolic unification of entrenched social divisions.

Although Lahens pessimistically concludes that Haiti failed to seize this opportunity to move beyond its traditional divisions after the quake, she utilizes the metaphor of social and political fault lines to bring into view the tangled web of relations that have continually made

Haiti a liminal space, an exception to the norm to outsiders.[498] In *Failles*, the author's engagement with this discourse is evident in a passing remark that Haiti seems only to exist to measure the limits of suffering (*F*, 68), echoing Paul Farmer writing in *Pathologies of Power* that Haiti "has long constituted a living laboratory for the study of affliction."[499] Lahens's intervention insists, however, not on Haiti's supposed liminality but rather on its centrality in the long genealogy of today's global modernity, a "'laboratory' for foreign policy and the forceful implementation of neo-liberal privatizations in industry, agriculture, and social services provided not by the Haitian state but by NGOs."[500] Once again, Lahens's text resonates with the central themes of disaster and revolution at the center of Daniel Maximin's literary enterprise. Whereas Maximin ponders the impact of Guadeloupe's missed revolution through the figure of the (non)erupting volcano, Lahens likens the political significance of the 2010 earthquake to the Haitian Revolution. If Laferrière evokes the "Big Power politics" behind the cliché of the Haitian "curse," Lahens offers an additional lens to rethink the earthquake outside previous frames.[501] Not only is the earthquake the source of unquantifiable suffering as well as the result of internal histories of divisions, it is also the revelation of global forces of exploitation.

Telescoping the history of Haiti from the Revolution to the 2010 earthquake, Lahens situates the small Caribbean nation at the heart of modernity. "Haïti n'est pas une périphérie. Son histoire fait d'elle un centre" (*F*, 71), Lahens, echoing but extending Glissant's own characterization of Haiti as "la terre matrice des pays antillais," adds that "l'expérience haïtienne est une matrice. Elle préfigure dès le début du dix-neuvième siècle la nature et les traits de ce

[498] See Dash, *Haiti and the United States*.
[499] Farmer, *Pathologies of Power*, 30.
[500] Schuller and Morales, "The Republic of NGOs," in Schuller and Morales, *Tectonic Shifts*, 57.
[501] Patrick Bellegarde-Smith, "A Man-Made Disaster: The Earthquake of January 12, 2010: A Haitian Perspective, in Lundy, "The Haiti Earthquake," 269 for the phrase "Big Power politics."

qu'on appellera plus tard les relations Nord-Sud" (*F*, 34).[502] Focusing on the semantic and hermeneutic richness contained in the concept of the matrix, Lahens evokes in one sense of the word the idea of an interconnected network of relations via the invasions, interventions, occupations and migrations – in and out – that define Haitian history in the Atlantic world and beyond. As a womb, though, Haiti becomes the site of the genesis and gestation of North-South geo-political power relations and the cultural and economic hierarchies that define modernity. Haiti is, in other words, "a harbinger of the modern world since the landing there of the white man in the 1400s" that triggered "the initial and signature act of globalization: the genocide of…the indigenous Arawak or Taíno Indians."[503] Thus, far from reducing it to a laboratory of suffering, Lahens reframes Haiti as a laboratory of global modernity and its discontents that binds neoliberal globalization into the same genealogy as Enlightenment colonialism, a far cry from Straub's search for spiritual authenticity.

Lahens concludes *Failles* with one last image. "Haïti n'est ni une carte postale ni un cauchemar," she writes in the same nuanced tone that forever tempers her optimism with a dose of pessimism (*F*, 143). Indeed, the hope of rebuilding a new Haiti, one that is shared by all the authors in my analysis, has slowly faded into the realization that the aftermath of the disaster still continues to shape Haitian society. On each anniversary of the disaster, a host of reports, articles, and editorials briefly refocus the international spotlight on Haiti to underline the continued struggles as well as the gradual advances relating to the on-going cholera epidemic, the billions in un-fulfilled pledges, mismanaged reconstruction, widespread sexual terror in tent cities, and hundred of thousands of homeless. The portrait that emerges is not one of a Haiti "built back better" to quote a phrase dear to Bill Clinton but rather one of, to use part of the title of former

[502] Edouard Glissant, *Traité du tout-monde*, 139.
[503] Wilentz, *Farewell, Fred Voodoo*, 93.

Associated Press reporter Jonathan Katz's memoir, "how the world came to save Haiti and left behind a disaster."[504] The narratives in this analysis, then, "nationalize" the earthquake in the sense that they seize the catastrophe as an opportunity to overturn the tangled relations that structure both the visibility and invisibility of Haiti in national and international imaginaries. Yanick Lahens quoting from Albert Camus' *L'Homme révolté* writes: "L'homme n'est pas seulement esclave contre maître, mais aussi homme contre le monde du maître et de l'esclave" (*F*, 79). The testimonies from Straub, Laferrière, and Lahens underline the metamorphosis that is required in the way Haiti is imagined and regarded. Tacit in the testimonies from Straub, Laferrière, and Lahens is the awareness that any real transformation of the inequalities in Haiti needs to begin by re-imagining the island and the realm of possible epistemic, economic, and political relations that define it in order to realize the national and international solidarities that Straub, Laferrière, and Lahens outline in their respective texts.

Conclusion: The Globalization of Catastrophe

While different in style and context, the authors examined in this chapter reshape and redefine the destruction inherent to natural catastrophe. The writing of such "national" catastrophes aims not to naturalize a fixed definition of the nation in Guadeloupe and Haiti; rather, the translation of natural catastrophe into "national" catastrophe resembles the various acts of deterritorializations and reterritorializations that inhere to the function of global capitalism as the authors simultaneously make national identity local and global. By projecting national, or insular identity, onto the planes of the local and the global, these authors reconfigure the tensions along these axes of globalization into empowered subaltern subjectivities, underscore spaces of local and cosmopolitan solidarity, and contest the place on the global

[504] Jonathan M. Katz, *The Big Truck That Went By: How the World Came to Save Haiti and Left Behind a Disaster* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013). On Clinton's slogan see, pg. 52, 115,147, or 151.

periphery that geography and history have relegated them. In so doing, the narrative appropriation of catastrophe offers a way to renew postcolonial critique on both islands by drawing the legacies (and futures) of neocolonial domination and attempts to resist it closer together. The resistance to which these authors point, by navigating the tensions among local, national, and transnational histories and identities indicates the critical purchase of the literature of catastrophe for thinking the economic, political, and ecological processes of globalization. In fact, as these same processes increase interconnectedness across the world, they also bring with them rising inequality, increased vulnerabilities, and accelerated ecological degradation that augur for many observers a looming global catastrophe. This future catastrophe and its various representations in present-day Caribbean science fiction is the subject of the brief conclusion that follows. My brief analysis there builds on the globalization of catastrophe depicted here to trace the outlines of a space of radical critical within the Caribbean literature of catastrophe for rethinking the ethical and social dimensions of ecological catastrophe against the backdrop of the international political impasse regarding global climate change.

CONCLUSION

The Future of Caribbean Catastrophe

Il n'y a plus de catastrophes naturelles: il n'y a qu'une catastrophe civilisationnelle qui se propage à toute occasion.

- *Jean-Luc Nancy, L'Équivalence des catastrophes, 2012*[505]

In recent years, the specter of apocalypse has cast a long shadow over popular culture as summer blockbusters, TV series, comics, and popular teen fiction regularly propose an assortment of dystopian futures to audiences around the world. Although the fantasy of apocalyptic destruction, which in the West goes back at least to the Book of Revelation in the New Testament, is not in itself new, zombie thrillers like AMC's *The Walking Dead* (2010-) or post-apocalyptic dystopias like Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (2006), adapted for cinema in 2009, to name just two recent examples, speak specifically to contemporary preoccupations about climate change, economic inequality, and the effects of eroding social cohesion. The looming possibilities of global catastrophe represent an important nodal point for contemporary Caribbean writing as well. In fact, a number of well-established "highbrow" writers as well as a burgeoning number of younger science fiction writers have created a post-apocalyptic Caribbean landscape in order to critically interrogate the challenges that climate change poses in terms of economic, political, and cultural sustainability.

In this concluding chapter, I depart from my previous concern with representations of disaster in the near and distant past to examine how a number of contemporary Caribbean writers imagine the catastrophes of the future. This brief chapter explores several post-apocalyptic

[505] Jean-Luc Nancy, *L'Équivalence des catastrophes (Après Fukushima)* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 2012), 57.

representations of the Caribbean along with the real menaces of global ecological and technological catastrophe that they evoke. If catastrophe offers a powerful idiom for re-conceptualizing the past, it serves similar purposes in identifying present challenges by offering speculative representations of the consequences of the melting polar ice caps and rising sea levels, severe draughts and famine, and in some cases a crippled or uninhabitable planet. To a greater or lesser extent, there is no doubt that the literature of Caribbean apocalypse offers a pessimistic outlook about the future and the place of small island nations in it. However, as I will argue, this apparent doom and gloom constitutes in reality an important philosophical and political operation with regard to contemporary catastrophism, or the proliferation of threats of impending global catastrophe. While Caribbean science fiction narratives allow such catastrophic, or even apocalyptic, scenarios to play out within their pages, they also provide a critical avenue to counter political catastrophism that arrests discussion and debate regarding emergency reforms and measures taken in response to the threat of disasters of this magnitude.[506]

To begin, Édouard Glissant's last novel *Ormerod* (2003) – a hybrid theoretical and literary reflection that mixes genres, epochs, and characters from the author's previous novels to explore the imbricated relations of the "Tout-monde" – begins by evoking a future cataclysm "de science et prophétie certaines."[507] In this version of Caribbean apocalypse, a massive earthquake causes the islands to sink to the bottom of the sea, a speculative scenario that Glissant further refines within the pages of his next book, *La cohée du Lamentin* (2005). There he recalls reading in the newspaper that Martinique has stockpiled 45,000 coffins in case of a devastating earthquake or other natural hazard, proof that the memory of the 1902 catastrophe of Saint-Pierre is still alive. Fantasizing about the destruction of his island, Glissant imagines what the new map

[506] See for instance, "La catastrophe est-elle une politique? Discussion entre Michaël Foessel et Frederic Worms." Esprit (Mai 2011): 51-70.
[507] Édouard Glissant, *Ormerod: roman* (Paris: Gallimard, 2003), 16.

of the Caribbean would look like with a blue void between Dominica and Saint Lucia where Martinique used supposed to be. "Laisserions-nous au moins le souvenir d'une Atlantide en réduction, sans civilisation mystérieuse, un *Black Atlantis?*" the author wonders.[508]

Maryse Condé extends this future destruction beyond any one island to the entire Caribbean in her novel *En attendant la montée des eaux* (2010) that was partly the focus of chapter one. At the beginning of the text, the main character Babakar befriends an elderly Cuban expat who imagines the eclipse of the Caribbean as rising sea levels eventually submerge the entire West Indies under water:

> Si cela continue, un jour, tout disparaîtra. Cette île sera bientôt sous l'eau comme toutes celles de la région. D'abord, fuyant les fonds inondés, les habitants se réfugieront à la tête des mornes et des montagnes. Mais cela ne suffira pas. La mer les rattrapera et les recouvrira. La Caraïbe ne sera qu'un souvenir. Tout ne sera plus que vagues violettes couronnées d'écume blanche.[509]

In the pages that follow, however, the novel turns decidedly away from the uncertain future of the impending catastrophe to which its title refers in order to concentrate instead on present-day suffering in Africa, the Middle East, and the Caribbean. Yet the brief glimpse of apocalypse that the novel evokes in the above passage identifies an immanent threat for a number of low-lying archipelagos throughout the Pacific and Indian Oceans in addition to the Caribbean.

A recent UN Environmental Programme (UNEP) report on the subject highlights the challenges facing most Small Island Developing States (SIDS) around the world.[510] Achim Steiner, the UN Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UNEP, highlights that these

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[508] Édouard Glissant, *La cohée du Lamentin* (Paris: Gallimard, 2005), 13-14.
[509] Maryse Condé, *En attendant la montée des eaux* (Paris: JC Lattès, 2010), 22-23.
[510] United Nations Environment Programme, *Emerging Issues for Small Island Developing States: Results of the UNEP Foresight Process* (Nairobi: UNEP, 2014), accessed August 17, 2014, available at http://www.unep.org/pdf/Emerging_issues _for_small_island_developing_states.pdf.

nations – home to more than sixty-two million people, including tens of millions of people in the Caribbean – are responsible for less than one percent of global greenhouse gas emissions but "suffer disproportionately from its effects due to their small size, narrow resource base, high susceptibility to natural hazards, low economic resilience, and limited capacity for mitigation and adaptation."[511] The theme of rising water and climate change have been more thoroughly explored in the work of the Grenadian-born writer Tobias S. Buckell whose already prolific oeuvre includes a novel, *Arctic Rising* (2012), about the melting polar icecaps and the global scramble to lay claim to the region's untapped oil reserves.[512] In the more recent, *Hurricane Fever* (2014), a techno thriller, Buckell imagines life in a future Caribbean where climate change has unleashed massive super storms that regularly pummel the islands and their inhabitants.[513]

Rodney Saint-Éloi's short story, "The Blue Hill," which was the point of departure for my examination of accounts of the 2010 Haiti earthquake in the last chapter, is also worthy of attention beyond the context of disaster testimony in light of the post-apocalyptic word that it briefly outlines.[514] Returning to the poisonous blue fog that is killing the residents of Port-au-Prince in Inspector Simidor's dream, the ecological disaster that Saint-Éloi imagines gives voice to a critique of the "humanitarian" occupation of Haiti, painting its pernicious effects in the darkest of colors. At the intersection of reality and fiction, Saint-Éloi's post-apocalyptic narrative re-inscribes the ebbs and flows of Haiti's cholera epidemic into the context of the post-quake

[511] Achim Steiner, "Statement by UN Under-Secretary-General and UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner on the Occasion of World Environment Day 2014," United Nations *Environment Programme, News Centre*, June 5, 2014, accessed August 17, 2014, http://www.unep.org/newscentre/Default.aspx?DocumentID=2791&ArticleID= 10878 &l=en#sthash.xeoAt69f.pJ23HKP8.dpuf.
[512] Tobias S. Buckell, *Arctic Rising* (New York: Tor Science Fiction, 2012).
[513] Tobias S. Buckell, *Hurricane Fever* (New York: Tor Science Fiction, 2014).
[514] Rodney Saint-Éloi, "The Blue Hill," in *Haiti Noir*, ed. Edwidge Danticat (New York: Akashic Books, 2011), 302-309.

humanitarian disaster that many observers detailed at length.[515] If Saint-Éloi's blue fog represents a metaphor of the UN's MINUSTAH security force, present in Haiti since 2004, the massive foreign non-governmental organization (NGO) community that operates in Haiti for which the UN is but a symbol, or both, the author also couches his critique in the terms of an ecological disaster. In the months after the devastating 2010 January earthquake, the environment became poisonous for Haiti's most vulnerable citizens when a latrine in a MINUSTAH compound housing Nepalese soldiers leaked into the Artibonite River and contaminated the water source for residents in the area, thus sparking the cholera epidemic that began in October 2010.[516]

Though a number of the aforementioned examples evoke to varying degrees concrete examples of environmental catastrophes, Caribbean speculative fiction also provides a number of narratives that go beyond the act of naming a specific threat or risk to world the post-apocalyptic landscape. For instance, the Jamaican author Curdella Forbes's novel *Ghosts* (2012) takes readers to the fictional futuristic Caribbean island Jacaranda, which has been devastated by global warming, where inhabitants try to reconcile technological advances with the increased hazards of an ailing planet.[517] The Barbadian novelist Karen Lord's *The Best of All Possible Worlds* (2013), with its tongue-in-cheek Panglossian title, follows a group of survivors from an alien humanoid civilization that seeks refuge on earth after nearly being destroyed by genocide.[518] The novel recounts these interplanetary refugees' attempts to cohabitate with humans while maintaining their own culture and traditions on a foreign planet. Re-imagining this

[515] This idea is the main argument to journalist Jonathan Katz's memoir and is expressed as well in the title, Jonathan M. Katz, *The Big Truck That Went By: How the World Came to Save Haiti and Left Behind a Disaster* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).
[516] Amy Wilentz, *Farewell, Fred Voodoo: A Letter from Haiti* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2013), 136.
[517] Curdella Forbes, *Ghosts* (Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 2012).
[518] Karen Lord, *The Best of All Possible Worlds: A Novel* (New York: Del Ray, 2013).

future earth, Lord has transformed the planet into the Caribbean writ-large as a global archipelago fragmented by subtle differences of language, culture, and ethnicity. Significantly, for Lord, the Caribbean whose intense histories of genocide, massive immigration, and (forced) exile of millions of Africans, Asians, and, to a much lesser extent, Europeans frames this intergalactic encounter.

The retired electrical engineer Charles-Henri Maricel-Baltus brings this discussion of West Indian apocalypse back to a Francophone space. The third novel of his Guadeloupean trilogy, Maricel-Baltus's *La vie au fil des temps* (2012) imagines life in Guadeloupe in 2032. Set in the context of a severe global crisis and a succession of natural catastrophes, Maricel-Baltus interrogates the relation between France and Guadeloupe where contemporary economic divisions between haves and haves-not, political oppositions between separatists and departementalists, and ecological degradation have created a highly volatile situation.[519] Maricel-Baltus's resolves these tensions in his narrative by mixing a philosophy of non-violence and an emphasis on the respect of life with a political referendum that transforms Guadeloupe into an autonomous state associated with France. While Maricel-Baltus's resolution may seem rather unlikely given the strong support that departmental status still garners on the island, his narrative has the merit of underlining certain economic, political, and ecological challenges facing the French Antilles and of seeking out solutions to thwart the onset of a dystopian future. His narrative and others like it in this chapter give form to the darkest fears of collective destruction and disaster, but do so in a manner that descrambles such pessimistic catastrophism.

This rapid, and by no means exhaustive, survey of contemporary West Indian speculative fiction demonstrates that the preoccupations of the literature of catastrophe are not the exclusive

[519] Charles-Henri Maricel-Baltus, *La vie au fil des temps* (Gourbreyre: Éditions Nestor, 2012). The first two novels in the trilogy are *D'une vie à l'autre* (Bourbreyre: Éditions Nestor, 2012) and *La vie en face* (Petit-Bourg: Ibis Rouge, 2009).

domain of "highbrow" Caribbean authors; these concerns are also tied to "lowbrow" genre fiction like science fiction, for example. Regarding the latter, disaster discourse remains pertinent for imaging the future in the Caribbean and in many other regions in the world. As the critic Lois Zamora explains, "The resurgence of apocalyptic modes of thought and expression is a predictable reaction to social disruption and temporal uncertainty, and explains in part its currency in our own popular vocabulary."[520] As a result, the ecological, political, and technological catastrophes that these works imagine map in effect a panoply of contemporary tensions that are not unique to SIDS but shape, to varying degrees, societies in the global North and South alike. These novels therefore interrogate the limits of sovereignty in the age of postmodern global capitalism; reflect on sustainability as the disruptive consequences of climate change come increasingly into relief; question an ever-eroding social contract in light of rising economic inequalities and the continued spread of neo-liberal thinking and policies; and bear witness to the "posthuman" frontier as the uncertainty of technological advances bring with them new social and ecological costs for individuals and the communities in which they live.

A similar catastrophism emanates from the myriad technocratic reports and studies issued year after year by numerous intergovernmental agencies, private think tanks, and university laboratories that predict, describe, enumerate, and quantify the consequences of global ecological catastrophe. Beyond the obvious differences of plot, narration, and poetic license that are the prerogatives of fiction and the statistics, modeling, and experiments behind the data in such reports, the possibility, if not the certainty, of catastrophe permeates both literary and technocratic genres. Yet what makes science fiction different from ominous technocratic reports and papers is that the catastrophe has already taken place in the former. As Jean-Pierre Dupuy

[520] Lois P. Zamora, *Writing the Apocalypse: Historical Vision in Contemporary US and Latin American Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 13.

explains, "La catastrophe, comme événement surgissant du néant, ne devient possible qu'en se 'possibilisant.'"[521] As such, speculative fiction, by making the catastrophe possible, offers readers the opportunity to witness and vicariously participate in the near annihilation of human society, and therefore, in a way that technocrats cannot, it "possibilizes" catastrophe to imagine the subjective and collective changes that ensue.

However, I argue that these scenes of future destruction possess a deeper function beyond the establishment of an uncannily familiar world whose purpose is to critique our own. Instead, they constitute a literary form of what Dupuy calls *catastrophisme éclairé*, or enlightened catastrophism. Defining this notion, the French philosopher of science writes that "Le catastrophisme éclairé tient [la] déréalisation de l'avenir pour l'obstacle métaphysique majeur. Car, si l'avenir n'est pas réel, la catastrophe future ne l'est pas davantage. Croyant que nous pouvons l'éviter, nous ne croyons pas qu'elle nous menace. C'est ce cercle que la méthode du catastrophisme éclairé tente de briser."[522] In effect, by imaging the future and the future catastrophe, at least on the diegetic level, Caribbean speculative fiction attempts to break the cycle of denial that relegates impending catastrophe to abstraction until it occurs. Reversing this schema, these novels put into practice the ruse that Dupuy proposes when he writes that:

> Le catastrophisme éclairé est une ruse, qui consiste à séparer l'humanité de sa propre violence, en faisant de celle-ci un destin, sans intention mais capable de nous anéantir. La ruse consiste à faire comme si nous étions sa victime tout en gardant à l'esprit que nous sommes la cause unique de ce qui nous arrive. Ce double jeu, ce stratagème, est peut-être la condition de notre salut.[523]

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[521] Jean-Pierre Dupuy, *Pour un catastrophisme éclairé* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2002), 13.
[522] Jean-Pierre Dupuy, *Petite métaphysique des tsunamis* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2005), 104.
[523] Dupuy, *Petite métaphysique*, 100.

Thus, by imagining the world of the *post*-apocalypse, these novels instantiate a literary space wherein the catastrophe that Dupuy evokes has become impossible *not* to think, a key step toward reversing the de-realization of the future. For Dupuy, the simple intellectual exercise of making the catastrophe thinkable is a radical one since, as he writes, "la catastrophe majeure qui barre notre horizon sera moins le résultat de la malignité des hommes ou même de leur bêtise que de leur absence de pensée (thoughtlessness)."[524] By making future catastrophe possible, Caribbean speculative fiction constitutes a space of radical critique that throws attention onto the human processes that have lead to the catastrophic scenarios they enact in fiction and that are driving the planet toward ecological disaster.

Despite mapping the threats and exploring possible subjective and collective experiences of the post-apocalypse, science fiction in particular and literature in general do not, alone, create the political will and consensus necessary to alter and mitigate the conditions that are leading to global ecological catastrophe. At worst, they are dismissed as fantasy; yet, at best, they help shape collective imaginaries and define the terms of the debate. Gesturing toward the latter, Caribbean speculative fiction brings into focus the nexus of relations between society, ecology, and the symbiotic representations of both to provide a window into contemporary perceptions of risk and hazard in the present-day Caribbean. Yet as the inscription and practice of enlightened catastrophism, this literature of catastrophe reminds readers of the imperative to rethink the triple social, ecological, and narrative relation of catastrophe. In other words, such narratives outline the necessity to strive for a more inclusive social contract, to create more sustainable approaches to the exploitation of natural resources, and to develop a more refined critical awareness about the interconnectedness of both of these processes in order to be better prepared for the catastrophes of the future.

[524] Dupuy, *Petite métaphysique*, 102. The English gloss is provided by the author.

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