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HAITI'S 200-YEAR MÉNAGE-À-TROIS: GLOBALIZATION, THE STATE, AND CIVIL SOCIETY*

Mark Schuller

ABSTRACT

In this article, I explore the limits of dominant historiographies of Haiti to examine and challenge binary frameworks within discourses of globalization and civil society. I employ a comparative, *longue durée* world-systems approach, discussing Haiti's history and contemporary situation through long-term fieldwork, oral history, and published materials on Haiti's history. Conversations with different groups of Haitian people helped me identify, analyze, and categorize two dominant historiographies.

Two major tropes argue that Haiti's trajectory is a result of either global / international forces or actions of a predatory state. I argue that theoretical constructs implicit in dominant historiographies elide a complete understanding of Haiti, rendering sets of actors invisible, and produce and perpetuate a set of mutually unintelligible binaries.

A complete understanding of Haiti's history requires a tripartite framework, tracking and theorizing participation of three general sets of actors: foreign powers, the state, and Haiti's people. Furthermore, while Haiti is a particularly dramatic example, binary logics within theories of globalization and civil society need to be replaced with a tripartite framework. This article provides a model for other scholars interested in a rich understanding of globalization and civil society, presenting a calculus that allows for a conversation between these theoretical constructs.

Keywords: Haiti-history, Haiti-contemporary situation, globalization, state-society, civil society, critical historiography

RESUMEN

En este artículo se exploran los límites de las historiografías dominantes sobre Haití, con el fin de analizar y cuestionar los discursos binarios acerca de la globalización y la sociedad civil. Utilizando un enfoque de sistema-mundial comparativo de *longue durée* y sobre la base de información etnográfica, historia oral y materiales publicados,

se discute la historia y la situación contemporánea de Haití. Conversaciones y encuentros con distintos grupos de la sociedad haitiana fueron de gran ayuda a fin de identificar, analizar y categorizar las dos historiografías dominantes.

Dos grandes tropos señalan que la trayectoria histórica haitiana es resultado ya sea de fuerzas globales / internacionales o bien de un Estado depredador. En el artículo se argumenta que las configuraciones teóricas implícitas en las historiografías dominantes, eluden una completa comprensión de Haití, y que además de mantener en la invisibilidad a grupos de actores, producen y perpetúan un conjunto de binarios ininteligibles.

La comprensión completa de la historia haitiana requiere de un marco tripartito, que rastree y teorice la participación de tres grupos de actores: los poderes externos, el Estado y la gente haitiana. Se indica que, aun cuando Haití constituye un caso particularmente dramático, las lógicas binarias dentro de las teorías de la globalización y la sociedad civil, necesitan ser reemplazadas por marcos tripartitos. Este artículo provee un modelo para los estudiosos interesados en una comprensión más rica de la globalización y la sociedad civil presentando un cálculo que da lugar para la conversación entre estas configuraciones teóricas.

Palabras clave: Haití-historia; Haití- situación contemporánea; globalización; Estado-sociedad; sociedad civil; historiografías críticas

RÉSUMÉ

Dans cet article, j'explore les limitations des historiographies dominantes d'Haiti dans le but d'examiner et de critiquer les logiques binaires des discours sur la globalisation et la société civile. J'utilise l'approche comparative et de longue durée du système-monde pour analyser l'histoire d'Haiti et la situation actuelle à l'aide d'études de terrain prolongées, de l'histoire orale et de publications. Des conversations avec différents groupes d'Haïtien(ne)s m'ont aidé à identifier, analyser et catégoriser deux historiographies dominantes.

Deux arguments prévalents sont que la trajectoire d'Haiti est le produit de forces globales/internationales ou des actions d'un État prédateur. J'avance pour ma part que les constructions théoriques qui sous-tendent les historiographies dominantes nuisent à une compréhension approfondie d'Haiti en masquant plusieurs acteurs, et produisent et perpétuent une série de binômes mutuellement exclusifs.

Une compréhension approfondie de l'histoire d'Haïti exige un cadre tripartite, qui accompagne et théorise la participation de trois groupes

d'acteurs : les puissances étrangères, l'État et le peuple haïtien. Bien qu'Haïti soit un exemple particulièrement dramatique, il est nécessaire de remplacer les logiques binaires des théories sur la globalisation et la société civile par une approche tripartite. Cet article présente un modèle pour d'autres chercheurs à la recherche d'une compréhension approfondie de la globalisation et de la société civile, qui permet un dialogue entre ces constructions théoriques.

Mots-clés: Haïti-histoire; Haïti-situation actuelle; mondialisation; l'Etat-société; société civile; historiographie critique

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Introduction

This article provides a brief overview and analysis of the major historiographies of Haiti. I argue that two major stories are embedded in the telling of Haiti's history—"globalist" and "statist," and a third, lesser known, "populist"—each focusing on one of three general sets of actors: the international community, the state and local elites, or "the people."¹ Because of bias and methodological exigencies, the first two historiographies are far more elaborated than the third. While some historians consciously incorporate two or more sets of actors in their narratives (e.g., Dupuy 1989; Trouillot 1990), these are exceptional cases.

Haiti's history is among the richest and most fascinating anywhere. It is also one of the most complicated and contradictory. The first slave revolt (1791-1804) to succeed in creating a new nation, the Haitian Revolution permanently ended slavery, the first step toward toppling the plantation complex (Curtin 1990). Yet today Haiti is occupied by U.N. forces, Haiti having been reduced to a state of neocolonial domination. Another oft-cited trope is that Haiti declined from the "world's richest colony" to the "poorest country in the hemisphere." What accounts for these extraordinary contradictions? With the questions posed in this way, boiled down to either "what went wrong" or "why is Haiti poor," there are three predominant answers: that "the Haitian mentality" keeps Haiti underdeveloped; that Haiti has been the victim of its leaders, a "kleptocracy;" or that Haiti has been destroyed at the hands of foreign powers.

Haitian Exceptionalism or Pathologization

The first general pathologizing response, mutually reinforced by the discourse of “Haitian exceptionalism” (Charles 1999; Dash 1997; Trouillot 1994:46), comes in several varieties. Missionaries (Haitians as well as foreigners) promote the idea that “voodoo” [sic., often called “superstition”] is the source of all of Haiti’s evils. Others have discussed a “terrified consciousness” (Maingot 1996), “socialized ambivalence” (Herskovits 1937, cited in Bourguignon 2000), or the “culture of violence” (Heinl, Heinl, and Heinl 1996) as obstacles to progress. In this characterization by many missionary groups, development workers, or people with experience in hierarchical relationships with them, Haitian people lack a sense of responsibility, a sense of civic consciousness, and are, in short, a backward and fatalistic people whose future is hopeless, expressed by the phrase, *se pa fòt mwen* (it’s not my fault).

Organizations and people continue to make these claims today, reinforced by a legacy of bad press, with powerful destructive effects. While this was the mainstream discourse and analysis written by anthropologists, adventure-seekers, and would-be imperialists in the years following the Haitian Revolution and U.S. Occupation (see, for example, Bohning 2004; Gold 1991; Leyburn 1941; Loederer 1935; Saint-Mery 1973; St. John 1971), this view is individualist, totalizing, and atheoretical, erasing historical, political, economic and social context. Contemporary scholarly discourse has eschewed these stereotypes and tends to cluster around two narratives, each with legitimation from general theoretical approaches within the social sciences, and each falling back on mutually unintelligible binaries. I turn now to a discussion of the stories imbedded in these understanding of Haiti’s history.

Istwa: History as Stories

In Kreyòl, the word *istwa* means both “history” as well as “story” (Bell 2001) This article analyzes the “story” of Haiti that is told in the writing of Haiti’s “history.” This is not to denigrate the work of the *griyo* (storytellers²) but I agree with Trouillot’s argument that the act of writing history is not “neutral” but an act of power (1995:28)—in Nicholls’s words, “a work of combat” (1974). Bias and a theoretical perspective are implicit in the act of writing history. To deny this fact in the search for “truth” about the past is at best, misguided; at worst, a deception (or “ideology” in theoretical terms). As Trouillot has argued, “history

is always produced in a specific historical context. Historical actors are also narrators, and vice versa" (1995:22).

As alluded to earlier, knowledge of Haiti has been constructed largely through stereotypic and fearful interlocutors, with a powerful and persistent meta-narrative that Haiti is "African" or with a culture that is resistant to "development" or change, driven by powerful racial ideologies shaped by slavery (Dash 1997; Dayan 1995; Dubois 2004; Plummer 1988). Haiti has played an important and often contradictory symbolic role in the region. Haiti played a central role in the consciousness of Martiniquan scholars Franz Fanon, and especially Aimé Césaire, who wrote a play about Christophe (1970). Leaders within CARICOM, including Bahamian PM Perry Christie, voiced Haiti's strategic importance in the region for its role in paving the way toward emancipation. However, as both Knight (2000) and Rodríguez O. (2000) pointed out, Haiti preceded its Caribbean neighbors—planter societies with allegiance to their metropolises—in independence by generations, so the early reaction was one of a "terrified consciousness" (Maingot 1996). While Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez spoke in terms of the debt owed for Haiti's role in the first Bolivarian revolution, Spanish Caribbean societies were mixed. Some progressive elements within pre-Castro Cuba, including Alejandro Carpentier (1987), heroized Haitian independence and its African cultural roots, whereas dominant narratives within Cuba were fearful (Zacair 2005). As many scholars have pointed out (e.g., Howard 2001; Matibag 2003; Sagás 2000; Suárez 2006; Wucker 1999), Haiti inherited a hostile relationship with its immediate neighbor. The 19th Century saw Haitian conquest (Toussaint and Boyer) and Dominicans' defensive invitation of Spanish recolonization, to roles reversed in the 20th Century, including a 1937 massacre and continued economic exploitation, especially through sugar plantations, *batèy*-s.³

There are many ways in which scholars may analyze the *istwa*. As an anthropologist, I am attempting to understand Haiti's contemporary "impasse," the 2004 regime change and its aftermath. To understand this impasse, it is necessary to look at the second use of *istwa* as story, not only the first, official/scholarly "history." While there are exceptions, and space constraints prevent an exhaustive review of the literature on Haiti's history, there are two major narratives: that Haiti's trajectory is a result of either global / international forces or a predatory state. A less widely discussed third narrative addresses movements of non-elite actors within Haitian society.

I argue that too often, the theoretical constructs implicit in these

historiographies elide a complete understanding of Haiti and at best, produce and perpetuate a set of mutually unintelligible binaries of “state versus society” or “global versus local.” Haiti’s history, seen particularly in the irony of the bicentennial year commencing a new foreign occupation, is an ideal case to examine the limits of these theoretical constructs. A complete understanding of Haiti’s history requires at least a tripartite framework, one that tracks and theorizes the participation of sets of actors at three levels: global, state, and “civil society” (or, “the people”). Furthermore, while Haiti’s history is a particularly dramatic example, the binary logics implicit in theories of globalization and civil society should be replaced with a tripartite framework. This article provides such a model for scholars interested in a rich understanding of globalization and civil society, in effect a calculus that allows for a conversation between these theoretical perspectives and hopefully a resolution of the theoretical / political impasse. This tripartite frame allows for a thorough understanding of Haiti’s complex current situation, and illuminates other cases, as well. This model should be useful to Caribbean scholars in general because it at once acknowledges both the region’s unique character and diversity within individual nations’ histories of statehood and Creole identities while at the same time being in the shadow of the world’s preeminent imperialist power.

I will begin by tracing the “globalist” trope, a history arguing that Haiti’s trajectory was dominated by multinational forces, beginning with the Columbian contact. I begin here not because it is the most powerfully promoted discourse—it is not—but because it provides a general framework, a skeleton, to understand the series of events in Haiti’s “history.” I assess where and how this discourse is promoted, and then discuss the theories of globalization implicit in this narrative. Next, I discuss the state-centered discourse in the same fashion, discussing implicit theories of state and society. Continuing the metaphor, this *istwa* fleshes out the general story of domination. I then pause from the retelling of the *istwa*-s to assess these two dominant theoretical binaries, globalization and “civil society.” After this, I discuss what role “the people” in Haiti play in directing the trajectory. The people provide the life’s blood, literally as well as metaphorically. With these three historiographies in place, a tripartite model theorizing the participation (or lack thereof) of three sets of actors at three distinct levels is possible. I end with a brief outline of such a framework, a model for scholars to not only understand Haiti’s contemporary situation but also make sense of other complex geopolitical situations.

Readers should note that the present tripartite analysis is not intended to gloss over the incredible diversity of these sets of actors. For example, Haitian society is very inegalitarian and divided on multiple axes: of color, socioeconomic differences, and gender. And with recent regional/geopolitical shifts, particularly the rise of Chávez and “Lula” style left-leaning governments in Latin America, it makes little sense to talk about “the” international community in the singular. I am arguing, however, that these various levels of analysis need to be integrated, as these *sets* of actors are interacting and intertwined, and each play a role in Haiti’s trajectory.

The Skeleton: The Globalist Trope

The present retelling of this particular *istwa* (e.g., Chin, Dunkel, Flounders, and Ives 2004; Curtin 1990; DeWind and Kinley III 1988; Farmer 2003; Houtart 1995; Knight 2000; Matthewson 2003; Plummer 1988; Renda 2001; Robinson 1996) contains many lacunae, given space constraints. Rather than an exhaustive retelling of details, this article illuminates theoretical constructs in their framing. In 1492, the Spanish monarchy financed an exploratory voyage of Christopher Columbus, in search of gold and other material resources to control. Columbus landed on the north coast of present-day Haiti, leaving a settlement he named “La Navidad” (near present-day En Bas Saline) (Deagan 1998:203). Delighted, the Spanish crown claimed the area as “New Spain,” naming Columbus its first viceroy of the island “Hispañola.” Unaccustomed to diseases that afflicted previous generations in Europe, native Tainos, with population estimates of two to three million, were decimated (Coppa, Cucina, Chiarelli, Calderón, and Mancinelli 1995; Curet 1998). Meanwhile, Columbus brought African people to the island in 1502 to work as slaves (Price-Mars 1956:19). While Spain turned its attention to Mesoamerica and South America, the Portuguese, Dutch, British and French established plantation societies for sugar production in the Caribbean (Curtin 1990). More competition from European nations ensued, and private profiteers (*boucaniers*, translated as “buccaneers”) shifted the balance of control within the western, mountainous third of the island toward France. In 1697, France consummated that control with the Treaty of Ryswick.

During the hundred years of complete French control, the colony (now named Saint-Domingue) became the world’s richest ever. The wealth of Saint Domingue was based on extreme brutality, in which

sugar mills operated night and day (Mintz 1977). Life expectancy of slaves was seven years (Tannenbaum 1947:46). The owners of this system were absentee landlords, the rising bourgeoisie inching its way toward the French Revolution. The slave society was highly unstable, with whites vastly outnumbered and dependent on intermediaries, free *gens de couleur*. By 1788 there were only 27,717 whites on the colony, compared to 21,808 free people of color, and 405,564 slaves (Price-Mars 1956:25). After the guillotine fell on Marie Antoinette's head, the "Reign of Terror" destroyed the delicate balance within Saint Domingue, deepening and widening the fissures between socioracial categories in Haiti—the "big whites," the "small whites," free mulattos, freed blacks, and slaves, further divided between Creole (island-born, often Franco-phone) and bossale (African-born, speaking one of several languages).

As this *istwa* is told, while Saint Domingue slaves revolted on August 14, 1791, there have been slave revolts before and since,⁴ so this cannot account for the revolution's success. Contradictions within the world system added fuel to the fire. Specifically, a France weakened by the slave revolt and an ongoing revolution at home was a target for Spanish, English and later American opportunism. France's Old World rivals made military moves to capture the island. Seeking slaves' loyalty, Jacobin governor Sonthonax proclaimed universal emancipation, later ratified by Revolutionary French masses on February 4, 1794. With the help of slave insurrection leader Toussaint Louverture, the French quelled foreign military threats. Meanwhile, the revolution in the metropole took a reactionary turn as Napoleon Bonaparte consolidated power. While engaged in a two-front war in Europe, Bonaparte sent his brother-in-law to invade the colony in December 1802 with a 20,000-person army to destroy Toussaint and to reinstate slavery. With France's army divided, and Bonaparte's attention in Europe, not to mention renewed moves by its European rivals and yellow fever (Matthewson 1996), the slaves defeated the French. On January 1, 1804, Haiti was born.

A couple of points deserve mention here. First, most *istwa*-s do not span Haiti's entire historical sweep, focusing instead on discrete historical time periods. For obvious reasons, more *griyo* focus on the Haitian Revolution. Second, in the *istwa*-s that span Haiti's trajectory, there are often disjunctures in the *istwa*. Many *griyo*—such as Leyburn (1941) and Heintz (1996)—see the Haitian Revolution through the prism of geopolitical forces, downplaying the role and agency of Haitian actors. Once Haiti is its own country, these *griyo* shift their analytical frame, and Haitians are to blame for their situation. Other *griyo* (e.g. Chin *et al.* 2004)

do the reverse, seeing the Revolution as a heroic act of Haitian people, and later, foreign powers punished Haiti for this act. These inconsistencies expose the general ideological nature of the *istwa*-s: to romanticize or, more often, denigrate Haiti and Haitians (Lawless 1992).

After former slaves created the free nation of Haiti, the world powers took notice and reacted. In 1804, giving up his ambitions in the so-called “New World,” Bonaparte sold Louisiana to the U.S.A. at a bargain. The British adopted a pragmatic approach, abolishing the slave trade in 1807—three years later—discovering that indentured servitude with colonized South Asians was more economical⁵ (Knight 2000). Surrounded by slaveholding empires, Haiti was punished because of the formers’ fear that Haiti’s existence inspire slave revolts at home.⁶ The U.S. and France refused to recognize Haiti, imposing sanctions while violating Haiti’s sovereignty through profiteering, promoting private business interests. The U.S. kept Haiti out of a fledgling Inter-American system⁷ in 1825. The same year, France recognized Haitian independence by a treaty requiring Haiti to pay an indemnity of 150 million francs to compensate absentee slaveowners for their losses, plunging Haiti into a debt that required the vast majority of customs revenue (80%) to service it until it was refinanced by U.S. banks in 1922 (Gaillard 1990).

Some events are noted in passing, that the Vatican recognized Haiti in 1860, followed two years later by the U.S. divided by a war that was to end slavery. However, the usual *istwa* skips forward to July 1915,⁸ when U.S. Marines landed and occupied Haiti. Some *griyo* discuss prior moves by National City Bank to control the Haitian National Bank, providing a “national interest” justification for the Occupation, in which Haiti’s gold reserves were taken to New York on U.S. Navy ships (Plummer 1988:169; Shannon 1996:4). The U.S. Occupation that lasted 19 years brought about a new constitution that Franklin D. Roosevelt claimed to have written personally that among other things specified French, the language of the elite, as the national language and opened up Haitian land for private, foreign ownership. The Marines propped up a series of light-skinned puppet regimes and established an Army, that suppressed and killed the opposition (the *kako*), displaying the crucified corpse of resistance leader Charlemagne Peralte. By destroying resistance, the Occupation thus removed barriers and safeguards against future dictatorships (Renda 2001:36).

Astute observers (e.g., Verna 2005) add to this *istwa* the 1948 U.N. mission to Haiti, a plan set up in six weeks by foreign observers, providing the blueprint for international development assistance—including 101

specific policy actions (United Nations 1949). This blueprint included centralized authority and implementation on the developmentalist assumption that strong states are best for development. International development institutions such as the World Bank, IDB, U.N. and USAID followed up with hundreds of millions of dollars.

Thus, with civil society safeguards removed by the Marines during the Occupation, and through Cold War state-centered development assistance, foreign powers set the stage for the 29-year father-and-son Duvalier dictatorship and continued to prop it up. The international community poured an enormous sum into the Duvalier dictatorship, by their own accounts funding the *tonton makout* and the Duvaliers' personal accounts (Ferguson 1987:70). Geopolitical reasons account for much of this, with Cuba just across the windward channel. Duvalier cast a deciding vote to exclude Castro's Cuba from the Organization of American States (OAS), and was rewarded in this Cold War context.

The world system also helped ensure "Duvalierism without Duvalier." Upon Duvalier *père's* (the father) death in 1971, the U.S. military helped to secure the transition of power to Duvalier *fils* (the son) by keeping people—notably exiled professionals—out of Haiti (Ferguson 1987:57). During the reign of Duvalier *fils*, the U.S. government's development plan starved Haitian peasants and swelled Haiti's cities with very low wage laborers for export processing zones in a blueprint of the Caribbean Basin Initiative (DeWind and Kinley III 1988). Later, responding to an outbreak of swine fever, the U.S. government killed off Haitian pigs, de-facto bank accounts, replacing them with high-maintenance pink U.S. pigs, amounting to Haiti's "great stock market crash" (Diederich 1985; Smith 2001:29).

The situation in Haiti deteriorated, triggering massive extralegal migrations. The U.S. intervened to stop the so-called "boat people." Suddenly, Duvalier's time had come to leave. On February 7, 1986, rather than give in to popular pressure, the U.S. military secretly flew Duvalier and his family out of the country and helped install an interim government made up of a coalition of military leaders (CNG), led by Henri Namphy. U.S. support for the junta did not waiver, even after an election-day massacre, November 29, 1987. This support was mutual; almost immediately after Duvalier left, the CNG let the U.S. government bombard the Haitian market with cheap, subsidized rice, all but destroying national production.⁹

While the U.S. government bankrolled other candidates including former World Bank official Marc Bazin in the December 16, 1990

election, opposition priest and fiery orator Father Jean-Bertrand Aristide was elected by a *lavalas* (landslide)—65 percent in a field of a dozen candidates. Even before Aristide was set to take office, there was an attempted coup against him, and former president Carter tried to persuade him against taking office. Eight months into his presidency, Aristide was ousted by a coup on September 30, 1991 that had foreign as well as local backing. As this *istwa* goes, foreign support for the junta regime delayed or undermined actions against it. The Vatican even recognized the coup regime led by Raoul Cédras as Haiti's legitimate government. Finally, again after a wave of "boat people"—and after President Clinton needed to thank members of the Congressional Black Caucus for a nearly-lost budget vote—returning Aristide became within the U.S. national interest. But the first attempt in October 1993 to install U.S. troops aboard the *U.S.S. Harlan County* was foiled by a new paramilitary group known as FRAPH (in English, Front for the Advancement and Progress of Haiti, also a pun on the French phrase, "to hit"). FRAPH's leaders, including Toto Constant and Louis-Jodel Chamblain, received U.S. military and paramilitary training (Fort Benning and CIA) as well as legal and extralegal financial support (the CIA and the International Republican Institute, or IRI) (Glick Schiller and Fouron 2001:227; Rohter 1996). The brutality of the FRAPH machine dwarfed that of even the *tonton makout*-s. As the *griyo* argue, this was deliberate pressure to force Aristide to sign the Governor's Island Accord (Clement 1997; Farmer 2003; McFadyen, LaRamée, and NACLA 1995; Ridgeway 1994; Weisbrot 1997). The Accord promised structural adjustment programs (Clement 1997:34; Doyle 1994:51; Farmer 2003:218; Goff 2000:9), granted amnesty for coup leaders (only in 2007 Constant faced a trial), and established a "power-sharing" government forcing Aristide's opposition into his government with less than a year and a half left to finish his elected term.

On October 15, 1994, Aristide returned to a country weakened by junta and FRAPH violence and an international economic embargo. A U.S.-led, 30,000-strong U.N. force failed to disarm Haiti's army and FRAPH, and instead suppressed the popular movement (Goff 2000; Shacochis 1999). The *istwa* skips ahead to post-2000, when international development agencies withheld aid from the government of Haiti. At the same time, through the same channels as in 1990, the U.S. and E.U. governments poured millions of dollars into Aristide's intransigent opposition, both the "political party" opposition, the *Convergance Démocratique* and later, the "civil society" opposition, the Group of 184

(Chomsky, Farmer, and Goodman 2004; Engler and Fenton 2005). These two oppositions were encouraged by mixed signals and official wavering on the part of the international community, who were only clear on keeping Haitians from seeking shelter in the U.S. (Bogdanich and Nordberg 2006; Dupuy 2005). These oppositions fused into one—the Plateforme Démocratique—and named a shadow government in January 2004.

“Globalization”

While this is obviously a rough sketch and a generalization, missing nuance and subtlety in argument, the *istwa* just presented is one of foreign domination, of Haiti being exploited and tampered with to serve foreign interests. Proponents—the *griyo*—of this theory tend to focus on U.S. (and now U.N. troops, or “MINUSTAH”) imperialism. They include leftist U.S. and Anglophone Canadian scholars and solidarity organizations, CARICOM, and associated media outlets, especially new media such as blogs.¹⁰ For example, a group of (Anglophone) Caribbean women triggered an angry response from a certain segment of Haiti’s feminist movement, writing against Aristide’s ouster “because Haiti is ours.”

World systems theory provides theoretical grounding for this account (e.g., Cox and Schechter 2002; Harvey 2005; McMichael 1996; Robinson 2004; Sassen 1998; Sklair 2001; Stiglitz 2002; Wallerstein 2004). Expressed as a political project, Haiti is suffering at the hands of globalization or imperialism. Again, this is rough and crude, but world systems analysis, and the political project of anti-globalization movement organizing,¹¹ relies on a binary. The two primary actors in this *istwa* are foreign elites—and depending on slice of world systems theory, Northern states—and “Haiti.” The power relations are inflexible, with Haiti being the victim of foreign powers. As with all binaries, especially in the political project, normative value judgments can be and are made; there are “good guys” and “bad guys.” U.S. imperialism is the bad guy, and playing innocent victim is Haiti—often synonymous with Aristide. A political project can be easily grafted onto this theoretical construction.

The Flesh: The Statist Trope

Another competing *istwa* focuses on the role of the Haitian ruling apparatus, the state (see for example, Deibert and Peck 2005; Diamond 2005; Dupuy 2007; Fattou 2002; Ferguson 1988; Girard 2005; Lundahl

1997; Rotberg 1988; Rotberg 2003). Given the same constraints, this account will be similarly imperfect. As these *griyo* argue, Haiti's problems stem from Haiti's 200-year legacy of mismanagement, brutality, and irresponsibility of Haiti's leaders, results of Haiti's "kleptocracy" (Lundahl 1989; Rotberg 1997) or "predatory state" (Fatton 2002; Lundahl 1984). A key question debated within this *istwa*—in its theoretical strain—is when this dictatorial governance began, begging the question of the origins of the Haitian state. Some observers begin with January 1, 1804—Haiti's declaration of independence. However, Haiti's state apparatus began before its juridical independence.

C.L.R. James' original analysis of the Revolution centers on the person of Toussaint (1989 (1938)). James grappled with issues within the Marxist analytic tradition, himself an ideological proponent of Trotsky's Fourth International. His *istwa* was also explicitly aimed at inspiring and educating contemporary nationalist revolutions in other, Anglophone Caribbean islands, such as his home Trinidad.¹² As such, the history focuses on the revolutionary party apparatus as embryo of Haiti's state. While James was sympathetic to pressures leading to the centralization of power in a revolutionary vanguard, he criticized Toussaint for its excesses, including cutting off his left wing by killing his adopted nephew, Moïse (Ibid. 278-9). James also criticized Toussaint for his "failure of enlightenment"—that is, his adoption of Western cultural forms, especially models of economic and political governance (Ibid. 288). From 1794 on, Toussaint effectively ruled Haiti as if it were independent, a situation resembling a protectorate status with Jacobin France receiving financial benefits derived from Toussaint's reinstatement of the plantation economy. Toussaint's 1801 constitution formally abolished slavery and welcomed foreign slaves seeking freedom, but it outlined authoritarian military rule, naming Toussaint as Governor-for-Life. This precedent was to be adopted as a model for future leaders. The other aspect of Toussaint's "failure of enlightenment" was that he was wooed into submission, betrayed and captured by French general Leclerc.

As this *istwa* goes, it was the "crude" and brutal Dessalines that delivered Haiti's independence by *koupe tèt, boule kay*—"cutting off the heads, burning the houses." While Toussaint retained foreigners as advisors, Dessalines killed remaining white people following the Revolution, sparing Polish mercenaries who defected and joined the slaves' struggle. The brutality didn't stop at *blan*; he crowned himself Emperor and violently put down several attempted revolts. In one revolt, Dessalines was

ambushed and murdered on October 17, 1806, not even three years into his rule. Haiti's first *coup d'état*, that like the President-for-Life, was to serve as a blueprint and be repeated 32 times.

This coup was blessed, if not planned, by the two other independence leaders, mulatto Pétion and black Christophe, who almost immediately broke rank and divided Haiti into a Southern Republic and Northern Kingdom. Depending on ideological position of the *griyo*, one or another was the virtuous heir to the Revolution and the other its destroyer (with wealthy, literate, French-speaking mulattos having more access to producing and promoting the narrative) (Nicholls 1974). However, both can be described as tyrannical, at war with each other, the black masses, and the outside slaveholding world. Christophe's Citadel and impressive military apparatus were accomplished on the backs of militarized plantation agriculture.

Barely a year after the French recognized Haiti's independence, the terms of which mulatto leader (and member of Leclerc's army) Boyer agreed to, the same Boyer instituted his 1826 Rural Code. The Rural Code was in effect a return to the plantation system, undoing minimal land reform that Pétion instituted to appease black masses. Boyer ruled Haiti—and later the entire island—with a military hand until an internal conflict within the urban, merchant mulatto elite weakened him in 1843. The two elites, northern Black military generals and southern mulatto traders, competed with one another to use the reins of the state apparatus for private gain, all the while exploiting rural peasants by taxing coffee exports. There were shifts in the balance between black and mulatto, later expressed in two political parties, the Nationals and Liberals, until the U.S. Occupation, when U.S. white supremacy tipped the balance in favor of lighter skinned Haitians. Color still divides Haitian society, dividing 95 percent of the population from the lighter-skinned elites, and separates two elite groups.

With each iteration of the struggle for control, Haitian peasants became poorer and the leaders more powerful, until François Duvalier neutralized his enemies by playing all against all. The brutality of the Duvalier dictatorship cannot be exaggerated, especially in the first years when he was consolidating control. The *tonton makout*-s and the torture at Fort Dimanche terrorized Haiti's population. While he arguably was not as bloodthirsty as his father, Jean-Claude continued his tradition of terror. He also presided over the "economic revolution" that starved tens of thousands of peasants off their lands, triggering mass migration into the city and out of Haiti, creating in Marxist terms the "lumpenprole-

tariat" willing to do almost anything to feed their families. Jean-Claude lives in the south of France off the millions stolen from the treasury.¹³ Finally, it need not be emphasized that the military juntas that followed Duvalier and the 1991 coup were corrupt and brutal.

Some *griyo* who promote this *istwa* are quick to describe continuities in the system of kleptocracy, even after Haiti's transition to democracy. The first democratic transition to power in 1996 was largely a nonevent. The Lavalas movement gained full control of the legislature, but it quickly imploded into two opposing factions, each side accusing the other of squandering the movement in whose name thousands of Haiti's poor risked (and gave) their lives. Préval, Aristide's late-chosen successor, dismissed Parliament after endless deadlock held up hundreds of millions of dollars in international aid that was designed to rebuild the country. Running without a parliament and ruling by presidential decree, there was no functioning government to sign agreements. These *griyo* argue that the "absorptive capacity" was limited by corruption and malfeasance; governmental structures did not adequately function. A round of legislative elections was tried and failed in 1997 and 1999, when Préval dissolved Parliament. Elections were held in May 2000, a month after the highly visible and as-yet un-investigated murder of journalist Jean Leopold Dominique. These *griyo* denounce irregularities in the vote calculation methods. The 1987 Constitution mandates runoff elections when no single candidate wins a majority, expected in a multi-party system.¹⁴ Rather than hold new elections, or hold runoff elections, Aristide asked eight senators whose election was contested by the opposition to step down, inching the parliament towards collapse. Finally, in January of 2004, the lower-house Deputies and a third of the Senate's term expired, rendering Parliament inoperative.

According to these *griyo*, Aristide was not immune to the temptations of corruption. Some argue that he siphoned public funds to build his private mansion and university in Tabarre while allowing the public university to decay and naming his own university administration (Antonin 2004). Low levels of police and his private security have been implicated on drug smuggling charges, with security chief Oriel Jean and other higher-ups convicted at a Miami federal court (Miami Herald 2005). The interim government sued Aristide for millions of dollars allegedly stolen from the telephone company (Charles 2005). They argue that institutions like the National Police were used as political tools, and large unbudgeted discretionary accounts seemed to vanish or go support the lumpenproletariat, the so-called "*chimères*," to repress

and contest the opposition, swelling after university students became involved. Human rights violations, and curtailment of freedom of expression and the media, were tolerated, triggering more (and more vocal) opposition (NCHR 2003). This vicious cycle reached a crisis point in February 2004.

“Civil Society”

The promoters of this historiography are many; this is certainly the more vociferous and enumerated *istwa*, told by agencies like USAID, the IMF, the foreign-funded opposition, and foreign (or foreign-oriented) NGOs. In addition, more Francophone scholarly literature by French presses and Haiti think tanks promote this view. Many Haitian university professors and Haitianist scholars are among its ranks, particularly political scientists and economists. Mainstream news agencies—foreign wire services and elite-owned (Haitian) media—are also more likely to promote this view. This may be in part because of the natural oppositional culture of a national media (and an embattled one at that), in part because of the daily beat of news tends to focus on visible maneuvers—what Farmer calls “episodic violence” as opposed to the more hidden transcripts of international power, “structural violence” (2003:350; 2004). Finally, particularly with the Haitian media, owned by powerful business elite families or supported by USAID subcontractor RAMAK, direct control of the media and message cannot be ruled out.

Undergirding this reading of Haiti’s history—*istwa*—are theories of the state and civil society. Briefly and roughly, the normative promotion of civil society, defined in culturally-specific “Western” terms, usually theorizes it as locked in a zero-sum opposition against the state (e.g., Booth and Richard 1998; Clastres 1987; de Tocqueville and Grant 2000; Foley and Edwards 1996; Fukuyama 2000; Havel 1999; Pelczynski 1988). This binary logic has moral dimensions. The state is demonized as the locus of oppression,¹⁵ having a monopoly on the use of force. Civil society represents the grassroots democratic spirit of modern societies, a watchdog offering a check on the abuses of state power. A clear political project emerges that focuses on what Kofi Annan called “holding states’ feet to the fire” (quoted in Karim and Leve 2001:94).

Missing from this *istwa* is the pressure coming from the world system. The Code Rural and the 97-year debt, tools to oppress poor Haitian peasants, were outcomes of French reassertion of control in their 1825 treaty. The U.S. Marines arrested the development of civil society, providing

the state with an Army to suppress dissent and kill Haitian citizens. The developmentalist project and the Cold War provided Duvalier with enormous sums of money that the Haitian people continue to pay for—Haiti's debt as of 2006 was 1.4 billion dollars, with annual debt service of \$57.4 million (Schuller 2006). And so on.

Clash of Ideologies

This brings the discussion to the contemporary period. Since I began dissertation fieldwork in October 2003 until well after I left in May 2005, Haiti was mired in crisis. The two main sets of protagonists (*rat pa kaka* versus *grenn nan bouda*¹⁶) have been intransigent: *Aristid pou senk an* (“Aristide for five years,” the cry of Aristide’s supporters) versus *vle pa vle, fòk Aristide ale* (“willing or not, Aristide must leave”). This is an archetypal example of the clash of ideologies. Like the political debate “resolved” by an armed group of “rebels”—a motley crew of U.S.-trained and armed former FRAPH leaders, regular Army members as well as gang members who had broken with Aristide and common criminals—the theoretical debate has no resolution.¹⁷ The Haitian people, particularly poor urban classes and peasants, lose out in the end.

When state power shifted hands to the regime of U.N. retiree Gérard Latortue, nominated by a “Council of the Wise” under the watchful eye of foreign governments¹⁸ until Préval’s May 2006 inauguration, these binary ideologies switched their positions. Aristide supporters lamented and exposed the Haitian state’s abuses, and Aristide’s opposition—amped by international organizations¹⁹—silenced them, denigrating pro-Aristide civil society. This shift exposes both the ideological nature of these *istwa*-s as well as their imbalance; the anti-Aristide *istwa* was much more proliferated. And again, the *istwa*-s talked past one another.

I am not suggesting that the truth is “somewhere in the middle.” These are two totally different *istwa*-s, relying on two separate calculi, talking past one another. As such, two separate claims require two separate sets of evidence. They can both be true, one or the other, or neither. To assemble evidence and bombard media—including listservs, solidarity organizations, wire services and CNN—to promote one *istwa* (usually the bourgeois state-versus-society) does not negate the other. So the only recourse is to “win” by attempting to silence the other.

In the clash of binaries, no resolution is possible, as they are not talking about the same set of actors or even events. Both *istwa*-s discuss two general sets of actors, and only two actors. At least one general set

of actors is rendered invisible in each *istwa*. The foreign-funded, elite opposition's *istwa* is a tale of the evil Haitian state, including Jean-Bertrand Aristide, oppressing "civil society." This account completely erases the role of foreign powers in destabilizing Aristide, weakening his government to the point where basic needs could not be met. The other *istwa* erases the role of the Haitian state *and* its people, conflating them into a singular "Haiti" that is a victim of colonialism, slavery, white supremacy and now foreign imperialism. Solidarity movements²⁰ defending bottom-up democracy, Haiti's poor exploited masses, and constitutional rule in Haiti are rendered powerless to respond to the onslaught of Aristide's alleged abuses—or make comparisons between different state leaders—using a binary framework and ideology.

Haiti's people lose in three ways. First, by undermining their elected president and institutions set up to protect their interests, the interim government happily promoted foreign interests—purer forms of neoliberalism—at the expense of the poor majority's (Schuller forthcoming). Second, the ideological accounts heap bad news about the other side in a framework that does not and cannot make sense. The resulting cognitive dissonance and accumulated bad news about Haiti divides, confuses, and weakens the solidarity movement, as Haiti appears hopeless. Lastly, the people's voices, their lives, and their conditions, are silenced while invoking them in the struggle as victims.

The Blood: Populist Trope

For those with a good ear, the patience, and willingness to take off their binary frames, a third *istwa* is told in whispers (e.g., Bell 2001; Fick 1990; Racine 1999; Smith 2001). Unlike the other two *istwa*-s that focus on elite actors, this *istwa* is rarely written down, as elite methodologies and historiographies fail to notice the role that Haiti's women and men have played in history. Contemporary written accounts focus disproportionate attention on national or international elite actors, missing the activities and perspectives of subaltern actors. Then historians solidify this bias through what counts as acceptable evidence. This *istwa* is told through a vibrant tradition of oral history, folklore, ritual practice, and music—*chan pwen* (Smith 2004). According to this *istwa*, Haiti's people are ultimately responsible for their past and future. Despite the powerful alliances against them, Haitian people have resisted foreign and elite domination, at times shifting the course of its history—and the world around it—altogether.

From the beginning of foreign colonization and slavery, the people on the island of *Kiskeya* have resisted. Anacaona, an indigenous Taino “queen,” led her people in revolt against the colonizing Spanish, memorialized in *ra-ra* processions.²¹ While eventually her “kingdom” of Xaragua (stretching from present-day Jakmèl to Senmak) finally succumbed to Spanish rule, they held out longer than any other, and imprinted resistance on the soul of the Creole land. Indigenous people also handed down the practice of *marronage*—desertion from the plantation, hiding in the still-forested mountains—to their successors, African-descended slaves (Debbasch 1973; Debien 1973). As the slave system became more brutal, the acts of *marronage* became more forceful, including suicide on the slave ships and eventually, poison. Since planters depended on slaves for literally everything, they were helpless and terrified when maroon leaders practiced this deadly form of resistance. Maroon religious leader Makandal was put to death in the 1760s because of poison’s threat to the slave system, and because of an uprising in 1757-58.

Another maroon leader, Boukman, led a religious ceremony on the eve of August 14, 1791 at *Bwa Kayman*, igniting the masses to revolt. Leading the mass with a prayer, Boukman preached total revolution, renouncing the Christian god who supported slavery. With a very short life expectancy—seven years—and having originated from several societies in Western Africa, the first and most effective means marooned slaves had to communicate with one another was through traditional drumming ceremonies. After independence, these ceremonies were solidified (at least in the foreign imagination) as *Vodou*, or “voodoo.”

This decisive act by slaves themselves threw colonial Saint-Domingue completely off balance. As this *istwa* is told, while assuming military leadership because of his superior knowledge of the French, Toussaint could only cajole, not give direct orders. Challenging James’ elitist account, Carolyn Fick argued that the masses followed Toussaint as long as he promoted their interests, especially emancipation (1990). Toussaint committed a grave error in putting Moïse, an early proponent of independence, to death. The popular masses no longer saw Toussaint, who had taken their loyalty for granted, as their leader and abandoned him. Once abandoned, Toussaint was thus vulnerable for the French ambush. Before he was sent to a cold prison cell in the Jura to die, alone, Toussaint warned his captors that, “you have [only] succeeded in cutting the trunk of the tree of liberty. But the roots are strong and deep.”

Indeed, the roots were already at work in continuing the struggle for independence. By this time, a breakaway group of former slaves

had already decided for themselves that the struggle was against the French with independence as their goal, literally “liberty or death.” Only later, the “vanguard” of Pétion, Dessalines, and Christophe joined the struggle, and united, they defeated the French. Again, the black masses did not stop the coup against Dessalines, say these *griyo*, because of their disgust at his brutality (Dayan 1995:22). King Christophe, building his military apparatus on the backs of plantation labor and brutality, suffered the same fate.

President Boyer had a similar zeal for conquest as the Revolutionary vanguard. He invaded the Spanish part of the island, and imposed a plantation system to control peasant agriculture. Peasants, if they were aware of this law, openly defied it, continuing their smallholding practices, defending their land tenure with their machetes. The state largely backed off, choosing instead an indirect form of control: export tax on coffee revenues. After the fall of the Revolutionary generation, and the French military threat abated, Haitian elite leaders turned to the goal of plunder rather than conquest. Conscious or not, Haitian ruling elites learned their lesson and no longer attempted direct brutality against the Haitian peasants, particularly after the 1848 peasants’ uprising by the “Army of Sufferers” (Sheller 2004).

Spurred on by the U.S. Navy’s sale of rusted-out battleships to arm the black military (Plummer 1988:27), the state at the turn of the twentieth century again adopted a more militaristic position against the people. This time, an armed resistance—*kako-s*—fought back. With this military justification, the U.S. Marines invaded to “restore order.” The Marines backed the Haitian Gendarmes and created the modern Army that propped up notorious dictators and led coups against democratically-elected leaders. But the *kako* refused to submit, continuing the struggle of resistance against foreign occupation (Michel 1996; Renda 2001).

Inspired by leaders like Charlemagne Péralte who opposed the U.S. occupation militarily, many Haitian people slowly built other, subtle forms of resistance. In *la Révue Indigène*, black intellectuals like Jean Price-Mars sought to dismantle the myths of European superiority woven into the fabric of Haitian social life by celebrating Haiti’s African roots—including traditions of folklore and religious practices (Price-Mars 1983; Shannon 1996). Jacques Roumain held a literary circle in which writers challenged the occupation as well as the mulatto hegemony buttressed by it. Following Péralte’s crucifixion by a racist²² U.S. Marines, Haitian women organized around religious spaces. Using their presumed harmless identity as church ladies, they organized visible, peaceful protests

against the Occupation that encouraged other peaceful dissent (Miller 1991:4-5), as I detail below.

This *istwa* is barely audible during the Duvalier dictatorship, a time of extreme repression and *ton ton makout* murders and disappearances. Encouraged by Pope Jean Paul II's 1983 visit when he said that things must change in Haiti, the people began to organize, openly and defiantly after the pig fiasco. The violent suppression of a November 1985 student protest in Gonayiv uncorked peasants' pent-up anger, and suddenly Duvalier had an opposition: the people, forming popular organizations (OP's). While the U.S. removed Duvalier before this movement gathered full steam, providing a safety valve while maintaining military order, the poor black masses—peasants and urban dwellers—finally asserted their rights to participate in society. Because Duvalier's removal was largely cosmetic, with the repressive state apparatus still in tact and the military in firm control, the popular movement focused on *dechoukaj* (uprooting), attempting to root out the strong and deep roots of the dictatorship. The task was difficult, as the CNG junta was brutal in their suppression of OP's (and as mentioned above, had unwavering support from President Reagan). Despite this, the popular movement was able to push through a constitution that for the first time made Kreyòl an official language, and made several checks and balances against despotic power, including universal suffrage. This constitution of March 29, 1987 also called upon the government to guarantee citizens' human rights, defined to include rights to education and health care.

Despite four years of repression, the poor black masses asserted their right to democracy, thrusting Jean-Bertrand Aristide to power in a landslide. In preparation for the inauguration, neighborhood committees cleaned urban streets and repaired minor infrastructure problems. This movement continued to push for literacy, education, increases in the minimum wage, and further consultation in a whirlwind of activity in Aristide's first eight months. When a coalition of elites, black (military-Duvalierist), mulatto and foreign, conspired to reverse these gains in the coup d'état, the people continued the struggle for their right to self-determination and democracy, risking death. The coup regime targeted women with sexual violence (NCHR 1994; Rey 1999). Undaunted, women's organizations went underground and continued the struggle (Racine 1999). Many continue that struggle today.

Women's *istwa*

Women tend to get even less focus, but the *griyo* are passing down the lessons of resistance even as women shoulder ever greater economic burden (Bell 2001). Despite (or because of) this marginalization, Haitian women *griyo* tell their *istwa* especially through folklore,²³ *krik-krak* (Haiti's vibrant oral storytelling culture) (Danticat 1995; 1998),²⁴ and through traditional religious spaces (Brown 1991; Dayan 1995).²⁵ Following Anacaona, a few Haitian women are given a place in Haiti's collective memory for their contributions to the cause of freedom. Marie-Jeanne represents the rebellious slave woman, although Duvalierist state ideology recast her as an enemy of the state (Charles 1995:140; Racine 1995). Catharine Flon, who sewed together the red and the blue for first Haitian flag, symbolizes unity of the blacks and mulattoes and was recently accorded a place on Channmas, the national heroes plaza surrounding the National Palace. In one of his last symbolic gestures before his ouster, Aristide praised Dessalines' wife Claire Heureuse as he consecrated a statue at the end of Airport Road that read, "Haiti is the mother of liberty, honor and respect for all Haitian women."²⁶

Despite legal discrimination and cultural ideologies relegating women to second-class status, Haitian women's culturally constructed and valorized identities as mothers grant them important roles during national crises, and central roles in resistance, as elsewhere in Latin America and the Caribbean.²⁷ Price-Mars exhorted women to raise children to be proud of their African heritage and to stand up to the U.S. Occupation (Price-Mars 2001). Indeed, in 1930, during a visit led by a U.S. Senator, the Forbes Commission, a group of women marched to their hotel to deliver the message that the Marines were an unwanted presence (Racine 1995:8). In 1934, just before the U.S. troops pulled out—and arguably offering a final push—a group of professional women founded Haiti's first formal women's organization, the Ligue Féminine d'Action Sociale (Charles 1995; N'Zengou-Tayo 1998; Racine 1995). After a generation of activism from these professional women, the 1950 constitution granted women the right to vote, first participating in national elections in 1957, in which François Duvalier rose to power.²⁸

Women played visible leadership roles in the democratic movement in the 1980s, including in the November 1985 protest that sparked Duvalier's eventual downfall. Shortly after his departure, on April 3, 1986, a group of 30,000 women marched in the streets of Pòtoprens, among the largest. As scholars (e.g., Benoit 1995; Charles 1995; Racine

1995) have argued, women's popular organizations—organizing working class women, peasants, and *timachann* (street merchants)—have had a dual focus on citizenship, democratization, and economic transformation on the one hand with women's participation in civic life, representation, and change in traditional cultural roles and stereotypes on the other. Women played such a central role in the popular movement that Aristide launched his campaign in a gendered space, the Mache Solomon—an open-air market in a low-income Pòtoprens neighborhood (Racine 1995:11), and political parties formed women's groups to attract women to their cause (Benoit 1995:27). Also owing to their centrality, women became increasingly targeted for sexual violence, particularly during the 1991-4 coup d'état (Bell 2001; Racine 1999).

Contemporary moment

Where is this defiantly strong popular movement now? Democracy and resistance are occurring in small, often unnoticeable ways, in the provinces. Peasant organizations continue their quiet revolution of transforming society at the grassroots, actualizing movement goals of self-determination and equality. As Jennie Smith shows, peasants have a wide array of local associations (2001), and individually challenge people in authority (albeit temporarily) through “pointing” songs, *chan pwen* (2004). While the self-named political class in Pòtoprens regularly commits ritual patricide, hamstrung by opportunism and seemingly endless infighting, there is a quiet, but strong and vital, grassroots movement of Haiti's poor in various parts of Pòtoprens and Haiti's mountainous countryside, of peasants', women's, and workers' organizations, that continue to build a new society.

This Haiti misses the attention of elite Haitian media and foreign wire services, and even solidarity organizations that focus on the “political” stage, available through lived experience and ethnography. The recent crisis period in Haiti was unquestionably difficult (see Schuller forthcoming for a more detailed discussion). The assembly jobs in the country are dwindling, with owners blaming the Aristide government and the “chimères” for the violence but endorsing a U.S. free trade bill called HOPE to create jobs. In this dearth of jobs, several workers told me that while “50,000 people are behind you” competing for the same job, they are more intimidated. Prices for staple goods skyrocketed during the interim period, making it more difficult for families to provide food. Public transit fares went up three times during this protracted political

crisis. Two tropical storms wiped out tens of thousands of homes and killed thousands of people each. Violence cut off poor Pòtoprens neighborhoods from the rest of the country, further isolating residents who faced death on a daily basis. Many rents in relatively safe neighborhoods doubled in 2004. The human costs of this protracted political crisis are erased as they are subsumed into interim government statistics or juxtaposed as context-less “man on the street” interviews—if reported at all. Even more invisible in these elitist, hit-and-run accounts is the slow, quiet work of building grassroots organizations and animated social debate. Under the most extreme circumstances, the *youn-ede-lòt* (helping one another) spirit of solidarity between people in Haiti continues to *kenbe la* (hang on), as neighbors repair roads, promote literacy, organize labor unions, build common granaries, plant trees, and discuss AIDS. This other *istwa*, this other Haiti, has lessons to offer marginalized peoples everywhere. To have access to this knowledge requires a different set of eyes and ears, a slower, patient, sympathetic understanding and solidarity that goes beyond the focus on elite actors and their machinations. Partnerships with this resilient civil society that begin with listening and following local lead, animated by solidarity rather than official foreign policy, can be (and are) built. It is not surprising that mainstream media does not (indeed cannot) report on it. But it is there, nonetheless.

Resistance

This *istwa* is told in religious ceremonies of the *ti legliz* (liberation theology Christian Base Communities) and Vodou, in meetings of grassroots organizations, at the marketplace and as neighbors stopping to have a *brase lide* (conversations about ideas) or in more structured *tèt ansanm* (literally, heads together; brainstorming meetings). Promoters of this *istwa* tend to believe in Haitian women and men’s agency. Extreme variants focus on individual responsibility to the point that social and historical forces are erased; these are the individualist narratives discussed above. But even the most fervent anti-imperialists often end a conversation saying something such as: we Haitians are responsible for our future. An Aristide supporter and anti-imperialist said, “The first person (people) who is responsible aren’t the *blan*, no. The foreigner is not the first responsible. The first responsible are Haitians.”²⁹ Whether or not this is a function of pride passed down by the revolutionary ancestors, and whether this is also largely ideological, a function of what Glick Schiller and Fouron call an “apparent state” (2001:214), this

istwa demands that Haitians be treated with the respect and autonomy as people in charge of their destiny. Brian Meeks concludes his analysis of James saying, "it is not that productive forces do not play their role in shaping events, but that people adamantly refuse to play the minor parts assigned to them" (1994:101).

Animating this *istwa*, while accounting for structural forces, are theories of "resistance." While it has been argued that social, economic, racial, and global inequality can be totalizing, inscribed in the practice of everyday life, people can occasionally resist this domination or hegemony.³⁰ James C. Scott calls on ethnographers to learn how to see the "weapons of the weak" with a broader lens—as individual polyps gradually build a coral reef, people build movements that change the course of history (1985:36). DeCerteau points out that individuals can engage in "tactics" to disrupt the day-to-day reproduction of domination (1984). While others warn against the "romance of resistance" (Abu-Lughod 1990; Ortner 1995; 1997), Haiti's people have shown that it is possible to alter the course of history. Haiti's history also shows that these moments of popular victories seldom go unpunished, as global elites and local intermediaries regroup and refine their tools and tactics. Finally, Haiti's history shows the importance of collectivism and conscious on-the-ground theorizing and action.

Taken Together

Haiti's trajectory is a particularly rich ground for highlighting the interplay between three sets of actors, calling for (at least) a tripartite analysis with which to understand it. It is important not to reify and essentialize such fragmentary entities such as "foreign powers," "the state," and "civil society." Foreign powers include a constantly competing set of powerful nation-states that have at times opposing interests: a set of public and private sphere international agencies, referred to as the "core" in Wallersteinian terms (1974; 2003) as well as nation-states such as Brazil that comprise the "semi-periphery" and groups of "peripheral" nation-states such as CARICOM. As Abrams (1988) and political anthropologists have argued (Aretxaga 2003; Chalfin 2006; Ferguson and Gupta 2002; Gupta and Sharma 2006; Trouillot 2001), states are not monolithic, unitary entities. And as I and others have argued, particularly in the case of Haiti (Jean 2002), "civil society" glosses over real differences and systems of discrimination (Benhabib 2002; Fraser 1992; Gramsci 1971; Schuller 2006b; Schuller 2007; Young 1990).

Foreign elite groups—in a process now called “globalization”—are always putting pressure on the system, first in terms of slavery and threat of reconquest, and later debt, imperialism, U.S. Occupation, and structural adjustment programs. The Haitian government and elite groups have also taken their toll on the people, with militarism, brutality, pilfering and later corruption, opportunism, and mismanagement. But the Haitian people have not always played the victim, at times making decisive steps toward independence and the end of slavery, and later collective organizing, solidarity, and resistance against despotism. Extreme inequalities of class, color/caste, and gender structure these interrelationships as they are structured by them.

A tripartite analysis can make sense of the advances of a unified Haitian people, without resorting to exceptionalism or treating it as an aberration. Slaves not formally educated were able to defeat three of the world’s most powerful armies, paving the way for both the end of slavery and the United States’ “Manifest Destiny” (Reinhardt 2005). However, a tripartite analysis does not mean that the three general sets of actors are all on equal footing. As James argued, quoting Marx, “men make history, but only such history as it is possible for them to make” (1989:x). However, while it is true that not all three actors are on equal footing, they need to be rendered visible in order to understand their relative status; if local civic activity is theoretically dismissed, how can its relative lack of power be evaluated?

Once theorized within a tripartite framework, changes in Haiti’s trajectory can be fully understood as shifts in the relationships between the three general sets of actors. The Revolution was the first fundamental shift, but France’s recognition of Haiti’s independence by imposing an indemnity heralded a strategy of plunder rather than conquest. The 1915-1934 U.S. Occupation tipped the balance in favor of mulatto elites while re-arming the black military, catalyzing nationalist resistance. The people revolted in 1985, and some now argue that they are still in revolt, that Haiti has been in turmoil since this never-ending transition to democracy began. But when the people, the government, and the *blan* are united, so-called progress is possible. Thus understood, Haitian and foreign analysts (and I mean to include everyday *brase lide* as well as scholarly articles and conferences) can debate these shifts: what precipitated them?

This framework calls attention to the intermediaries of the system, such as the slave drivers or free “*gens de couleur*” in colonial Saint-Domingue. What roles do they play in holding up or transforming the system? Are they a revolutionary, conservative, or reactionary force

at a given moment? The system is held together by a small group of elites—traditionally a lighter-skinned merchant class that does not invest in education or infrastructure (Trouillot 1997). Haiti is second only to Namibia in inequality (Jadotte 2006).³¹ There are advantages for local elite groups—as well as for semi-elites, the small middle classes—in identifying with foreign powers, in “globalization.” However, much of the shifts of Haiti’s trajectory fall on these intermediaries, especially when their alliance is with “the people” instead of (as is usually the case) foreign elites. An important lesson of Haiti’s history is emblazoned on its flag: *l’union fait la force* (in unity there is strength). When blacks and mulattos unified, they collectively drove out the French. Is such a unity a singular and reactive event? Will this current state of affairs, Haiti being controlled by MINUSTAH and recently ruled by a foreign-backed interim government, generate tactical alliances that can once again shift the relationship?

Post-“crisis” and return of democratic order

This is a challenging moment for Haiti, as the situation is complex and pressing because of Haiti’s continued economic and environmental crises. On the level of “the people,” despite some sectors’—especially those closely related to runner-up political parties—loud protests following calculation methods that granted Préval a first-round victory, there has been a palpable increase in goodwill. While it is far to soon to say whether this democratic transition will heal the deep social wounds within Haitian society, a couple of primary indices—high costs of living and kidnapping—showed signs of letting up during subsequent visits in August 2006, January and March 2007. On the State stage, Préval’s “unity” government—so far—has not fissured into its constituent factions despite partisan bickering and a rocky campaign against corruption. Préval also has a delicate international balancing act, whereby there are not one but three poles of foreign interests each pulling in a different direction: Chávez offering to develop State-run services like electricity while the neoliberal Washington-Brussels-Bretton Woods junta pressures for privatization of the phone company, and polyglot U.N. forces largely led by social democratic South American governments remain on Haitian soil. Said many interlocutors on these latest visits when asked what they thought of the situation, “*se swiv nap swiv*” (we’re following the situation). Rather than just following one of three levels of analysis, the tripartite model is indispensable for a complete picture and diagnosis,

highlighting just how delicate and precarious Haiti's social, political, and economic situation is. But also implicit in this model is that *if* this balancing act is successful in bringing about long-term stability at all three levels, Haitian people can build the foundations toward sustainable social and economic progress.

Beyond Haiti

The lessons learned from a close understanding of Haiti's *istwa* are not applicable to Haiti alone. The tripartite model Haiti's past and present demands is useful in other situations for a nuanced, appropriate form of solidarity. The situation within pre- and post-invasion Afghanistan offers a good case in point. I cannot possibly do justice to this complex situation within these few words; others (e.g., Ignatieff 2003; Schade 2005; Stockton 2004) offer far better guidance, and I am *not* equating Aristide with the Taliban. That would be a misapplication of the complex, multiscalar tripartite analysis in the article. However, progressive activists in the U.S. and Northern Europe were presented with profound dilemmas that often arise within simplistic binary frameworks. U.S. feminists such as Eve Ensler focused on the *birq'a* (veiling practices) as highly visible symbols of women's subjugation under the Taliban regime, expressing a state-versus-civil society tension. Global justice activists such as Michael Moore critiqued the U.S. exploitation of the events of 9/11 to install a client regime of Bush and Cheney associate Hamid Karzai and build a pipeline to gain access to newly-independent former Soviet states' oil reserves. At least in the U.S., these contradictions splintered a liberal/socialist constituency of an embryonic peace movement (admittedly silenced by the War on Terror) and all but silenced voices from Afghanistan, especially women. Organizations like the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA) offered a nuanced, feminist, tripartite critique of *both* Taliban and Coalition Authority regimes as well as the foreign use of the veil to build the case for war, a familiar imperialist strategy (Afary 1997; Jayawardena 1994).

Another world *is* possible, a globalization built on solidarity, justice, mutual respect, and self-determination. Transnational solidarity is a delicate relationship, requiring careful attention to multiple interactions and players. As Haiti paved the way to abolition and Latin American independence, lessons Haiti's ménage-à-trois offers can help solidarity movements sharpen their analyses to address actually-existing complexities and dilemmas posed by this new world order.

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Notes

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¹ In Haiti, "the people" (*pèp la*) is a highly politicized, polemic term referring to the (often excluded) poor majority.

² Despite convention described in the following note, since all my uses of *griyo* are plural, and since in common usage the term is never followed (to my knowledge) by a plural denotation, I do not alter the word.

³ Since Kreyòl does not distinguish singular from plural through suffixes but

context or the word “yo,” convention in English translation is to add the “-s.”

- 4 Other slave revolts include Jamaica in 1760, the Simmons Plantation (Barbados) in the late 18th Century, in the United States—both the Prosser Conspiracy August 30, 1800 and Nat and Cherry Turner on August 21-22, 1831, Brazil on December 24, 1826, Cuba in 1843, and Dutch St. Croix on October 1, 1878.
- 5 The mass servitude of South Asians in the Caribbean followed the Empire's 1838 abolition of slavery.
- 6 It should also be noted that eight U.S. presidents before the Civil War owned slaves.
- 7 Despite this move that Bolívar accepted, Monroe eventually boycotted Bolívar's 1825 Pan-American Congress
- 8 Given the thrust of the *istwa*, events that did not have a direct bearing on regional or geopolitical history are not told, but a few Haitian scholars continue this narrative throughout the 19th Century, detailing foreign governments' uninterrupted pillage of Haiti—the term was “cash cow”—e.g. Étienne, Sauveur Pierre. 1997. *Haiti: L'Invasion des ONG*. Port-au-Prince, Haiti: Centre de Recherche Sociale et de Formation Economique pour le Développement.
- 9 Once an exporter of rice, Haiti is now unable to feed itself, producing only 18 percent of rice consumed, importing \$200 million per year (National Campaign to Defend Haitian Rice, December 2004).
- 10 Readers may note that I have not categorized the Haitian Diaspora in this (and following) list of *griyo*. Given the impassioned conversations at the Haitian Studies Association conferences, it can be fairly stated that this is a diverse group of scholars with very wide-ranging views.
- 11 As opposed to “altermondialisme” or “global justice” as movement organizing principles.
- 12 The Spanish-speaking Caribbean was by and large independent at this time, but Césaire and others were militating for an end to colonialism in other Francophone Caribbean countries, including his home of Martinique
- 13 In May 2007, a civil society campaign successfully froze Duvalier's Swiss accounts, valued at 7.6 million francs.
- 14 The February 7, 2006 elections had 34 presidential candidates among 43 parties, with losing parties again challenging the calculation methods.
- 15 That said, there has been an emergence of a discourse of Duvalier being the “good old days,” not just from middle classes. To some, Duvalier represents stability, security, and even a nationalist protection against neoliberalism.
- 16 *Rat pa kaka* refers to Aristide defenders, a truncated version of a Haitian

proverb that they chanted. *Grenn nan bouda* refers mainly to university student protesters against Aristide.

- 17 Guy Philippe admitted to ties to foreign agencies and the supposedly-separate “political” opposition. Jacklin, Jean Paul. 2007. “CHUTE D’ARISTIDE - Les révélations de Guy Philippe à Signal FM.” in *Le Matin*. Port-au-Prince.
- 18 U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell said in a Fox News interview: “We are working hard with the new council of eminent persons that has been created to come up with a new prime minister” (reported in AFP, March 9, 2004).
- 19 For example, the U.S. State Department gave an award for human rights to the Haiti branch of the National Coalition for Human Rights, criticized for exposing only abuses of Aristide’s government and his supporters.
- 20 There are several organizations who engage in Haiti solidarity work, with a very wide and sometimes opposing range of approaches/ strategies: e.g., Haiti Action Committee, Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti, Quixote Center, Grassroots Haiti Solidarity Committee, National Coalition for Haitian Rights, and Haiti Democracy Project in the U.S.; Haiti Support Group, Coordination Europe-Haïti, Freres des Hommes, and EURODAD in Europe.
- 21 The more common *istwa* of the ra-ra is that they are celebrations of Lent, as slaves were only allowed this humanizing celebration because of its Christian nature—see McAlister, Elizabeth. 2002. *Rara! Vodou, Power, and Performance in Haiti and its Diaspora*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- 22 Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan was quoted as saying, “Dear me, think of it! Niggers speaking French!” Douyon, Frantz. 2004. *Haïti - de l’indépendance à la dépendance*. Paris: L’Harmattan, Shannon, Magdaline W. 1996. *Jean Price-Mars, the Haitian Elite, and the American Occupation*. London: Macmillan.
- 23 Several women, including Lenelle Moïse and Gina Ulysses, play roles of storyteller in their public performances, addressing themes of women and gender.
- 24 In addition to Danticat, several Haitian women produce literature—e.g., Myriam Chancy and Nadege Clitandre. Scott, Helen. 2006. *Caribbean Women Writers and Globalization: Fictions of Independence*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Books. Danticat makes several references to women ancestors in her works.
- 25 Unlike the case in Christian churches, women play visible leadership roles in traditional ancestor worship. Ritual practice involves communication with ancestral spirits, many of whom are women Michel, Claudine and Patrick Bellegarde-Smith. 2006. “Vodou in Haitian Life: Invisible Powers.” New York: Palgrave Macmillan..

- ²⁶ Ayiti se manman libète, one respe pou tout fanm Dayiti.
- ²⁷ The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires are a notable example.
- ²⁸ The irony of this victory for women's legal rights being appropriated by Duvalier may be related their privileged status, as Charles argues, "indeed, the Ligue, which represented the interests of middle-class women, was unable to reconcile and to include in its agenda the concerns of the majority of Haitian working women" Charles, Carolle. 1995. "Gender and Politics in Contemporary Haiti: the Duvalierist State, Transnationalism, and the Emergence of a New Feminism (1980-1990)." *Feminist Studies* 21:135-164.
- ²⁹ Premye moun ki responsab la se pa blan, non. Etranje a pa premye responsab, premye responsab la se Ayisyen.
- ³⁰ Some scholars—e.g., Foucault—argue that power is defined by resistance.
- ³¹ The top quintile has 68 percent of the income, and the lowest 1.5. Wealth is concentrated in even fewer hands.