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### Privilege in Haiti: Travails in Color of the First Bourgeois Nation- State in the Americas

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**Privilege in Haiti**  
**Travails in Color of the First Bourgeois Nation-State in the Americas**

by

Philippe-Richard Marius

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Anthropology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate  
Faculty in Anthropology in satisfaction of the dissertation  
requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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## Abstract

### **Privilege in Haiti Travails in Color of the First Bourgeois Nation-State in the Americas**

by

Philippe-Richard Marius

Adviser : Professor Donald Robotham

Who are the elites in the poorest country of the Western Hemisphere? Do Haiti's elites constitute themselves in a Blackness vs. Whiteness/Mulatto-ness opposition? In investigating these questions, this ethnography encompasses in the object of study the nation's middle classes educated in Western ways, and it arrives at an analysis of social relations among privileged national subjects within and across boundaries of color. Its central thesis is the material unity in privilege of Haiti's colorist fragments. *Noirisme*, a fundamentalist strain of Haitian black nationalism that reached hegemony in the dictatorship of François Duvalier in the 1960s, is in marked retreat in contemporary Haiti. Its lingering influence nonetheless continues to foster a black qua black sociality among privileged black nationalists. Mulatto nationalism, as political project and public discourse, lapsed into irrelevance sometime around the mid-point of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. *Mulâtrisme*, the ensemble of presumptively *mulatto* worldviews, is reduced today to an obsessive measurement and reproduction of approximations of whites' somatic features, and arrives at a mulatto qua mulatto sociality. Notwithstanding the political instrumentality of the colorist fragmentation, through competencies in Western cultures, the fragments recover societal cohesion in the reproduction of privilege, and in colorist thought and action, over against the interests of the vast monolingual poor Creole-speaking majority. The analysis sees one effect of the fragmentation in the rupture of a potential moment of liberal politics in the privileged classes at the boundary of color.

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## Introduction

A week and a day after I first arrived in the field in March of 2011, it shifted significantly from what it was at my arrival. I was at a trendy bistro in Pétionville, a municipality outside Port-au-Prince often known as a suburb of privilege to foreigners of some acquaintance with Haiti. Informed by my primary and secondary schooling under the Duvalier dictatorship and a dozen or so years of post-secondary studies in New York City, the whole augmented by decades of independent reading in popular and learned literatures, I had landed at the airport on Thursday, the previous week, to begin fieldwork in what was axiomatically the first black Republic. The questions I came to investigate did not change at the restaurant. Who are the elites in the poorest country of the Western Hemisphere? Do Haiti's elites constitute themselves in a Blackness vs. Mulatto-ness opposition? The operational questions through which I entered the central thesis of the investigation did not change either. How do members of Haiti's elites distinctively enact their elite status, in what contexts and with what consequences? How is the construction of Haiti's elites contested, and by whom? Are there determinate barriers to inter-elite mobility? However, it began to transpire to me at the bistro that the truly rich and the merely comfortable in the middle and upper-middle classes share a cohesive sociality across lines of color in the reproduction of privilege. Yet more significantly, I also began to understand, the vast majority of Haiti's population, which is indeed dark-skinned, and poor and socio-politically marginalized, is an object, not a subject, of the national identity in blackness. At the bistro, a study of privileged life in a Haiti taken to be a *black* Republic began to seem as viable as attempting empirical observation in a labyrinth of smoke and mirrors.

That Friday evening, I was at Kay Atizan (Artisans House), a restaurant which is very much a place of the black Republic - in its Haitian Creole name, in its decorative artifacts



evocative of Haiti's vernaculars bequeathed by the African past, in the house band playing on Friday nights<sup>1</sup>. I was there with a black gynecologist. We had known each other from kindergarten through high school before I left Haiti to attend college in the USA. We had not communicated in the intervening decades until I randomly came across his contact information on a social-media Website the previous January. When he picked me up at home earlier in the evening to come to the restaurant, he drove a late-model four-wheel drive hatchback. When he had stopped by the house yet earlier in the afternoon, he had driven a sedan. I asked him whether one of the two vehicles was his wife's; it wasn't. His wife generally drove yet a third car of the family. They use the four-wheel drive at night, or when security is otherwise an issue, because of its higher clearance off the ground: "Si w bezwen monte twotwa a pou w debloke tèt wou" [If you need to drive over the sidewalk to get yourself out], he explained.

As the gynecologist and I spoke about Haiti and shared news of our private and professional lives, the inconsequential stories of his everyday amounted to a portrait of privileged life. The stories were also tales of variously becoming a bourgeois middle-class subject, a Haitian, or a *black* Haitian. The story of his teen-aged daughter setting the agenda of the family's most recent vacation would have a familiar ring to many a household in the global North. Perusing the Internet, she found a cruise out of a port in Florida, and enlisted her younger sister to convince their parents to make that their vacation destination. The latter eventually made the appropriate reservations to fly to Miami, cruise the Caribbean Sea, and return home. In a simpler mode of family recreation, the gynecologist occasionally takes early morning drives with the children to the rural interior. On these more or less impromptu excursions, they leave at dawn, and the destination is what random town or hamlet they reach from which the gynecologist can return to Port-au-Prince by late morning to attend to what business of the day

he may need to. His father did the same with him when he was a boy and, as it happens, so did mine with me. The gynecologist specifically placed those outings in the context of acquainting his children with Haiti. He furthers the acquaintance with planned trips to landmarks of the national past such as King Henri Christophe's Citadelle Laferrière near Cap Haitien. The day before the gynecologist told me of these excursions at Kay Atizan, a wealthy fair-complexioned executive, the sole fair-skinned Haitian who ever told me of being white, had also told me of taking her teenage son to see the Citadelle, to show him the grandeur of his country's past, she told me, in the wake of the American military occupation that facilitated President Jean-Bertrand Aristide's return from exile in 1994. She adamantly opposed Aristide's return. Incidentally, the gynecologist was no fan of Aristide either. For both, those visits to the countryside and to the national patrimony would effectively be trips of becoming Haitian in the momentary encounter with the rural place and the glory of the imagined past.

In another anecdote related to me by the gynecologist during our evening at Kay Atizan, he recalled with bemused paternal affection a dinner with his wife and children at La Plantation, an upscale restaurant in Pétionville where the cost of dinner for two can reach upwards of \$100 US<sup>2</sup>. As they perused the menu his younger daughter insistently asserted her desire for "mayi moulen" (cornmeal) – her general preference also at home. The dishes at La Plantation are heavily inflected by French culinary traditions. "Mayi moulen" is a staple of poor Haitians' diet – in lieu of the more expensive "diri" (rice) – and is remembered in popular memory as the principal food served to the slaves of yore. In telling me the story the gynecologist let it be clear that neither he nor his wife objected to their daughter's predilection for "mayi moulen," and that their concern at the restaurant was to convince her to settle for what was available. Thus a family – the daughter in her taste for "mayi moulen," her parents in legitimating that taste – found a

commonality with a Haitian subject who is a pivotal preoccupation of what I call Haitian black nationalism in this study, the discourses and practices which in aggregate posit Haiti as a black nation. The family here, like Haitian black nationalists in general irrespective of phenotype, become *black* Haitians inasmuch as they ideologically subscribe to the validity of the cultural vernacular of the nation's *poor* black majority, particularly where this culture has detectable affinity with what Gérard Barthélemy (1989) calls Haiti's rural universe, and inasmuch as they practice – highly selectively, in given contexts - ways of being that is evocative of the life of *those* blacks. This ideological identity with the blackness of the peasantry can be realized at a distance that is as marked by social, political, and economic privilege as it is unbreachable by the nation's immense majority of poor dark-skinned subjects.

The gynecologist, whose father was an entrepreneur, is also an incidental landlord, owner-developer of an impressive office building with prime frontage on a major thoroughfare not far from the international airport in Port-au-Prince. He told me how that came to be also that Friday evening at Kay Atizan. A commercial group headed by one of the country's best known wealthy mulatto businessmen once wanted a particular parcel of land in downtown Port-au-Prince to initiate a project. As it happens, the businessman's father had been one of numerous mulattoes to serve as high-level officials in the Duvalier dictatorship. The gynecologist's father owned the parcel and the group purchased it at market price. In a visit to the gynecologist's house (his childhood home) during the negotiation of the transaction, small talk came to another parcel the gynecologist's father owned in another commercially vibrant part of the city. The wealthy mulatto businessman suggested that the gynecologist's father develop it. The family was not in a position to do so. The mulatto businessman, to solidify the relationship with the gynecologist's father, arranged for a mortgage through a bank he controlled, waiving a

bewildering array of conditions through which the economic elite has controlled access to credit and concomitantly to the business terrain<sup>3</sup>. Leading the project for his family, the gynecologist hastily ordered architectural plans, closed on the mortgage loan, and broke ground. The resulting building emerged as a notable address for practitioners of a liberal profession. Its value stood at well above a million US dollars and the mortgage on it a third of that at the time I was in the field. It is a store of social and economic capital passed on by the gynecologist's father to his children and potentially to his grandchildren.

So it was that well before I could fully contextualize in a broader set of social relations the tidbits the gynecologist shared with me at Kay Atizan, before we even left the restaurant, I began to realize that privileged dark-skinned Haitians do not live a common blackness with disenfranchised blacks, while the nation's colorist fragments, notwithstanding the political instrumentality of the fragmentation, do actually recover societal cohesion in the practice and reproduction of privilege. I was to find it more analytically sensible to approach Haiti distinctly as a place of Western modernity rather than a place of blackness. Competencies in dominant Western cultures hold the irreducible socio-political boundary between the generally dark-skinned monolingual poor majority on one side and the elites (economic, political and intellectual) together with the educated middle-classes on the other. Thus, although my collaborators in the field included subjects who fit the narrow definition of "elite" as scions of dynastic wealth in the business sector or key players currently or formerly at or near the pinnacle of political power, I collapsed their experiences with those from the relatively privileged middle classes to arrive at a study of relations between and within formations of privilege.

This ethnography's central thesis is that in contemporary Haiti class, not color, is the principal site of unity among Haitians, and the nation's colorist fragments remain united in the

realization of privilege. It establishes that the elites of contemporary Haiti are descendant formations of the upper echelons of the army that won the War of Independence and eventually constituted the leadership of the nation at its birth. Reflecting social organization of the colonial period and at the founding of the nation, today's elites contest power as distinct formations of "blacks" and "mulattoes." Privileged black Haitians and privileged mulatto Haitians realize and reproduce their social situation in contexts that almost inevitably pivot on dominant cultural forms of the West, and on French cultures in particular. Consequently, the elites, and the middle classes of relative privilege in general, although presenting distinctive identitarian boundaries of "blackness" and "mulattooness," live their privilege in actuality as one formation wholly distant from the vast majority of the nation population, which is overwhelmingly dark-skinned and monolingual Haitian Creole speakers. Blacks and mulattoes contest the construction of the elites alternately through control of state agency and control of the economy. Blacks have prevailed in the state since the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to a large extent through the deployment of the narrative of national blackness. Mulattoes have historically maintained a dominant position in the economy through strategic reproduction of "mulattooness" in endogamous practices parallel to the reproduction of economic power. Mobility across boundaries of color in the elites (and in the middle classes) nonetheless obtains from global encounters across racial lines and from the local circulation of other forms of capital besides color in the reproduction of privilege.

Ultimately, privileged dark-skinned Haitians and privileged light-skinned Haitians live determinate social practices cohesively across boundaries of color. These practices coherently and simultaneously reproduce class privileges along with the socio-political economic marginalization of subjects lacking definite cultural attributes not predicated on phenotype. The thrust of the analysis proceeds along three thematic threads of argument. Firstly, there are two

distinct moments of liberal political engagement that remain unrealized within, respectively, “black” and “mulatto” identitarian formations. Secondly, to the detriment of liberal politics as a national possibility, the dominant narrative of national blackness mystifies the unity of the black-nationalist political elite with the mulatto economic elite over against the interests of the marginalized majority, and it mystifies a simultaneous unity of privileged Haitians in a field of colorist practices within a broader field of social practice in which privilege is negotiated and reproduced. Finally, unpacking the paradigm of blackness reveals a potential civil society action transcending lines of color and aiming to render the state responsive to the nation’s human and economic development. I should note here that although gender does not become a distinct object of study in the analysis, its considerable import is eminently evident in operations of class and color in the nation. For example, the instrumentalization of the female body in the reproduction of color as social capital transpires cogently, and a distinctly feminist approach would clearly augment the present investigation.

In speaking variously of “liberal” politics or “bourgeois” liberalism throughout this study I speak distinctly of political thought and action along the spectrum imagined in the Western tradition from the “center” to the “left” – a politics of *social democracy* in which relatively privileged subjects support a presumably equitable constitutional order and a functional state that intervenes to mitigate miseries systematically experienced by disadvantaged or otherwise vulnerable subjects of the nation-state. The analytic aim is two-fold. I aim to delineate a theoretical pathway to envision a coherent practice of liberal politics in the privileged classes, and to make salient the silencing of the voice and material interests of the vast *black* majority in the ideological imagining of the nation that began to dominate public discourse in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is worth remembering Gérard Barthélemy’s (1989) point that Haiti’s

peasantry was founded by factions of African-born rebels – the *Bossales* - who lost their “war within *the* war,” as Trouillot puts it (1995:37), before the French lost theirs – *the* one – against the triumphant Revolutionaries. These were generally *Creoles* – former slaves and freedmen – and unlike the *Bossales*, born in Saint-Domingue or elsewhere in the Caribbean. The analysis is not predicated on a post-racial vision. I take the colorism embedded in privileged Haitian social praxis to be but a local refraction of the global racism pivoting on *whiteness*, and I take global white racism to be a foundational feature of the Western experience. I do posit the possibility of a politically liberal alliance across lines of color among privileged sectors of Haitian civil society with the capability to confront manifestations of colorism within it. I also posit that bourgeois liberalism in Haiti, much as in “centers” of Western power, would be worth whatever it is in the historical context of the nation. I do not attempt to assess it.

Liberal politics emerged as an object of the study by the nature of the project. Discussing the difficulty faced by an anthropological study of elites, Stephen Nugent notes that where anthropologists generally “practise research on others on the basis of a complex, but still quite overt, socio-political asymmetry, the study of elites...requires a different strategy since they are” less likely to grant access and “consent to being studied” (Nugent 2002:72). One of possibilities the anthropologist is left with is “to focus on accessible elites and limit the anthropological remit to the ordained asymmetrical programme (that is, accept the implausibility of ‘studying up’)” (Nugent 2002:72)<sup>4</sup>. The segment of the economic elite that seemed systematically to make itself inaccessible to me is the oligarchy structurally tied to the state in clientelist relations. Where my field collaborators included figures linked to sectors of the business elite outside the oligarchy that are notoriously hostile to popular initiatives, of the two or three figures from the economic elite with direct links to the oligarchy whom I contacted all variously declined to take part in the

study<sup>5</sup>. Rather than opting for a problematic “anthropological enquiry [of the elites] confined to those groups that allow us access” (Shore 2002:11), having detected a commonality among various segments of the elites and the middle classes in what can be called a liberal political stance on the condition of the nation, I focused on how the engagement with “color” and “nation” mediates the commonality of privileged subjects in thought and action of liberal politics.

In the French- and English- speaking nations of the Caribbean popular and scholarly discourses identify ‘politics’ and ‘economics’ as sharply separated spheres dominated by complementary elites. In general, these are differentiated on the basis of deeply identitarian racialist or colorist ideologies and they are held to represent different national “publics”<sup>6</sup>. In Haiti these elites are seen as “black” (in “politics”) and “mulatto” (in “the economy”), the two articulating with respective nationalist narratives. Simon Fass (1988) depicts a Haitian poverty extremely intensified by the expropriation of the income of the poor and the working classes in two layers of surplus for the reproduction of the two distinct elites. In the process, “corruption in Haiti [is] not about diversion of resources from intended purposes, but rather about intended purposes and practices that [are] themselves diversions from what the concept of ‘government’ [is] supposed to be about“ (Fass 1990:3). Using Katherine Verdery’s (1996) approach to the nation as symbol and to the study of nationalism as the study of symbolic operators, I seek to understand the relation of Haiti’s elites to the national project through the operations of color in the dominant narrative of the nation as a black Republic, and through the deployment of the nation in the narrative as symbol of a distinct public.

Neither the state nor development becomes subject of the research. They emerge rather as objects of the study inasmuch as they are objects of the elite social relations investigated around



color and the nation. Informed by Michel-Rolph Trouillot's reminder of Gramsci's remark that civil society stands between the economy and the coercive power of the state (Trouillot 1990:19), the investigation arrives at a reflection on what I detected among the privileged classes of civil society as a will toward a liberal politics lacking in both cohesion and coherence. Black nationalism remains a focal point of critical analysis and mulatto nationalism is not, because, as transpires in Labelle (1987), *mulâtrisme*, the ensemble of presumptively *mulatto* worldviews, has been reduced to an ideology of aesthetics, and a narrowing one at that. On the one hand, mulatto nationalism as public discourse and political project lapsed into irrelevance sometime around the midpoint of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. On the other hand, commanding fluency in and preference for Western – especially French - cultural ways are hardly a mulatto particularity in modern Haiti. The *mulâtre*'s distinction in aesthetic judgment is now found irreducibly in an obsession with measuring and reproducing somatic traits that approximate European ideals.

In a study of Elite Perceptions of Poverty and Inequality in five disparate countries of the global South “the most important contribution of the Haitian case...in types of inequality lies” in that inequality “in Haiti is structured by, and is understood in terms of, cultural competencies” (Reiss and Moore 2005:10). Omar Ribeiro Thomaz finds that to the country's urban elites the poor is “not only [the] person who does not have access to the minimum to live,” but also “individuals who do not speak French; or as former President Manigat [said] without hesitation, ‘poor is that person who does not have access to Western culture’” (Ribeiro Thomaz 2005:144)<sup>7</sup>. Leslie Manigat's definition of poverty not merely in a poverty of culture but more specifically a poverty of “Western” culture is particularly remarkable. He was not only a dark-complexioned son of the political elite but also a preeminent theoretician of “noirisme,” a fundamentalist ideological and literary strain of the black Republic narrative that posits blackness literally, so to

speak, as identity and tradition of the “true” Haitian. Living with and observing the privileged Haitian in the minutiae of everyday life reveals the complex materialities of class that would inform such a definition of poverty<sup>8</sup>.

In anthropology’s defining tradition of the ethnographic gaze destabilizing the taken-for-granted, this report emerged from the field in critical conversation with a vast array of foreign and Haitian thinkers who have studied Haiti’s elites from theoretical premises.

Trouillot is essential reading for any social science of contemporary Haiti and my analysis is considerably indebted to his work. His (1990) study of the Haitian state standing against the nation is an exhaustive investigation of the social, political and economic structuration of the reproduction of class through exceedingly deep inequalities in Haiti. In a historical perspective stretching from the colonial era to the Duvalier dictatorship, Trouillot dissects the construction of the Haitian state by the nation’s elites as an instrument of the ruthless exploitation of the nation’s peasantry and its derivative urban formations. He is deeply insightful on the operationalization of color in both mulatto and black-nationalist ideologies ultimately at the service of reproducing the state in the interest of the elites. Trouillot sees the immiseration of the majority of the population intrinsically articulated with racist/colorist thought and practice against its blackness. The sociologist and statesman Jean Casimir (2000; 2009) reprised this thesis yet more forcefully in speaking of the suppression of an African culture by Haiti’s elites.

However, Trouillot and Casimir, and the global intelligentsia’s thinking on Haiti in general, work in an epistemological current which, as John Garrigus (2006) suggests, is hugely influenced by C. L. R. James’s study of Toussaint Louverture and the Saint-Domingue Revolution originally published in 1938. Trouillot’s and Casimir’s understanding of social relations in Haiti’s elites – as that of most foreign scholars – particularly around the politics of

color is limited by an analytical flaw. The investigation of the reproductive structures of inequality at the foundation of the state is duly critical; and the investigation does also critically note problematic actions of the nation's founders in both their lifestyles as social subjects and modes of governance as political actors. However, the analysis generally comprises these two investigations as two distinct lines of critique in two distinct moments. Arriving at the condition of the majority of the population today, I find that the critical analysis is thus prone to conflate the blackness of the Haitian poor with that of dark-skinned privileged people, because the latter's socio-historic links to the nation's foundational structures of inequality are now erased.

The economist Leslie Péan (2003), to begin his *économie politique de la corruption* in Haiti, becomes the rare Haitian scholar who resolutely holds in the one and same moment of critical scrutiny – across boundaries of color - both the founders of the nation and the reproductive systems of inequality they embedded in the state. I borrow Péan's analytic paradigm to re-read the Haitian Revolution, and in its outcome at Independence I find a proto-bourgeois nation. Moreover, I apprehend today's privileged – upper and middle – classes as legacy formations of the Revolutionary elites. This ethnography can thus read with clarity dark-skinned privileged people contending with mulatto colorism as practitioners in a broader field of political-economic contestation. In its dominant mode, I argue, this is a field of social practice over against the interests of black people at the bottom, and the latter experience a blackness acutely differentiated from that of the dark-skinned above.

I presume that the research to one extent or another reflects my application of “analytic categories that rename and reframe” (Narayan 1993:32) my personal experiences as a native anthropologist. As Kirin Narayan argues, “to acknowledge particular and personal locations is to admit the limits of one's purview” (1993:33). I am a product of the black-nationalist petite

bourgeoisie, and themes that percolate in the project percolate in my personal history. At his death in 1985, my father was a retiree of the Banque Nationale de Cr dit, a spin-off of the National Bank of Haiti, where he had begun his career in the 1940s. His last formal title was Fond  de Pouvoir, the literal translation of which - Vested with Power - does not exist in anglo-saxon business or public service, but does more or less precisely indicate his embodiment of institutional powers. One of his brothers, a doctor of sociology, was a contributor to *Les Griots*, the journal of cultural criticism that was the quasi-official organ of *noirisme* from the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century through the 1970s. His father, my grandfather, at the onset of the American Occupation in 1915, was married to a first cousin of Sudre Dartiguenave, a mulatto installed as President (1915-1922) by the Occupiers “whose name is anathema to Haitian nationalists” (Trouillot 1990:30-31, 108). In this marriage alliance, my great-grandfather maintained direct access to political power although, as Minister of War and Finance of a black-nationalist government (1908-11), he had been an author of events leading to the Occupation (cf. Price-Mars n.d.; cf. Z. N. Hurston 1938). This awareness continually informs my confidence in standing with anthropologists doing “fieldwork whether or not we were raised close to the people whom we study” so long as we do not betray “the discipline’s canonical modes of objective distance [or] forfeit subjective distance” (Narayan 1993:32, 33).

I conducted the investigation through participant-observation ethnography; interviews; and documentary analyses of public and private histories, individual and collective. My research subjects were from Haiti’s political, economic, and intellectual elites. They occupied positions of privilege in Haiti’s middle and upper classes. If they did not always control significant financial capital, they invariably enjoyed definite access to the upper reaches of social and political power. Among my dozens of subjects were cabinet members; civil servants; a President of the Republic,

who served in the past thirty years; former presidential candidates; a former Prime Minister; parliamentarians; successful entrepreneurs; leading practitioners of the liberal professions; leaders of iconic business enterprises; a director of the country's largest private bank and a director of the Bank of the Republic of Haiti; and leading writers, artists and public intellectuals. They represented the full range of Haiti's colorist identities, from *noir* (black) to *clair* (light) to *mûlatre* (mulatto). Although Haitian liberalism eventually emerged as theme and object of the research, my subjects range across the political spectrum from former members of FRAPH, the paramilitary organization that wreaked murderous havoc on supporters of the Lavalas movement in the aftermath of the 1991 coup d'état against Jean-Bertrand Aristide, to leftist activists and intellectuals.

The fieldwork was in effect multi-sited. I did the ethnographic participant-observation principally in the Port-au-Prince metropolitan area over approximately seven weeks in three trips from my base in New York City in March-April 2011, December 2011, and October-November 2012. By the time I first arrived in the field, I had secured the commitment of the majority of a core group of over a dozen collaborators who would eventually inform my understanding of the field experience. As a native Haitian citizen, although it had been nine years since I was last in Haiti, I was intimately competent in the vocabularies – verbal and non-verbal – of contemporary Haitian social relations, and I knew my way around the social geography of Haiti's elites. Thus, upon arrival in the field, I had no need to dedicate time to subject recruitment, acculturation, or acclimation, and the compact periods on the ground were intensively productive. I interviewed my subjects and shared their quotidian realities as a participant-observer in their residences, at their work sites and in their leisure activities. Between my travels to Port-au-Prince and in the subsequent year or so I effectively continued the fieldwork with collaborators realizing their

privilege in trips to the New York metropolitan area. To a lesser extent, I spent time with collaborators elsewhere in North America, for example at the 2012 Art Basel Miami<sup>9</sup>. The annual conference of the Caribbean Studies Association – generally lasting Monday through Friday – also emerged incidentally as a fruitful site of participant-observation in 2011 (Curaçao), 2012 (Guadeloupe) and 2013 (Grenada). Presenting on the on-going research at the CSA meetings, I inevitably found myself in the company of members of the Haitian intellectual elite with whom I continued conversations begun in Port-au-Prince bearing on the research.

I researched genealogies primarily in the digital collections of the Association de généalogie d'Haïti. Whenever possible, I checked genealogical data from the AGH against family sources and mementos and artifacts – for example, photographs and personal narratives - in social-media accounts, which proved to be rich and transparent sources. I also checked the genealogical archive against period sources. In the AGH's holdings I also researched extracts of notarial and vital acts from Haiti's National Archives dating to the colonial era. For historical context, critical apprehension, and reconstitution of continuities ruptured in the historiography or oral histories, I read primary sources dating to the colonial era in the Mangonès Collections of the George A. Smathers Libraries of the University of Florida, and to the 19<sup>th</sup> through mid-20<sup>th</sup> centuries in the Kurt Fisher and Eugène Maximilien Collections of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture of the New York Public Library. In the University of Florida Digital Collections, I also read amongst 17,884 issues of *Le Nouvelliste*, Haiti's newspaper of record, dating to 1899 through 1979.

In chapter one, I provide a brief snapshot of contemporary privileged Haitians in various class and color situations engaging subjectively with the condition of the nation in the ethos of bourgeois liberalism. Noting the fragmentation of these disparate engagements in *la question de*

*couleur* [the question of color], I argue that they effectively represent a moment of liberal politics that might be but is not.

In chapter two, delineating the socio-historical origins of the field I investigated, I tease out markers in the Saint-Domingue Revolution that make Haiti a proto-bourgeois nation-state at birth. I summarize the operationalization of color in the contestation of political economy by dark-skinned and light-skinned post-Independence elites over the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Chapter three shows the narrative of blackness to be generally illegible to the Haitian poor, and I explore a moment of its local reproduction in which the non-privileged is systematically excluded from its authorship. In the latter part of the chapter, I retrace the genealogy of *noirisme* as a radical iteration of Haitian black nationalism by engaged intellectuals from the 1930s through its hegemonic apotheosis with the dictatorship of François Duvalier.

In chapter four, I document a post-Duvalier scene in which *noirisme* is in marked retreat as public discourse and yet of lingering influence in a black qua black sociality of the privileged. On the ground, I detect two points of tension in the cohesion of this sociality. In one, a liberal vision of the nation is subordinate to an ideology of color whose dominant embodiments since the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century have consistently violated the interests of the poor. In the other, liberal blacks from the middle classes living their unity with the “masses” in an imagined blackness might arrive at political paralysis when faced with fulminating anger from below.

In chapter five, where Labelle (1987) traces color prejudice in the mulatto at a distance from the broader social experience – through surveys and interviews - I aim to find the prejudiced mulatto in situ, living the national experience with the dark-skinned privileged. I note the dialectical reproduction of the mulatto as social subject. On the one hand, color prejudice is rampant among privileged mulattoes. On the other, Trouillot (1990), among others, shows that

the relatively dark-skinned privileged often seek relatively lighter complexion in their progeniture through the “right” marriage. Through close ethnographic attention to the prejudiced mulatto’s material relation to the objective characteristics of whiteness – “straight” nose, supple hair etc. - I argue that colorism in Haiti is pegged to the global phenomenon of whiteness, but whiteness as social value rather than social condition. I analyze a cluster of genealogies intersecting across lines of color and political ideology beginning in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century through the present. I conclude that colorism inheres in a field of social practice by the privileged across identitarian boundaries, and color is not co-terminus with political ideology.

Chapter six explores the operative presence of dark-skinned subjects in the field of colorist practices and how the black-nationalist imagination manages this presence. Through textual analysis - pop music and news reporting – and the ethnographic experience, I establish that “black” as descriptive term is not used to denote the color of the dark-skinned privileged; it is reserved specifically to *otherize* the poor and the peasantry. Dark-skinned privileged subjects have at their disposal a repertoire of alternate descriptive terms that make their social color in effect not-quite-black. Following the analysis of privileged Haitians’ unity in colorist practices across boundaries of color, in chapter seven the ethnographic moment captures various instantiations of their material unity in privilege now and across time and space.

To elucidate Haitian colorist practices within the global matrix of cultural and political economies sketched by Robotham (2000), chapter eight draws on Pem Buck’s (2001) materialist history of the invention of whiteness in a 17<sup>th</sup> century proto-development colonial project. Colonial elites orchestrated this invention of race to manage a specifically political-economic crisis presented by a cohesive formation of workers – they granted “whiteness” to European labor in lieu of higher economic valuation, and they simultaneously radically circumscribed the



political agency of African labor. It could not be somatic differentiation that subsequently distanced white labor from white elites; it would be rather a cultural differentiation. Invoking Robotham's (2000) argument of the articulation of European cultural power with European political-economic power to a logical conclusion, I call this cultural vector of social differentiation "knowing white."

In chapter nine, I explore the political economy of knowing white in Haiti, with particular attention to the situational problematic presented to the privileged nationalist who needs competence in knowing white for resonance and relevance in exchanges on the global stage yet locally wishes to validate Haitian Creole as medium of schooling.

The conclusion sees a conundrum of hermeneutics among civil society subjects, who hold more or less liberal political views in common and similarly share the limits of bourgeois liberalism in their political engagement. They do not share a common political engagement on the national project, because they engage on national conditions at a political distance borne in the ideology of color, as a "black" and as a "mulatto" within distinctive identitarian boundaries. This is a situation of national actors living the historical moment of the nation as bourgeois subjects within those boundaries and failing to live their commonalities without. I propose a transcendent space of civil society in which differentiation in color and class can be negotiated within a liberal political action.

Chapter One  
**Snapshot of a Western Place: Modern and Racialized, Unequal and Moral**

In my first week in the field, before the evening I spent with the black gynecologist at the trendy bistro in Pétionville, I had met subjects who might be from a “morally repugnant elite,” to borrow a globally fashionable phrase in which learned people conflate Haiti’s upper classes, in general the mulatto business elite more specifically. On the sidewalk outside O’Brasileiro, another fashionable Pétionville restaurant, a businessman of Arab descent had casually assured me that the thousands of impoverished Haitians displaced by the earthquake of January 2010 still lived in precarious encampments, because they did not want to move. They remained in the camps on purpose, he told me, solely to benefit from the largesse of aid organizations. The son of a black general in Duvalier’s army, himself a death squad member in FRAPH, the paramilitary organization that terrorized supporters of the constitutional order during the 1991-1994 period of Aristide exile, had gloated at the prospect of a return to the old order and the “disappearance” of the Lavalas movement that he saw in the “unstoppable campaign” of Michel Martelly in the presidential elections, the run-off of which was held days before my arrival. Yet I had also found ample suggestion that Haiti’s elites – as elites go - were not undifferentiated in moral callousness, however entangled they might be in the politics of color. In the middle classes also, I had been with subjects seeking a morally correct everyday engagement with Haiti’s realities, however adamant they might be in rejecting Aristide’s politics or the broader Lavalas movement.

The day after I arrived in the field, the gynecologist spent part of the afternoon at my house. He spoke of voting as “yon obligasyon” [a duty] and of his political views being “à droite” (on the right). An embodiment of the black-nationalist tradition, he had unsurprisingly voted for Mirlande Manigat in both rounds of the recent elections. A member of the noiriste establishment of the political elite, her husband was former president and noiriste theoretician

Leslie Manigat. The gynecologist supported the Lavalas platform in the 1990 elections, but shortly after the inauguration of Jean-Bertrand Aristide as President, he told me, he lost his illusions in what he saw as Aristide's populism without a programmatic agenda. At my house the afternoon after I arrived in Port-au-Prince, he remarked that the urgency to lift the majority of the population out of accelerating impoverishment was such that distinctions between left and right in Haitian politics were now practically meaningless. He spoke warily of Michel Martelly apparently winning the run-off the elections held five days earlier. He did not fret over behind-the-scene illegitimacies that might explain Manigat's loss. She had once been the leading candidate, but, he said, it was clear to him that Martelly was preferred by the majority of the voting electorate; that was that. His concern, arguably prescient, was that, while Martelly appeared not to be beholden to the political class, his organization, in its human dimension, was not a departure from Haiti's political tradition<sup>10</sup>. Martelly, if he had a program, would have no clue how to control the old-school "magouyeu" (racketeers) who constituted his political organization, the gynecologist told me<sup>11</sup>. Manigat would know how to navigate treacherous currents to implement the program she professed to hold to better living conditions in the country. All in all, the gynecologist's views on the current political landscape fit the template of principled middle class praxis in the Western liberal democracy.

Three days later, the following Monday, as I sat in the gynecologist's office between patients a man who seemed to be in his late twenties or thereabout and from the lower middle class stopped by to see him. After they exchanged greetings, the man sat down next to me in front of the desk as the gynecologist pulled out a ledger book. As he wrote a check from his business account, he invited the young man to tell me about his organization. The man was an artist who led an afterschool art program for poor children. The program, he told me, kept the

kids engaged and offered them an alternative to loitering on the street and potentially delinquency. He was there to pick up a regular donation check from the gynecologist. The previous Friday afternoon at my house, I had asked the gynecologist about any volunteer work or civic engagement in general; he lamented not having time for that. After the artist left, I told him that I considered his contributions to the afterschool program to be civic engagement. He told me that he had not remembered it, when he was at my house. He added that he had thought of my question in the context of political activism. He then described his membership in an organization of Haitian professionals, where his principal focus was in arranging health care for poor children with special needs. I did not see much of the transformative in these innocuous acts of private philanthropy, but together with the gynecologist's casual remarks about Haitian politics they held my ethnographic interest. Only later would I realize that perhaps my active attention to the man's otherwise banal engagement in civil society stemmed from the extent to which Haitian liberalism can be marginalized in a certain nationalist imaginary. The Thursday of the same week I was to find its expression in the business elite for the first time in the field with the wealthy fair-complexioned executive.

The woman's paternal grandfather immigrated to Haiti from north-central Europe in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In a trajectory another Scandinavian immigrant might have followed, he married a local light-skinned woman. His son, the executive's father, similarly married a light-skinned woman. The executive's mother's family established itself in the region of Cap-Haïtien so far back in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that she could not estimate when it might have arrived from Europe. The family firm gained public resonance in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As I chatted with the executive in her office, I asked her whether she felt there was a problem of socio-economic inequality in Haiti. She responded in Haitian Creole "Gen neuf

milyon pwoblèm e gen ti sa a lan nou. Si m pa kwè gen w pwoblèm m t a suisidè” [There are nine million problems and there’s this little of us. If I don’t believe there’s a problem, I’d be suicidal], showing me the tip of her forefinger to illustrate the relative size of “nou” (us)<sup>12</sup>. She spoke of making more or less regular donations in person to L’Hopital général, the teaching hospital of the State University of Haiti and the principal public health care facility of the city. She did so, she told me, because her business includes a fleet of delivery trucks and she wanted to ensure preferential treatment of any of her drivers who might ever be in an accident<sup>13</sup>.

I had met the wealthy fair-complexioned executive a few days earlier through a thriving black entrepreneur who owns an engineering contracting service (and whom I would come to refer to as the engineering contractor among my field collaborators). The two had a warm and easygoing business relationship. As we spoke in her office the fair-complexioned executive told me of her engagement in the social lives of her employees in language that was nearly identical as that used by the engineering contractor, when he brought up the same subject with me earlier in the week. They both support with cash gifts and salary advances life events like weddings, christenings and funerals, and occasionally household expenses like school fees. The engineering contractor deliberately schedules the work day to allow his technicians to get off early enough to pursue freelance job opportunities of their own; for the same reason, they are off on weekends. He frames this scheduling practice as a strategic move to help keep the technicians’ wages lower than they might otherwise be by allowing them the possibility of augmenting their total income. The practice could also arguably be described as a neoliberal tactic of wage depression. Both the engineering contractor and his wife, who owns the business with him, are nonetheless passionate in their view of Haiti’s social ills, and in their respective views of what is to be done about them. Where the wife sees in René Préval a cretin who co-opted and botched the Aristide legacy, the

husband sees public-policy successes – particularly in infrastructure - which Préval himself has failed to make salient due to his public detachment.

The wealthy fair-complexioned executive's husband is as blond as she and the paternal and maternal sides of his family established themselves in the country sometime around the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century from Europe and the US, respectively. As we killed time over a beer one afternoon during my second trip to the field, he seemed vague, apparently reaching in some murky memory, when he told me - far from persuasively - that he dated dark-skinned girls in his youth. He was quite the opposite, passionate and precise, in angrily vilifying the elite of US finance and expressing his support for the Occupy Wall Street movement, which had started a few months earlier in the New York City financial district. His expression similarly dripped of existential angst in denouncing what he considers Aristide's suggestion to Haiti's poor that violence against the rich is the solution to their problems. His voice also spiked up, but in a different register, when, at a business meeting, a Brazilian consultant mentioned in passing a low-cost portable water filtering system. The consultant was barely done describing the device than he exclaimed excitedly (in English), "That's what I'm giving my employees for Christmas." He went on to speak with earnest enthusiasm of the machine relieving household budgets of the burden of buying treated water. In a more sedate tone, he would mention to me one day that the taxation level in Haiti relative to the country's economy was below some international index, suggesting an unused margin of state intervention toward the alleviation of poverty. Incidentally, a few years earlier he and his wife were involved in the production and submission to the Haitian state of an analysis of revenues and tax payments of enterprises big and small, expressly calling attention to payments to the state that appeared disproportionately low relative to revenues.

The fair-complexioned executive told me more than once that her opinions on Haiti's

political and economic dilemmas were her own and not to take her as representative of any group. I nonetheless first learned of the corporate tax payment analysis from another daughter of the mulatto business elite, one who, uncharacteristically among elite mulatto families, married a middle-class dark-skinned man. Unlike the fair-complexioned executive, nowhere in the global North might she be taken for white; she would be black. As a *clair* person, of relatively light complexion, and of unmistakable wealth, in Haiti she is nonetheless together with the blond executive in the “mulatto elite.” Her paternal lineage reaches back to the colonial mulatto population and operated in the economic elite through the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century before gaining visibility in key functions of national politics. The *clair* executive’s father came in a line of the family that had married into a family of more recent European origins. She, too, was involved with the corporate tax study. She, too, is a leading executive of the conglomerate in a family of dynastic wealth. Of her family, she made a point of telling me assertively soon after we met: “Nous n’avons pas d’appartements à l’étranger. Nous sommes ici” [We do not have apartments overseas. We are here]. When she mentioned the corporate tax study to me, she did not have a hard copy at hand and could not find an electronic copy in her computer. She made a few telephone calls before she found someone who promised her a copy. The study evidently was the project of an elite formation of some sort. She eventually found me a copy. That afternoon, she also told me of being called a communist by peers in the elite for her interest in socio-political issues after she returned to the country in the mid-1980s following a fifteen-year absence. She had since been raising the issue of the poor’s conditions among her peers, she told me, telling them “if we don’t do something about it, they’ll eat us.” She spoke of those in the elite “who want a better Haiti,” if only out of a concern about the country’s image, and those who don’t and “only want to get rich.”

I had introduced myself to the wealthy *clair* executive via email before my second trip to the field in December 2011, on the recommendation of a respected Marxist Haitian mulatto academic based overseas, a childhood friend of hers also from the elite. At the time the academic first mentioned her to me, he spoke in earnest tones of her long and anonymous engagement in development projects in poor communities outside the family business. He had been dismissive earlier in our conversation, when I mentioned my finding of a liberalism circulating among the business elite and middle classes in Haiti. He came to be talking of her friend's personal involvement in community development after I pressed the argument that liberal elite segments have been instrumental in inter-class alliances toward social justice, particularly after I wondered why the left would so assiduously defend what's left of the welfare state in the global North in the neo-liberal moment yet would so reflexively dismiss bourgeois liberalism in Haiti. Be that as it may, the *clair* executive never brought up her community-development work with me; she spoke about it, and sparingly at that, only when I brought it up on a few occasions. She simply does it, she seemed to suggest, because it is valuable and she can do it.

During and after my fieldwork, in myriad conversations, I discussed these and other stories of more or less "liberal" social engagement in the elite and middle classes to dark-skinned and light-skinned Haitian black nationalists and to many a foreign academic. The initial reaction of the Marxist mulatto academic - dismissive of the Haitian liberal - is representative of *progressive* black nationalists, Marxist or not, who bear a vision of *transforming* Haitian society at its foundation to favor the interests of the masses. This reaction was inflected by a historical memory of the Haitian Revolution as a radical confrontation with human exploitation whose outcome has been co-opted. The stories of the fair-complexioned and *clair* executives – and of other instances of mulatto social engagement – elicited a reaction also grounded in historical



memory. In practically every instance, attention was too lax for me to finish the story, or it was wholly incredulous, or it was both. On two occasions, in an astonishing phenomenon, my interlocutor interrupted me to express incredulity, but in words or tones endorsing *my* incredulity on the presumption that I (taken to be a black-nationalist Haitian, engaged intellectual/anthropologist) had been duly incredulous the first time *I* had heard the story. My interlocutors in those various conversations in effect could not imagine a politically liberal subject of the mulatto elite. The constant commonality among all these reactions – to the extent that I could find any – was a subscription to the currently dominant iteration of the black Republic thesis, the more or less noiriste narrative of Haiti as a black nation. I came to see this resistance – to legitimating the Haitian liberal in general, or more specifically to imagining a liberal mulatto – grounded in a fundamental misreading of the Haitian Revolution initiated by C.L.R. James in the late 1930s with his seminal study *The Black Jacobins*. Speaking of James’s immense influence on the global intelligentsia in his interpretation of the Revolution “as an uprising of oppressed colonial working people,” John Garrigus notes that James “also adopted...populist stereotypes about [mulatto] selfishness” (Garrigus 2006:13-14).

The fair-complexioned executive embodies the color prejudice that can provoke fulminating anger in dark-skinned educated Haitians. From family lore she shared with me, it would seem that her prejudice came for a good part through her grandmother, and she actively passed it on to her children. After breakfast at her house one morning, it was as a banal matter of fact that she discussed with me how she could not countenance the thought of any of her children marrying a dark-skinned Haitian. She is wealthy and lightness of complexion is uniform in her family. She would not need to tell a black Haitian she is prejudiced. She would be presumed to be, and her color precedes her politics. I told a black-nationalist community activist of the fair-

complexioned executive speaking of the urgency to alleviate poverty in the country. I then asked him whether he might envision a common political action with her on the situation. He was about her age, knew her and her siblings; he grew up about five blocks away from them. He could not countenance the thought of the two of them in a common action on the nation.

Beyond its commercial enterprises, the family of the wealthy *clair* executive is of prominence in learned circles for its involvement in cultural productions. In spite of that and her marriage to a black man, her color would also precede her politics in the black-nationalist imaginary. One evening at an academic conference in the Caribbean several months after spending time with the executive in the field, I happened to end up chitchatting at the bar of the conference hotel with a Haitian noiriste intellectual and two American academics. As one of the Americans held forth on Haiti's mulattoes along the theme of the morally repugnant elite, and the other listened intently, I spoke the family name of the *clair* executive to begin what I was intending to be remarks about different family members' involvement in community development and in the founding of a university. I did not get so far with my remarks. A few words after I spoke the family's name, I had to stop talking. The noiriste intellectual had turned to me chuckling with glee, and he was evidently anticipating my own amusement by the story he had begun to tell. He first said the broad lines of the story in halted English to the Americans. He then told me more elaborately in Haitian Creole that a daughter of the family had married a black man and – citing the husband's first name – that he'd squandered their fortune.

When I returned to Port-au-Prince several months later, I told the *clair* executive of being told about her husband squandering her inheritance and asked her what truth there might be to the story. We were at one of the family's businesses, waiting to speak with its principal administrator. She shrugged with amused resignation and proceeded to describe various instances

of friction that did exist in the family among siblings and in-laws. Color and money did not figure in them; they were of the banal kind. In an unrelated conversation over a year before, explaining that there had been no family concerns of color and money about the marriage, the husband, whom by his engagement in literary initiatives I came to think of as the moneyed black intellectual among my collaborators, had also told me of “in-law issues” more or less along the same lines.

Privileged black and mulatto Haitians can nonetheless group across lines of color, class and political ideology for topical action on national politics. The Groupe 184 was a clear expression of that possibility. It was formed in early 2003 to seek the ouster of Jean-Bertrand Aristide from his second presidency, which happened on February 29, 2004<sup>14</sup>. Although it was initiated and led by André Apaid, a businessman of Lebanese descent and one of the most vilified figures of the mulatto economic elite in the global press as a sweatshop operator, the G184’s membership covered an immense breadth of Haitian civil society. One could find in the coalition not only a constellation of trade, industry and liberal-profession associations, but also Lavalas members disillusioned by what they considered Aristide’s betrayal of the movement’s fundamental values and objectives. Outside G184, in no less staunch opposition to Aristide and in active favor of his departure, one could find PAPDA, a collective of activist Haitian civil society organizations working on human and institutional development alternatives to the neo-liberal models. PAPDA is unmistakably of the left, its work clearly advances the interest of the poor, and its leader was tortured and exiled in the early 1990s by the *de facto* government (1991-1994) that ruled Haiti in terror – particularly against leaders, members and supporters of the Lavalas popular movement - after the first coup d’état against Aristide in September 1991.

The G184’s very breadth of ideological diversity would underscore its fragility as a

political project; it is no surprise that the alliance did not hold into an institution. However, in the complexities of historical memory, elements of principled bourgeois liberalism it might have contained might no more have been able to persist cohesively as a political formation across color and class lines. In the field, I spent time talking with a black nationalist in his fifties who had been a public presence in support of Aristide's removal from the Presidency. His father, a black man of great political power in the heyday of the Duvalier dictatorship, amassed a fortune in his time working for the regime. After the death of the father, the man disclaimed his inheritance. He nonetheless offered a modulated assessment of his father's morals and politics. He is still grateful that his father not only maintained a voluminous library at home but also kept on its shelf books which one would not expect a prominent agent of the dictatorship to endorse and to which he had free access. The man told me the family library was the foundation of his political consciousness, citing the work of Arthur Koestler, particularly his novel *Darkness at Noon*, as an example of the catalyst of his precocious opposition to the Duvalier dictatorship. Yet for the first ten years of his life, he took his father's sister – who lived in the family home – to be his mother and called her “mom.” He was ten years old, when he was told of and got to meet his biological mother. She was an illiterate peasant woman. In Haiti, there would generally not have been a place for someone like the biological mother as the woman of the house in a family of privilege, even in the household of an erudite dark-skinned black nationalist. How thoroughly the importance of class infringes on that of color – and the complex relations of these two operators – in the articulation of privilege transpires even more clearly in the fact that the man's father and his biological mother had three children together, not one, and the man's two siblings shared a similar parental history.

Without his father's fortune, the man is nonetheless a worldly person of advanced

education and relative privilege. He went to high school at what was and remains perhaps the most elitist institution in Haiti for children of society's upper crust and expatriates. His professional work in Haiti's social and political economies is grounded in a nationalist vision of a cohesive civil society, viable institutions of substantial democracy and a foregrounding of the problems of the urban poor and the peasantry, informed by a Marxist understanding of the country's inequalities. He spoke wistfully of his experience with a mulatto classmate as 15-year-olds in thrall of Marx's ideas. Using access facilitated by his father's power, he and the classmate once snuck in the offices of a religious order after hours to use its mimeograph to make copies of a protest leaflet. They then went to distribute the flyers around the light-assembly factory zone near the road to the Port-au-Prince airport. The classmate became a key player in one of the most powerful industries in the country, and part of the cadre of mulattoes from the economic elite who remained pro-Aristide. At the time I met the man in the field, he and the classmate had not spoken in decades. When I asked him whether he and the classmate might share a common vision of the country, with dismissive flair and humor he answered that his former classmate was now "un bolchévique du capital" [a Bolshevik of capital].

I never had reason to think that this black nationalist shared C.L.R. James's stereotype of the selfish mulatto. It is by the classmate's professional occupation that the man concluded that the two could not share a common action on the nation's inequalities. I could not know by what moral or practical calculus his classmate would have become a supporter of Aristide, or what he might make of his subjective sympathies with the conditions of the poor against the constraints of his social situation. All in all, the man's dismissing of what liberal possibilities might be in his former classmate's political agency was evocative of momentary squabbles that can pop up among learned urbanites of the left in the global North. Altogether, I would come to understand

from the fieldwork, Haiti is indeed a place where one can find this certain privileged Western subject of a moral sensibility positing mitigation to some degree of the inequalities that condition the reproduction of one's social privileges in the nation. As everywhere else in the West, in Haiti praxis of the privileged moral subject is activated in social fields in which inhere deeply complex crisscrossing operations of class and race/color, and these find significance in historical particularities of the nation.

## Chapter Two Historical Context

Literatures taking Haiti to be the “first” black Republic do not consistently specify the space within which the country became first. Occasionally, it is the New World, at other times “history,” and most often, it would seem, there is no specification at all. The first-ness of Haiti, that I have found, is never situated as a phenomenon of the *West*. Yet the founding of the nation was irrefutably a seminal moment in helping to define the dimensions of Western modernity. This Haiti - as authoritative presence at the birth of the West - is the historic context in which I was able to read the life of the privileged Haitian with critical clarity across boundaries of color. To proceed with the research I effectively had to unlearn the historical sketch of the country that has become a canonical template in many an introduction of popular and scholarly texts on Haiti and Haitians. That story, which I call the black Republic narrative, inflected by themes and theses of the given author, may be aware of class lines amongst Africans and African descendants who transformed the general slave insurrection in Saint-Domingue into a sustained, strategic revolutionary process, but it collapses them in a commonality of phenotype. Carolyn E. Fick, for example, speaks of the “*commandeur* on the plantations,” a slave under whose “direct authority [the] vast majority of the [other] slaves labored,” and of “other privileged positions in the slave hierarchy” (2004:30, 31). Although she correctly remarks that “regardless of one’s rank or station in slavery, in Saint Domingue a slave was a slave” (31), she proceeds to read the “*Revolution from Below*” without accounting for the possibility of historical continuities of those class lines in the revolutionary moment, or in the new society born of it.

In reading the destruction of the colonial order, the conclusion of the Haitian Revolution, and the founding of the Haitian nation – eventually becoming the first black Republic in the narrative - the canonical template conflates distinct forms of social, political, and economic

violence that regulated colonial inequality: slavery, proto-capitalist labor exploitation, and racism. These forms of violence – in their historical iterations – being endemic to the West, the narrative template logically arrives at a taken-for-granted epilogue: ever since 1804, the Haitian people and the Haitian nation have suffered in consequence at the hand of internal and external Western powers and their proxies. The narrative is generally aware of, but not particularly alert to who is suffering, and how, in the nation-state bestowed by the Revolution. Haiti remains a nation created through the genius and unfathomable bravery of formerly enslaved Africans and descendants of Africans who, in alliance with black and mulatto freedmen, some formerly slaveholders, defeated a Napoleonic army to claim political sovereignty on their own terms<sup>15</sup>. The achievement was unthinkable in its own time, as Trouillot (1995) shows. I neither sought nor found reasons to reject this dominant view during my research. I nonetheless propose a re-reading of the historiography to see in the triumph of the Haitian Revolution the birth of a Western bourgeois society by non-white people, when white powers had barely begun elaborating the bourgeois global order of the West. In such a perspective, one begins to see material logics in contemporary Haiti, where one might see paradoxes in the black Republic. The leaders of the Haitian Revolution were implacable enemies of white supremacy and its system of slavery. They nonetheless did not conflate slavery and labor extraction in their radical confrontation with the incipient West, or after Independence. Moreover, if they created their new nation in an inexorably racist world, they would have emerged from the Revolution's international negotiations as informed navigators of the racial universe of the West.

The historian John D. Garrigus (2006) links the mulatto-rights movement that preceded the general insurrection of the slaves in August 1791 to the Revolution. He does so without usurping the dominant historic significance of the black leaders who came on the scene in the



wake of the uprising. I find his work helpful in teasing out of the established historiography the historical-material origins of modern Haiti's socio-political topography. Beginning in the mid-1780s, the mulatto slaveholding planter Julien Raymond, "who was, as yet, no abolitionist" (Garrigus 2006:234), established himself in Paris to argue for official recognition of political equality between free people of color, particularly the wealthy property-owning class, and whites<sup>16</sup>. In late 1789, he and other activist mulatto planters in Paris began calling themselves the "American colonists" to sidestep the question of whether their ancestry made them European or African. By early 1790, not only had the group tactically recruited blacks as members, free blacks constituted almost half the membership (Garrigus 2006:237-240). Mulatto activist planters interpreted an ambiguous decree of March 1790 by the National Assembly in Paris as granting them political rights equal to those of whites in the colony, and they sought its application locally beginning in October 1790. Their campaign led to a civil war within the planter class and "the Caribbean's largest and best-policed slave system let down its guard" (Garrigus 2006:2). Expanding on the work of Carolyn Fick (2004:137-140), Garrigus argues mulatto planters were actively complicit in a limited slave insurrection in the Southern peninsula in early 1791, several months before the massive insurrection in the central plains later in August (2006:250-252).

Beginning in 1796 Toussaint Louverture was increasingly the dominant political and military figure in Saint-Domingue. Leading the first state in the control of the Revolution, he expertly revived the plantation economy from its devastation in the first half of the decade and by the close of the century he was the undisputed ruler of the colony. While former slaves were ruthlessly made to labor as formally liberated cultivators, Louverture, a former freedman slaveholder, was uncompromisingly committed to private property and considerably expanded

his holdings (see Turnier 1989). He was also uncompromisingly committed to Republican France's ideals of *liberté* for all and *égalité* of all. Julien Raymond, the mulatto slaveholder who had not yet been an abolitionist in the 1780s, joined nine white planters to constitute an Assembly that drew up the Constitution of 1801. The document made Louverture the colony's General Governor for Life with the right to name his successor. In the 1780s, when Raymond lived in Paris to press for political equality between mulatto planters and their white peers in the colony, he had in effect argued to French power that mulattoes were no less capable – or trustworthy – than whites to be architects and custodians of capital. With the Constitution of 1801, I would argue, Louverture, having restored the economic luster of the colony in but a handful of years, unilaterally asserted to Napoleon that blacks also were no less capable.

Although Napoleon's expeditionary forces, which arrived in late January 1802 under the command of general Charles Leclerc, eventually captured and deported Louverture (June 1802), Jean-Jacques Dessalines, his chief lieutenant and a former slave, initially aligned himself with the expedition (April 1802), when it appeared that its mission was to stabilize the post-slavery colonial order orchestrated by Louverture. Henri Christophe and other black Louverture lieutenants also took their troops to the French army, which included as well mulatto officers – some of whom had returned to Saint-Domingue from France with the expedition – and their troops. These black and mulatto officers were generally *Creoles*, former slaves as well as freedmen who were born in Saint-Domingue or elsewhere in the Caribbean. So-called “rebel bands” of *Bossales*, African-born former slaves who had been fighting as distinct factions since the insurrection broke out in 1791, adamantly refused to lay down arms against the French and pressed on with their fight. In the colony, the bossale slave was scorned by the creole slave, and the latter was charged with helping to break the former into the colonial system of slavery. The

Bossales would now be fought by Dessalines and the other eventual victors of the Revolution, not once but twice. They were fought first (June-October 1802) on behalf of the French by “the black officers reintegrated under Leclerc’s command” (Trouillot 1995:40). When Paris’s intent transpired as the restoration of slavery, Dessalines and the Creole officers (black and mulatto) broke with the French to launch the War of Independence (October 1802). Alexandre Pétion, the most important of the mulatto officers, recognized Dessalines as the supreme leader of the *Armée indigène* (Indigenous Army), as the reconstituted Revolutionary army was now called. The Bossales refused to accept Dessalines’s authority as they had refused to bow to Leclerc’s. They were again fought (November 1802-April 1803), and this time defeated, by the Dessalines-Creole alliance, which included former slaveholders, mostly but not exclusively mulattoes (see Trouillot 1995:40).

The alliance finished off the French in the Battle of Vertières on November 18, 1803 to conclude the War of Independence. Bearing memories of their native African non-state societies, the Bossales had effectively fought a war of *liberation*, to be free of state control. They would now disperse in the interior of the modernist nation-state, which the Dessalines-Creole alliance solemnly proclaimed on January 1, 1804, to lay the foundation of the peasantry (cf. Barthélemy 1989). In the year following the founding of the nation, Dessalines sought to annihilate whiteness on its soil through killing campaigns against the remaining white population. The Independent state nonetheless adapted the Louverture economic project and its ruthless agricultural labor policies (cf. Trouillot 1990:73, 76). Thus at its birth as a nation we find in Haiti a “free” labor force in the universal political emancipation of the person, and the subordination of labor to capital at the control of an elite class. Thus, indeed, we find for the first time in the Americas the signal political economy of a Western bourgeois society.

In grounding the new nation's sovereign economy in the plantation, a form of production that would be a political-economic absurdity without global commerce, Dessalines practically reprised Louverture's assertion of a sovereign stake by black people in the global order constructed by white powers. Toussaint's Constitution of 1801 consistently employed the French Republican calendar as temporal marker, one banal indication of the normative power of global European symbolic systems in the articulation of the postcolonial nation-state that he prefigured. On January 1, 1804, Dessalines, an illiterate and mono-lingual Haitian, spoke the fact of the new nation to local populations in an oral proclamation in the Creole lingua franca. He nonetheless ensured that a formal Act of Independence was written in French at the same time. That document spoke the fact of the new nation to the no less factual pan-European complex of symbolic, political and economic powers. The Act of French expression spoke to the global political economy<sup>17</sup>.

The Revolution's elites moved on relatively promptly from their triumph. In 1806, Dessalines augmented a tax system (requiring a fourth of agricultural production paid to the state) "barely modified from that of French Saint-Domingue" (Trouillot 1990:59) by an additional 10% import-export levy (Trouillot 1990:60). Dessalines made the nation an Empire, and he, who as a slave would not have held property in the colony, shifted the Louverturean commitment to private property to a drastic program of plantation nationalization. Not incidentally, the Emperor bore, on the one hand, extensive leasehold interests in state property and, on the other, such markers of global elite consumerism as precious-stone jewelry (Madiou 1989a tome 3:146; see Turnier 1989 on Dessalines's property). With his 1825 agreement with King Charles X to indemnify France for the loss of the colony of Saint-Domingue, mulatto President Jean-Pierre Boyer (1818-1843), who also had been an officer in the Revolutionary

army, only formalized a de facto reconciliation with the global order expressed, for example, in the luxurious palaces of the black Henri Christophe, *président et généralissime* (1807-1811) then King (1811-1820) of his territory in the North of the nation. Where the material reproduction of Christophe's nobility rested on a brutal regime of plantation labor extraction, in the Republic of Boyer's predecessor Alexandre Pétion (1807-1818), the mulatto general who had conceded leadership of the War of Independence to Dessalines, the burden of taxation shifted disproportionately onto small agricultural producers (see Trouillot 1990:60). After Boyer signed the indemnity treaty with Charles X in 1825, he instituted a Rural Code in 1826, which codified and considerably intensified the extraction of labor in the peasantry by binding landless peasants to agricultural estates.

Thus today, if legatee formations of the Revolutionary elites continue to move along with the West, Haiti's peasantry and its offshoot in the urban poor do not link to the historic entrenchment of the nation in the global bourgeois order. Contemporary Haiti's dominant black nationalism has no more come to terms with the ontological ramifications of this historic dichotomy than mulatto nationalism in its heyday.

The sociologist Jean Casimir steers clear of color in speaking of Creole freedpeople as "bearers of facets of Latin culture" who facilitated the "acculturation and integration" of newly arrived African captives and were "partly responsible for the environment in which the captive labor evolved" (Casimir 2009:24, 25)<sup>18</sup>. Casimir nonetheless subscribes to a widespread tradition of the black-nationalist literature in reading Dessalines's nationalization of former colonial plantations as an incipient socialism presumptively equitable toward the nation's majority. He argues that "Dessalines challenges the freedpeople's tendency to monopolize" those plantations after Independence, and that "according to Dessalines, it is up to the State to protect the former

captives' access to the land" (Casimir 2009:106). Trouillot states wistfully that "the chance for capitalist accumulation within the state sector died with the murder of Dessalines. The emperor's projects...were never realized" (1990:64). He nonetheless speaks at the same time of "a practice common at least since Dessalines [whereby] political and military leaders bought for themselves, with state money, the luxuries they thought they deserved" (1990:65). Dessalines justifiably remains an inspiring icon of explosive confrontation with white supremacy, but in Leslie Péan's (2003) *Political Economy of Corruption in Haiti*, more cogently than in Trouillot's conflicted ambiguity, what socialism the black-nationalist imagination might read in the Dessalinian project transpires as myth, and its nationalization agenda as but an alternative modality to reproduce an elite class in the dominant schema of the bourgeois global order (see Péan 2003:100-102)<sup>19</sup>. The differentiation of black Haitians in privilege remains today in the shadow of the Bossale-Creole dichotomy of the nation's founding black population. In light of the naturalization nonetheless of the *blackness* that presumably unites subjects of the contemporary Republic I find it analytically useful in this study to read its distinct history within that of the nation.

Haiti's presumptive blackness entered the national narrative officially in Dessalines's Constitution of 1805. In this original formulation, Dessalines groups as "blacks" not only light-skinned and dark-skinned Haitians, but also exceptionally white women and their children as well as certain Poles and Germans, who had been agreeable to the revolutionary movement or were currently societally useful. The intent was to preempt differentiation of national subjects in *color* while positing *white* - not *mulatto* - as the nation's "other." In the Dessalinian regime the "anciens libres" [former freedpeople], mulattoes for the most part but not exclusively, invoked their education in claiming positions of prominence in affairs of state. In the colony, as freedmen they could be people of privilege who had opportunities to travel and study in France<sup>20</sup>. The

“nouveaux libres” [new freedpeople], overwhelmingly blacks but including an occasional mixed-race, had been slaves who gained their liberation beginning with the general insurrection of August 1791<sup>21</sup>. In making the nation black Dessalines was interested in preventing the *ancien libre* bearing a French education from *becoming* “mulatto.”

Dessalines’s Empire ceased to exist with his assassination in October 1806. Henri Christophe, a black *ancien libre* general who commanded the North province and the army’s second in command, succeeded Dessalines. A few months later a civil war split the nation between two distinct states in the aftermath of a new Constitution ratified in December 1806. The Constitution of 1806 paved the way for the March 1807 election of President Alexandre Pétion, a mulatto *ancien libre* general who commanded the West province and the army’s third-ranked officer. In the interim, on February 17, 1807, the North formally seceded under a Constitution that made Christophe leader of a new state seated in Cap-Haïtien, the capital of the province<sup>22</sup>.

The first article of the Constitution of 1806 invokes the “territory of the Republic,” and the second speaks of “The Republic of Haiti.” Christophe’s Constitution of 1807 altogether sidesteps the form of the nation by speaking solely Of The Government of Haiti under a “first magistrate who takes the title and quality of president and generalissimo of the land and sea forces of Haiti.” The document specifically requires that the “government of Haiti takes the title and will be known [as] the State of Haiti.” Both Pétion’s and Christophe’s respective Constitutions dispense with Dessalines’s coloring of the nation. Both do repeat Dessalines’s Constitutional declaration that slavery is forever abolished. However, only Pétion reprises Dessalines’s prohibition of any “white of any nation” as property owner. He also reprises the limitation of Haitian nationality to specific categories of whites. Meanwhile, under Christophe in

the north “Government solemnly guarantees to foreign merchants the safety of their persons and of their properties.” While Christophe’s Constitution implicitly lifts the prohibition on whites as property owners, it says nothing at all about whites as nationals. Where it sketches the contours of public administration, it completely ignores the definition of the nation. Thus, on the one hand, Haiti’s first Head of State, a black *nouveau libre*, made the nation a black Empire and the third, a mulatto *ancien libre*, made it a Republic of no particular color. Both are nevertheless in agreement on formally curbing whiteness within the nation. On the other hand, the second Haitian Head of State, a black *ancien libre* who in the colony shared with the third privileges denied the first, showed no interest in the form or the color of the nation and no apparent reservation in countenancing whiteness<sup>23</sup>. Therefore, calling the nation a “black Republic” does not mark a singular historical event. Neither does the appellation refer to a historical process in the nation’s genealogy so much as an amalgam of disparate political maneuvers which, at their inception, were in no way intended to cohere as a suite.

If an anthropology of Haiti, particularly an anthropology of the nation’s elites, needs to be mindful of the reification of its blackness, there are three additional points requiring critical attention in the history of color in national life. Dessalines’s formulation of national blackness was not only a tactical attempt to preempt the problematic of national subject qua color, but it also powerfully signaled that the new nation was forever done with the tyranny of whiteness. However, it nonetheless created a space for the construction of an *ideal type* of Haitian. Disciplinary wariness of ideal types would be warranted nearly two centuries later, when François Duvalier imagined the ideal Haitian and instrumentalized the type as the foundation of maniacal violence on the nation across class and color lines. Moreover, Dessalines was not trying to defuse a problem in the general population. The problem was “within the leadership [in] the



rivalry between ‘anciens libres’ and ‘nouveaux libres’” (Trouillot 1990: 45). Thus, at its formal point of departure, the black Republic discourse comes out of a conversation between segments of the national elite. It is not insignificant that Dessalines also attempted to pre-empt a breach in the leadership on the axis of color by – unsuccessfully – offering his daughter in marriage to the mulatto general Pétion<sup>24</sup>. If at its inception the discourse did not speak to the condition of the general population, in its dominant iteration in contemporary Haiti it does not speak to the condition of the nation’s poor majority. Finally, as Haitians became officially black irrespective of somatic appearance or subjective consciousness, theirs was blackness as metaphor. Thus the state attempted a metaphorical solution to a concrete problem: the emergence of skin color as a political idiom premised on the valuation of whiteness. If national subjects were universally black, there would be no socioeconomic advantage in some approximation of Europeans’ somatic characteristics. So went the logic. However, then, the value of whiteness was no metaphor; it was a social fact refracted locally from global processes. Now, as Robotham 2000 might argue, postcolonial national elites must still contend with the social fact of global whiteness.

After the assassination of Dessalines in 1806, color disappeared from official definitions of the nation. However, over the first half of the century, mulatto intellectuals and politicians developed a distinctive politico-historical discourse on the nation that worked to legitimate claims of the Haitian *qua* mulatto on leadership of the state. This nationalist current was multi-dimensional - existential in its embrace of dominant European cultural values as civilizational compass of the nation and political in its claims on the nation-state. The political dimension turned on two central theses. I would call the competence thesis – after Trouillot’s analysis - the argument that mulattoes should lead the nation by virtue of their education – that is, their

education in European thought and practice – dating contingently to their privileged social situation in the colonial era. The Pétion authorship thesis would be the construction of a historical memory that glorified the Revolutionary mulatto general Alexandre Pétion in his founding of the Republic. Pétion’s state is represented in mulatto nationalist thought as sensible corrective to the Dessalinian era that preceded it, and as rational alternative to the contemporaneous absolute monarchy of Henri Christophe in the Kingdom of the North that shared the national territory<sup>25</sup>.

Mulatto nationalism duly acknowledged bravery and intelligence in black leaders of the Revolution, particularly Toussaint Louverture, Jean-Jacques Dessalines and Henri Christophe. However, it did so together with an insistent attribution of perfidy and gratuitous cruelty to their leadership, and while lauding Pétion as a paragon of republican virtues and thus effectively the ultimate author of the modern nation<sup>26</sup>. Elaborated over the course of Pétion’s presidency (1806-1818) and that of his successor Jean-Pierre Boyer (1818-1843) this intellectual tradition operationalized color in political partisanship (see Nicholls 1974). By the final decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a counter-narrative forcefully reasserted the unqualified centrality of Dessalines’s leadership in the forging of the nation and posited that the nation ought to be led in the name of the most numerous segment of the population<sup>27</sup>. By the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Pétion authorship thesis lost its last shred of public resonance under the weight of a modern historiography that attributes the Revolution’s strategic genius to Toussaint Louverture and its conclusive military sweep to Dessalines’s bravado.

Trouillot speaks of the renewal in early 19<sup>th</sup> century of the pre-Independence “argument that the mulattoes and their descendants had a natural right to rule Haiti by virtue of their origins – because the blacks came from Africa and the whites from Europe” (1990:126). His historical

formulation comprises both the political and existential dimensions of mulatto nationalism – the political claim on the leadership of the nation, and the taste for European things, thoughts and practices as civilizational norms. Trouillot also mentions that “sometime before the end of the [1915-1934 US] occupation, the reference to competence” ceased to be politically potent in mulattoes’ argument for control of the state, because the “greatest number” now had plenty of their own “competent” representatives (1990:129). During the US occupation not only had the black elite been asserting its competence, it now began to assert the validity of the African heritage. A seminal moment was the ethnologist Jean Price-Mars's (1928) forceful legitimization of the cultural ways of the Haitian peasantry. As transpires in Roger Gaillard's history of the moment, the *mulâtriste* reaction to Price-Mars's study *Ainsi Parla l'Oncle* reached the point of frenetic anguish in reaffirming the mulatto's European ascendance. In his critique of Price-Mars's argument, a widely read newspaper columnist of the day, “as it is, claiming [this] genealogy for himself” (Gaillard 1998:xix) insisted “so what a bastard filiation, the turpitude of colonial promiscuities, the anonymous shame of brief encounters, the brief coupling of two paroxysms. [Nature] achieves its aims with the means at its disposal” (Gaillard 1998:xx)<sup>28</sup>.

The mulatto competence thesis must actually have begun to lapse into obsolescence well before the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Parti National renewed the “*noiriste* arguments [in] the 1860s with [the] slogan ‘The greatest good for the greatest number’” (Trouillot 1990:126). The black Louis Joseph Janvier, a point of departure of modern intellectual *noirisme*, became one of the party’s most fervent ideologues (cf. Nicholls [1986] 1998:311, [1979] 1986:113-116). Janvier left Haiti in 1877 to study medicine in France and as an intellectual polemicist was eventually to write that “France is the capital of humanity. Haiti is the black France” (Janvier 1886:57). At the official dedication of the mausoleum of the French historian Jules Michelet, Janvier spoke of

“Paris [the] City of Lights, and France [the] Torch-Nation” (1883:621) in reassuring an audience that included “Mr. Jules Ferry, then minister of

Public Instruction and the delegate of Romania, Mr. Hasdeu-Melcy... what most makes the glory of France is that she is the Disinterested Nation... Wherever she has unfurled her flags – be they white or tri-color - what she sought to conquer is not land: it is man... The fall of the Bastille, said Victor Hugo, was the fall of all Bastilles. That is true. [Janvier 1883:620-622].

Not long after Janvier sung the praise of virtuous French glory, he sponsored the membership of Anténor Firmin, another black intellectual politician, in the Society of Anthropology of Paris. Firmin’s engagement with the Society led to his talking back assertively to a French scientific racist *De l’égalité des races humaines* [On the Equality of the Human Races] (1885). Amongst the miscellaneous remarks in the argument of his main thesis, Firmin could confidently state as “certain truth [that] the white race of Europe [currently] offers us the greatest sum of beauty the human face is capable of.” Such robust competence in Janvier and in Firmin in the universalization of European normative thought was happening in the context of a relatively expansive black political elite. Firmin was in self-imposed exile in Paris to keep his distance from the autocratic President Lysius Salomon (1879-1888). Salomon, leader of the Parti National, idol of Janvier and contemporary *noiristes*, was the first of a series of six black presidents through the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Firmin, a dark-skinned man of advanced education in dominant French cultural ways, came to socio-political prominence as a leader of the Parti Libéral, which remains today the emblematic mulatto party in the black-

nationalist imagination. It would seem that if the authorship and competence theses still had any resonance at the time as distinctively mulatto thought, it must have already been diminished.

What became the Saint-Domingue Revolution entered in sustained conversation with Revolutionary France relatively early. The two can, in fact, arguably be said to share a gestational moment in the second half of the 1780s in the resident presence in Paris of the colonial mulatto planters lobbying for political equality with their white peers. In the aftermath of the slaves' general insurrection in August 1791, the French Revolutionary government – through its various iterations - sent a series of Civil Commissions to the colony to manage political developments. When, in February 1794, Republicans in Paris ratify the abolition of slavery proposed by their Commissioners, they only formalize the fact of freedom which the formerly enslaved had asserted on their own terms on the ground. Both in France and Saint-Domingue the moment nonetheless speaks to the *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen*, a seminal document of modern France that is not yet five years old; the French First Republic is not yet two. Subsequently, Louverture will frame the affirmation of his power in the Constitution of 1801 expressly in the ideals of the Revolutionary Republic. Thus he at the apex of his power as well as the activist mulatto slaveholders in pre-Revolutionary Paris would have in effect been *making* global France.

Louis Joseph Janvier's or Anténor Firmin's celebration of France in the seat of Frenchness in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century would not be a *cultural* aberration. It expressed a political-economic condition. Louverture and the mulatto planters, as precursors of Haiti's national elites, effectively argued and enacted their competence to be within an expanded limit – beyond whiteness as active agent – of an emerging global modernity. When Bonaparte's expeditionary forces left France in December 1801 to restore slavery in Saint-Domingue,

Louverture's sons had been living in France for their education. Ultimately, this was a matter of political praxis, because children of a local elite engaged in the global political economy would have to reproduce competence in ways of being upon which this globality pivots. Contemporary identitarian formations of privilege in Haiti contest social and political economies – and black nationalism asserts the color of the nation - in cultural and epistemological vocabularies of the West, because at its inception in 1804 the new nation renewed the stake of the Louverture's state in the global economy.

In 1904, for the nation's centenary, "La Dessalinienne" was adopted as the national anthem, settling once and for all in its title the question of the nation's authorship<sup>29</sup>. Significantly, color is absent from the hymn, which thus stays with the spirit if not the tactic of Dessalines's intent of a national society undifferentiated in complexion. As it happens, the black-nationalist tradition has never been articulated exclusively by dark-skinned Haitians. The fiery expression of the Act of Independence (stating the fact of the new nation) and of related texts (affirming Dessalines's absolute authority) is the work of Louis Boisrond-Tonnerre, making him, a mulatto educated in France and directly linked to the colonial slaveholding elite, one of the founding authors of Haitian black nationalism. Moreover, in a letter reproduced by the economic historian Alain Turnier, Boisrond-Tonnerre along with several mulatto generals assured Dessalines's widow the day after his assassination that "our position remains unchanged: Avenge the Emperor or Die" (Turnier 1989:45-47). He was also assassinated in his jail cell days later. In work such as the novel *Gouverneurs de la rosée* [Masters of the Dew] in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century or the monumental bronze sculpture *Le marron inconnu* [The Unknown Maroon] in the 1960s, or in contemporary academic scholarship, light-skinned Haitian writers, artists and scholars have

continuously been present in intellectual and creative currents that advance the narrative of Haiti's blackness.

The late 1930s saw a shift in the register of black nationalism in the wake of the journal *Les Griots* and its eponymous literary school. François Duvalier, a leading voice of the movement, posited *mulatto* and *black* as two distinct political economic classes, leading to what a public intellectual would later call “a triangular class struggle in [which]

the elite and the masses remain face to face, but the elite splits itself in opposing and competing camps: one of light complexion situated at the pinnacle (and always denounced as hostile to the people), and the other of a darker shade frustrated at the base, and (because racially similar to the urban and rural masses) pretending to be one with them. [Gaillard 1998:xxiii]<sup>30</sup>

The nationalist strain of the *Les Griots* thinkers eventually arrived at the 20<sup>th</sup> century iteration of *noirisme*, a discourse that effectively asserts, on the one hand, the centrality of blackness as complexion and tradition of national identity and, on the other, a radical skepticism on mulatto political-economic intent on the nation (cf. Piquion n.d.:176-177). It achieved ideological hegemony with François Duvalier's dictatorship in the 1960s (cf. *Collectifs Paroles* 1976).

The *Les Griots* intellectual engagement was principally in reaction to the “temporarily reestablished...supremacy of the mulatto elite” (Nicholls 1974b:15) from the onset of the U.S. occupation in 1915. A series of mulatto presidents continued after the end of the occupation in 1934, and Elie Lescot (May 1941-January 1946) undertook an unprecedented mulattoization of the state that systematically excluded educated middle-class blacks from all significant levels of the public service. Up until then – and this throughout the Pétion-Boyer period – mulatto regimes

had their black officers, and vice versa. Lescot's exclusionary practices were such a departure from Haiti's socio-political tradition that it had come to seem to "a majority of urbanites that Haiti's political and cultural future was at stake" (Trouillot 1990:128). A mass movement in Port-au-Prince uniting black and mulatto intellectuals and activists from the political center leftward led to the fall of Lescot and to the election of Dumarsais Estimé, a black member of the cabinet of Lescot's mulatto predecessor Stenio Vincent. Earlier during the Vincent presidency, Estimé had been President of the Chamber of Deputies, and an unmistakable marker of his elite situation was his new "tan Oldsmobile" at a time in Haiti when "automobiles were few, and license plates were memorized backwards and forwards by all literate citizens" (Dunham 1994:21). He marginalized the left wing of the coalition that toppled Lescot (see Nicholls 1974a), and his presidency became the political concretization of *noiriste* ideology (August 1946-May 1950). "Noiristes" came to remember his election as the "1946 revolution." Seeking the presidency in 1957, Duvalier explicitly claimed his legacy.

Expressly *noiriste* intellectuals have continued to think and write prominently in Haiti since the fall of the Duvalier dictatorship in 1986, but *noiriste* thought weighs considerably less in contemporary Haitian intellectual life than it did in the 1960s and 1970s. As the political scientist François Pierre-Louis (private communication) notes, "noirisme is spent" as an intellectual framework in which to apprehend Haiti's contemporary dilemmas or to envision their resolution. Privileged mulattoes as well as black nationalists can be found summarily rejecting the *noiriste* proprietary claim on the nation in the name of the black-skinned majority. This rejection of "noirisme" speaks variously to the political and economic violence across color and class lines of both Duvalier regimes (François 1957-1971, his son Jean-Claude 1971-1986). However, mulattoes and black nationalists reject the "noiriste" claim differently.



The mulatto rejecting the proprietary claim would also tend to contest the black Republic trope. In contemporary Haiti, in the absence of an actively mulatto nationalism since the authorship thesis lapsed into irrelevance, this rejection of the black-nationalist claim on the nation becomes in fact the sole distinctively mulatto statement on the nation that I found in the field. In two unrelated conversations months apart I asked the wealthy fair-complexioned executive and a trader of Arab descent whether they felt marginalized by the notion of Haiti as a black Republic. They each began their answer with the same assertive exclamation, verbatim: “Tout sa k pou t a di se peyi yo pa la ankò” [All those who could say it’s their country are no longer around], alluding to the long-extinct native population at Columbus’s arrival<sup>31</sup>. The Arab Haitian went on to wax poetic about Haitian Creole: “Papa m te pale sèt lang men l te toujou di se Kreyòl ki pi bèl lang ki egziste. Kreyòl se lang mwen” [My father spoke seven languages, but he always said Creole is the most beautiful language that exists. Creole is my language]. Black nationalists who unequivocally reject *noirisme*, particularly on the left, nonetheless tend to view the privileged mulatto *social subject* as “hostile to the interest of the people.” It is a black-nationalist subjectivity of a Marxist or proto-Marxist understanding of the dominant economic class, but it ultimately imputes to the actors who articulate the class a predatory essence qua individuals. Altogether, in contemporary Haiti a liberal mulatto might not subscribe to the black Republic thesis, and a liberal black nationalism sidesteps “noiriste” color determinism in principle only to arrive in effect at a *noiriste* conclusion on the possibilities in mulatto political agency. I posit the situation as a post-Duvalier moment.

At the time I arrived in the field, moving about in Haiti’s civil society were two former Presidents – Jean-Claude Duvalier and Jean-Bertrand Aristide – representing arguably the two most polarizing moments of modern Haitian politics. And one outgoing President ideologically

situated somewhere between those two was also headed toward civil life, not exile. Soon, quite remarkably in Haiti's history, there would be three former Presidents in civil life and one sitting President in obstreperous disputes – eventually chronic - with a recalcitrant legislature. Taking the moment to be the expression of a structurally deficient political liberalism, I made the privileged liberal subject the locus of my investigation of color in the nation's socio-political economic condition. In doing so I address *la question de couleur* not as a cultural problematic of color, identity and history in the nation but as a material web of social, political and economic relations.

This ethnography in no way investigates traces of the Parti Libéral in contemporary Haiti. I nonetheless remain aware that black-nationalist students of Haiti tend to dismiss 19<sup>th</sup> liberalism from the currents of Haiti's political history as a mulatto fallacy (see, for example, Trouillot 1990:126-127). If I find the bourgeois liberal moment in today's Haiti to be a legitimate object of study, I do not read through color. That the conflation of color and political position is analytically chimerical can be understood through the very moment of late-19<sup>th</sup> century political history analyzed by Trouillot 1990. The presence of the dark-skinned *noiriste* president Lycius Salomon, leader of the Parti National, is not visible in contemporary Haiti's mulatto elite, only because of gender conventions. Salomon's only child was a girl. He had her with the second of his two white French wives, and both of her own marriages were to light-skinned Haitian men<sup>32</sup>. She upon marriage and her son upon birth took her second husband's surname. In her mulatto son and grandson, through calculated color prejudice or through the contingency of human sentiment, she ultimately fulfilled a mulatto practice of reproducing lightness of complexion in the lineage<sup>33</sup>. This history suggests how complex and shifting the intersection of class and color in Haiti can be. Thus the ethnographic investigation does not apprehend color prejudice within

*mulâtrisme*, that is, as a problematic endemic to the mulatto universe, but rather as one transactional mode among others in a broader economy of color that articulates with the reproduction of privilege.

### Chapter Three

#### *Noirisme* and the Political Instrumentality of Blackness

At the American Anthropological Association conference of 2011 in Montreal, Canada, a panelist informally prefaced his presentation by noting that the day, November 18, was the anniversary of the *Bataille de Vertières*, the decisive battle of the Haitian War of Independence in the northern town of Vertières. The Haitian Revolution, we were reminded, triumphed on this day in 1803 over Napoleon Bonaparte's expeditionary forces. The former slaves declared Independence on the first of January, creating the "first black republic;" and Western powers had ever since made the country pay dearly for such temerity. The remarks were unmistakably extemporaneous musing and clearly not intended to be taken as scholarship. They indeed turned out to be wholly unrelated to the research findings presented by the scholar. Their very banality nonetheless reinforced the taken-for-granted quality of widely circulated postulates in the dominant narrative of Haiti as a black Republic. They effectively constituted an overarching framework of whatever a forthcoming presentation on Haiti or Haitians might contain. Yet, from the ethnographic experience among privileged Haitians, I had had reason to apply to Haiti's blackness anthropology's fundamental skepticism on reified social phenomena.

The black Republic narrative, like all nationalist narratives, mystifies as well as reveals social relations within and without the nation. As the trope of the Haitian Republic's essential blackness is reproduced in the global intelligentsia, and as it thoroughly dominates public imaginings of the nation, it remains fundamentally a domain of privileged people, and privileged narrators can routinely instrumentalize it in the reproduction of the marginality of the country's vast majority. The thesis of Haiti's blackness becomes an object of study here, because of its naturalization and its instrumentality in the reproduction of privilege and inequality. "Noirisme" provides a fertile point of entry to critical engagement. In the post-Duvalier moment, the black

Republic narrative remains heavily inflected by the Duvalierist past. Yet outside neo-Duvalierist circles, those who subscribe to the black Republic thesis tend to do so at a critical distance from Duvalier, and often enough from “noirisme” in general.

About a month after the AAA meeting in Montreal, and seven into the presidency of Michel Martelly, a fleeting moment of a morning radio show would give a succinct glimpse of the current state of Haiti’s blackness as both historical process and political instrument. It is early December and I am in the passenger seat of a car made available to me through family relations, headed toward downtown Port-au-Prince. The driver, a soft-spoken man in his early twenties, is off-duty from his regular job operating a “tap-tap,” one of the colorful communal taxis that shuttle passengers between outlying neighborhoods and the center of the capital. He is one of a handful of drivers of similar socio-economic standing whom I informally employ based on their respective availability. Originally from a village in southern Haiti where his mother still lives, he is now thoroughly urbanized. He wears “pèpè,” recycled garments from overseas sold in street-side bins and market kiosks, but he dresses neatly and with understated flair: this morning, casual loafers, kaki shorts and t-shirt. The car radio is tuned to a program of local and international pop music interspersed with the host’s smart banter.

Traffic on Delmas Road is crawling. A throng of vendors and the occasional pile of garbage on either side of the thoroughfare push pedestrians onto the roadway, sometimes darting amidst the slow-moving vehicles. Incidentally, I am on my way to an academic conference on the 19<sup>th</sup> century Haitian statesman and intellectual Anténor Firmin. This will soon be poetic irony, given the depth of “noiriste” scorn for Firmin's Parti Libéral. The final notes of a local pop song fade out on the radio, and the disc jockey intones solemnly in French: “Eight o’clock, the hour of the flag in the entire expanse of the national territory.” As the DJ finishes the words, I

see in the unbridled vitality of the street expression of political rights reclaimed at tremendous human costs since the fall of the Duvalier dictatorship. I have the proverbial sinking feeling in my gut. The announcement is a relic from the Duvalierist past of surrealist political violence. Jean-Claude Duvalier returned to the country the previous January, but his presence has settled into banality rather than political significance<sup>34</sup>. Martelly, since his election in April, has been said to restore respectability to Duvalier's cronies, but I have not seen much political effect of that, either, on the ground. However, I feel definite distress at a Duvalierist catchphrase on a rush-hour program of a major radio station. Fortunately, to my great relief and amusement, it is a false alarm. No sooner has the DJ finished that rhetorical ritual of yesteryear, he moves without ado to announce the day's weather forecast. There are no contextualizing comments, but the distinct scorn in his tone as he switches rhetorical register is nevertheless telling.

I ask the driver whether he grasps what the disc jockey has just done. He does not. While I am at it, I try to engage him on Duvalier's legacy. When I ask him what he knows about life under Duvalier, he shrugs with a bashful smile, not knowing much. "There were the macoute guys," is his only answer. Another time, returning to the conversation a little less than a year later while in a different car on a different errand, I will ask him more specifically about his impression of what Duvalier did for the "black people of Haiti." This time, there will be no shrug or smile, just a look of incomprehension as he glances at me quizzically. Rather than keeping the focus on Duvalier, I will switch it toward the black Republic thesis in general: "Do you understand that Haiti is a black country? Y'know, sometimes people call it a black republic." His answer again will be the shrug and bashful smile as he mutters: "I don't know." Significantly, he says this without irony. After finishing the "certificate," the sixth year of instruction that marks the end of primary school, his mother took him from their native village to live with a sister,

hoping for him to continue his schooling. He was fifteen years old. Two years later, bowing to economic realities, his scholastic education was over. As a twenty-six-year-old today he would have had no exposure to Duvalier's public spectacles of ideology. More tellingly, he was of a socio-economic background that precludes the formal education which dispenses the understanding of the national past projected in the black Republic narrative. The radio announcer's sleight of rhetoric that December morning of 2011 was a contemptuous dismissal of Duvalier's ideological posturing. What Duvalier made of the narrative nonetheless persists in how learned people "know" Haitian blackness. There was no way to know whether the DJ meant to mock "noirisme" in general, much less whether he understood Duvalierism to be "noirisme" writ macabre. However, the ritual he ridiculed was a pivotal element of the ideological underpinnings of the dictatorship's fantastical violence. It was fashioned by François Duvalier with the "noiriste" toolkit, and through it one might grasp traces of Duvalierism in a black-nationalist imagination that would otherwise wish to keep a critical distance from noirisme

"Eight o'clock, the hour of the flag in the entire expanse of the national territory" was the prelude to a piece of formidable political theater. From the 1960s well into the 1970s, on practically all radio stations across the land, the announcer's voice would be followed by a rendition of the national anthem. On the grounds of the national palace in the Champs de Mars area of Port-au-Prince, a live brass band playing an instrumental arrangement of the anthem would accompany the raising of the flag. Drivers on nearby streets would have stopped their cars in whatever spots they happened to be at the onset of the ceremony. Lest they risk considerable harm to themselves by (legal and extra-legal) police agents of the state, drivers and passengers alike would have stepped out of the vehicles with deference. Along with pedestrians who had similarly stopped in their tracks, they would stand at attention facing in the direction of the

palace until the band played the last note and the flag reached the top of the pole. Meanwhile, on public and private school grounds, pupils would be singing a selected stanza of the national anthem as the flag was raised, usually by a pair of schoolmates.

On the radio, the closing note of the anthem was not yet the end of the ritual. Duvalier's nasal drawl would follow as he proceeded to renew in triumphalist cadence the *Serment de fidélité au Drapeau*, his personal Oath of Fidelity to the Flag of the nation. The Oath was a paean to the heroic forebears of the Haitian *nègre*. Each verse spoken by Duvalier would be re-affirmed in echo by another male voice of neutral tone and matter-of-fact cadence. Meanwhile, at the "écoles nationales," public schools attended by the socio-economically disadvantaged, pupils would similarly follow the anthem with a live recitation of Duvalier's patriotic nod to the heroic past. He first took the Oath which the pupils would dutifully repeat in a speech introducing the Constitution that proclaimed him President for Life in 1964<sup>35</sup>:

I swear to God and to the Nation/To be its uncompromising and  
fierce guardian/Let it flutter in the blue sky/To remind all  
Haitians/Of the exploits of our sublime martyrs/They who attained  
immortality/Under cannonballs and volleys of bullets/At Butte  
Charier, At Vertières/In the Crete à Pierrot/To found for us a  
fatherland/Where the Haitian negro/Truly feels sovereign and free.

Duvalier complemented the sort of ideological spectacle which he produced around the raising of the flag with practical populism. On national holidays marking historic moments of the Haitian Revolution, he brought peasants by the busload to Port-au-Prince to cheer on his public speeches. He encouraged his association with vodou practices in the public imagination. Through the *Volontaires de la sécurité nationale*, more commonly known as the *Tontons Macoutes*, a



militia that vastly outnumbered the formal Armed Forces of Haiti, he empowered thugs in the rural interior as well as in the urban proletariat and middle classes to wreck havoc on the general population with impunity. On New Year's Day, a motorcade paraded through both popular and ritzy neighborhoods of Port-au-Prince and Duvalier (first François, then his successor son, Jean-Claude) tossed coins and banknotes from the back seat of the presidential limousine. Throngs of the poor who had cheered enthusiastically in anticipation by the roadside now scrambled for the money on the ground<sup>36</sup>.

Duvalier's populist gestures were readily legible to the Haitian poor and they were presumably intended to induce the allegiance of the socio-economically marginalized. They were also legible to privileged Haitians, to whom Duvalier posited himself as the embodiment of a Revolutionary promise to defend the interests of Haiti's poor black majority, particularly the peasantry. However, the verbal theatrics such as those around the raising of the flag were not comprehensible to the "people," to the "masses." Both the national anthem and Duvalier's personal Oath to the Flag are French texts. As such their publics could not possibly have included what Simon Fass (1985) calls Haiti's ordinary people, those who do not matter in the political process: the poor mono-lingual Creole-speaking majority of Haitians. That is why, speaking of such texts, I speak of ideological spectacle rather than ideological populism. If they were public displays of ideological grandstanding, they were not addressed primarily to the "people." They were texts intended for French-speaking Haitians, those identified by Fass (1985) as "extraordinary people," subjects who matter to the political process.

In Duvalier's historical context, his choice of the word "nègre" [negro] in the original French text of his Oath to the Flag was of political significance. He could have used "noir" to denote the black Haitian. In 1801, Toussaint Louverture spoke of himself as "Le premier des

noirs” (The First of the Blacks). This “noir” is descriptive, providing for the identification of a certain subject among others, and the term has remained in common usage. Colonial practices created the “nègre,” a human of African origins animated by a complex of material and cultural conditions amounting to a lesser humanity than the civilizational norm. By the late 18<sup>th</sup> century the use of “noir” or “nègre” could more or less correlate with the speaker’s social or geographic situation. In a harsh 1790 critique, a colonial physician railed in Paris against the “Société des amis des *Noirs*” (Society of the Friends of the Blacks), an abolitionist group<sup>37</sup>. The physician asserted that members of the Society were “enemies of the Whites” and did not realize that “if the Nègres could make themselves heard, they would ask you [to] remove them from the barbaric lands that saw them born.” A similar pattern transpires in the 1791 effort of a group of citizens in Nantes, a major port of the Atlantic trade. They aimed to facilitate a colonist’s letter to the King three months into the slaves’ insurrection. While the Nantes citizens spoke of the rebellion of the “Noirs à Saing-Domingue,” the colonist’s letter spoke of “nègres [who,] armed with sharp daggers by an ostensibly philanthropic sect, have slit their masters’ throats.” The “nègre” of the colonial imagination was a barbarian; he could not possibly be Duvalier’s “nègre.”

Haitian authors of the 19<sup>th</sup> century would not generally use the term “nègre” to denote a social subject of African ancestry. The word began to enter the routine vocabulary of black writers of the French-speaking world in the 1930s with the authors of the Négritude movement. It initially denoted not so much a political subject as a cultural subject<sup>38</sup>. Beginning in the 1950s more aggressively polemical authors like Cheikh Anta Diop and Frantz Fanon made the “nègre” a definite political subject, one motivated specifically by a grievance against European colonial interests. In 1964, this would be Duvalier’s “nègre,” whom he purported to represent in his Oath to the Flag as he declared himself President for Life. This would also be the logical end point of

“noirisme.” The *nègre* as national avatar, wholly a project of Duvalier abetted by fellow “noiriste” intellectual activists, might resonate then in the anti-racist imaginary. However, it was of a piece with Duvalier’s ideological shenanigans, given its centrality in the legitimation of dictatorial powers to crush nationalists of any color and social situation substantially engaged on the interests of Haiti’s poor (black) majority. If today the Haitian *nègre* may yet again hold symbolic appeal to an anti-racist imaginary, its use around one of Duvalier’s most spectacular ideological productions in one of Haiti’s most respected newspapers cogently indicates the nefarious influence of the Duvalierist past in contemporary Haitian nationalist thought.

The internationally known bronze sculpture *Le marron inconnu* has fared better in public esteem than Duvalier’s more vacuous ideological undertakings. In fact, it is almost solely associated with its acclaimed author, the architect Albert Mangonès, rather than with Duvalier’s political programme. I nevertheless call it a “noiriste” landmark, because its creation was a signature project of the Duvalierist regime. I find it immensely helpful in trying to apprehend the import of class in the articulation of the black Republic thesis. The work is manifestly another Duvalier text of ideological spectacle. Duvalier’s words at its dedication are encapsulated in an epigram that remains firmly attached to the base of the statue<sup>39</sup>. The sculpture was commissioned by the regime, and Mangonès installed it in 1967 across from the National Palace in the *Place du Marron inconnu*, a square which he also designed, imagining the whole as a memorial to colonial maroons. By 1967, Duvalier had long reached the pinnacle of dictatorial powers. He declared himself President for Life in 1964. In 1966, the Holy See acquiesced to his expulsion of foreign-born clergy leaders<sup>40</sup>. The same year, British author Graham Greene’s novel *The Comedians* – adapted for the cinema the year after – read the regime as absurdist terror. Altogether, when Mangonès delivered his commission, Duvalier was an international icon of political turpitude,

his extreme political violence had long ceased to be a novelty, and his deployment of *Le marron inconnu* across the street from his palace was no less an act of political theater than his orchestration of the raising of the flag.

At the time the statue came up, as historical text, it was not addressed to the “people,” and it is not now. Its Haitian Creole name, *Nèg mawon*, resonates across class lines on the streets of Port-au-Prince, but strictly as reference to a landmark of the cityscape and its immediate surroundings. “*Nèg mawon*” – and I refer specifically to the Creole phrase – does not evoke a moment of historical memory to monolingual Creole-speaking Haitians, and generally not to bilingual privileged Haitians either. The sheer meaninglessness of the sculpture as national symbol to non-privileged Haitians is captured by a reporter’s exposé on the post-quake situation in the expansive public space around the National Palace. The article, in the 12 August 2011 edition of *Le Nouvelliste*, an establishment newspaper, bemoaned the incongruous sight of a camp of displaced persons on the *Champ de Mars*, where statues of *The Heroes of Independence*

are encircled since 12 January 2010 by a desperate population. *Nèg mawon*, an islet of tents. The *Place du Marron inconnu* is an islet of tents not far from the National Palace...*Nègre marron*, symbol of liberty. Very practical for the homeless, the conch shell [in] his hands holds [electricity] cables. “The electricity...allows us [to] watch TV and listen to the radio,” says Jean [who] has taken refuge in the shade of the *Nègre marron*...Marie-Lourdes Louis, a laundress, [is] *Nèg mawon*’s neighbor and she doesn’t really know what this statue represents. She sees it with its conch shell, she says innocently and does not go any further. She finds that this

object retains a lot of heat and dries quickly the clothes [of] her clients... This symbol of liberty, these refugees do not care much for it; it is [for] Bernadette... an object of witchcraft. “[President] François Duvalier [had] it made; we know what this man was capable [of.]” [Her friend] Justine protests... “Since 12 January 2010, a lot of whites have taken pictures of Nèg mawon. They photographed me with him,” she says, seeing herself as a star. [An] American magazine [illustrates] an article with a photograph of her with the statue. “Nèg mawon is my neighbor. It allowed the world to know that I’m there,” [said] the old woman.

The article aims to bear witness to a “geography of despair” among 20,000 people living in tents around a statuary representing leaders of the Revolutionary past. However, as it proceeds to enumerate the specific ignominies of misery encircling each statue, it also reaffirms the privileged Haitian’s authority to determine what the national past is, and to write the present meaning of that past. As transpires in the passage on “Nègre marron, symbol of liberty... these refugees do not care much for,” this authority is exercised against the possibility of a past articulated from the poor Haitian’s subjective experience of national conditions. The report notes that “the misery of the people is without mercy.” It also unflappably reasserts Alexandre Pétion as “the father of Panamericanism,” albeit one who cannot “hear the din from this hive of homelessness which deteriorates [his statue’s] environment.” Similarly, for all that is “withering [around] the equestrian statue of Christophe,” he remains “the builder king.” Yet as the article catalogues atrocious miseries endured in the vicinity of the statues day in and day out, it shows no interest at all in how and where its interviewees might situate Christophe, Dessalines, Pétion

and Louverture in the national past.

The passage on the Mangonès sculpture is particularly significant, because it is indeed the rare one in the whole literature on the black Republic that captures a spontaneous interpretation from the bottom of a symbol of the national past projected from the top. It is further telling in revealing a discursive mechanism at work on the exclusion of the dispossessed Haitian from the articulation of the black Republic narrative. This exclusion, I find, can explain the profound illegibility of *Nèg mawon* as historical text to the poor in flimsy tents who would remain its neighbors more than two years after the earthquake.

The reporter uses three different designations of Mangonès's sculpture and the broader Place du Marron inconnu, where it is located. However, although they might seem to be used interchangeably, that is hardly the case. Their respective uses are informed by a social schema operating in Haiti's privileged classes across color lines. It is analytically helpful to recall that a literate Haitian would not need an editor's note to understand that the words in perfect French attributed to the interviewees in quotation marks were spoken originally in Haitian Creole: the interviewees are poor people living on the street. With this in mind, one can better appreciate a conspicuous exception: everything they said is translated but not what they called the sculpture - *Nèg mawon*. Although Creole has been an official language of the nation for nearly a quarter century and is routinely - if sparingly - used in respectable media, the reporter consistently uses the French "*Nègre marron*" to refer to his own subjective experience of the statue. In Haiti, people who are learned in a Western language in addition to Creole do not elect their language of expression at any moment in a social vacuum. The differentiated reference to the sculpture in the article is of tactical effect: the reporter avoids any risk of not differentiating who is saying what about the work. "*Nèg mawon*" may refer to the statue in the lingua franca of the nation, but the

reporter nevertheless reserves it strictly to designate the place – the square turned island of tents – and the subjectivities of the squatters. Privileged Haitians in general would indeed not use “Nèg mawon” to refer to the “symbol of liberty.” Matters of august import to people who matter in Haiti are generally not expressed in Creole by people who matter. Such things remain rigidly in the sphere of French expression. Thus the reporter systematically switches to the “Nègre marron” appellation to re-affirm the symbolic significance of the sculpture. This is hardly the end of the underlying socioeconomic calculus in the choice of vocabulary.

“Nègre marron,” although duly French, has never been the formal name of the sculpture. The phrase is effectively a neologism. It is a transliteration of the Creole “Nèg mawon,” but the two phrases are not equivalent. By the 1960s the historical trajectory of the French word “nègre” had arrived where the American “nigger” would also be by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: a derogatory term appropriated and redeployed with defiance by those whom it was intended to degrade by colonial and postcolonial powers. The Creole word “nèg” has no such historical-political resonance whatsoever. It is a word that simply means “man,” and only with distinct additional contextual meaning might it specifically signify a black man. In contemporary Creole “mawon” also does not carry the political dimension that the French “marron” or the English “maroon” carry in the radical Western imaginary. “Mawon” does indicate flight from social or political authority, but without necessarily suggesting guerilla resistance. A thief, for instance, can interchangeably be said to be “nan mawon” or “nan cache,” both phrases meaning “in hiding.” It is little wonder that the “people” could not see in Mangonès’s work a symbol of anything, even with the assistance of its name. In fact, given the utter banality of the words “nèg” and “mawon” in Creole, the title actively contributes to the illegibility to the poor of the history lesson which Mangonès otherwise wishes his sculpture to bear.

The reporter's consistent choice of "Nègre marron" over the official "Le marron inconnu" to refer to the sculpture is no less significant than the rhetorical pas de deux that he choreographs between "Nègre marron" and "Nèg mawon." Both terms are French, but they resonate in different registers. When the sculpture was unveiled to its intended publics – formations of Haitian privilege across color lines in politics, culture, and business – it was definitely called *Le marron inconnu*, and that is definitely the name by which it remains properly known today. "Le marron inconnu," evokes the French "Soldat inconnu" and the Anglo-Saxon/American "Unknown Soldier," and Haitian elites have most certainly not lost sight of the phrase's derivative luster in the global symbolic economy of the modern West.

In dedicating the sculpture, Duvalier intended to speak to the world: he spoke in French. To the learned classes of Haiti who articulate the black Republic narrative, the sculpture very much remains a symbolic instrument in the telling of their story to themselves as much as to the world. As such, it is still by and large inevitably invoked as *Le marron inconnu* in official ceremonies, and ceremonial commentaries by local and foreign dignitaries around its symbolic significance are still generally made in French. The epigram encapsulating Duvalier's dedicating words continues to speak to the legacy of "Le marron inconnu," insistently speaking French to the memory of a fugitive African slave who took to the mountains in defiance of French colonial violence<sup>41</sup>. However, the reporter of *Le Nouvelliste* is turned inward, not to the world, addressing national – and more or less nationalist – publics. While noting past glories - presumably yet to be recovered - he endeavors to record ignominious failures of the nation toward its poor subjects. His use of the phrase "Nègre marron" rather than the official "Le marron inconnu" is understandable. "Nègre" makes him explicitly "black" in a way that "marron" does not, and the assonance of "nègre" and "nèg" assertively makes him one of the people of Haiti. "Nègre



marron” allows him to manage the protocol of French usage while simultaneously managing his shadow over the indictment as intrinsic bearer of a French colonial heritage. With the appellation “Nègre marron,” privileged Haitians re-assert Mangonès’s history lesson while, in effect, imbuing themselves with a proxy experience of the conditions of the “people,” the poor, monolingual Creole-speaking “nèg” on the street. Indeed, the *Le Nouvelliste* reporter borrows his “nègre” from the national avatar fashioned by Duvalier, and his article achieves quite a remarkable feat. For an audience of privilege, it reproduces at one and the same time the exclusion of (black) dispossessed Haitians as subject-author of the black Republic narrative as well as the mirage of blackness as pivot of national unity.

In a country where the vast majority is black and overwhelmingly poor and a minority of light-skinned subjects are axiomatically said to be better off – and can indeed take themselves to be better persons - Duvalier’s aggressive black nationalism was popularly seductive. However, the alluring rhetoric was inseparable from the bewildering violence which ultimately enforced the regime’s more substantive intent to direct state resources toward personal enrichment rather than the public good (cf. Fass 1985). More than a generation after the collapse of the dictatorship in 1986, the distance between Duvalier’s ideological rhetoric and substantive intent informs public engagement with the black Republic thesis. The thesis remains ubiquitous in media representations of Haiti (locally and globally), but the circulation of “noiriste” thought even by unrepentant Duvalierists is noticeably circumspect in contemporary Haiti. In the wake of Jean-Claude “Baby Doc” Duvalier’s return the previous January even sympathetic media outlets showed no upsurge of blatant Duvalierist ideological statements. In the flurry of legal activity against him – for human rights abuses and theft of public funds – reinvigorated Duvalierists generally limited their interventions to defending his person or to issues of due process. There

was little reclaiming of ideological grounds<sup>42</sup>.

In the post-Duvalier moment black nationalism occupies a muddled terrain. Noirisme is in retreat, but its effects remain significant. If the narrative of blackness can unite dark-skinned and occasionally light-skinned Haitians in imagining the nation toward the interests of its majority population, it resonates strictly in sectors of privilege. If it appears incontrovertible in the *Le Nouvelliste* article that the narrative does not hold the poor as subject and author of national history, to the latter it is almost completely meaningless.

I asked a black woman in her late 40s how she understood Haiti to be a “black Republic.” Trained as an architect, she is a teacher of mathematics at an iconic parochial school in Port-au-Prince that has remained a destination for privileged girls. As a field collaborator, she will be the “math teacher.” She is married to a thriving entrepreneur in commercial and residential construction, whom I will refer to as the engineering contractor. The two own a firm that provides system engineering services. She steadfastly holds on to substantial ancestral land in the rural southeast of the country. Her father and his siblings had been the first generation of the family to migrate to Port-au-Prince to complete their studies; they had successful careers in the liberal professions and established families in tasteful homes in fashionable neighborhoods. I asked the woman: “What do you think that means, when we say Haiti is a black republic?” Her spontaneous response was baffled hesitation. However, it was not my twenty-six-year-old driver’s hesitation about what exactly I might be talking about, the December morning I was going to the Firmin conference. On the contrary, the woman’s reaction was that of someone asked to explain a taken-for-granted, to explain an obvious which is so manifest that one no longer thinks about its underlying rationality. She finally answered: “Our ancestors, the slaves, revolted and they gained their freedom.” We were speaking on the telephone and she wondered

what her seventeen-year-old daughter might think. The girl was nearby, and she eventually passed her the telephone.

I repeated the question to the daughter, a student at her mother's school. The daughter also hesitated, sounding demure. She was not generally shy around me: I had known the family for a few years and had visited their home on numerous occasions during my fieldwork. After I assured her that I was not putting her on, she let go of her answer: "That means, the slaves, they were black, and we became independent." She could not elaborate further on the theme as she intermittently paused and muttered a few inconsequential words. She seemed as baffled as her mother at being asked to explain an irreducible proposition. Her mother returned to the telephone and reframed the issue to assert that "our ancestors gave us a country, but others make it difficult." I asked her who she meant have made it difficult. "Those who don't care," she said. She and I had had enough conversations about *la question de couleur* for me to know that, in her view, "those" would be the mulattoes. I asked her whether she was alluding to the color question. She chuckled, sounding as if she would rather drift off the subject. I did not press it.

I asked the question also of a black man in his mid-50s. He has worked extensively with grassroots groups both in the countryside and in the city, both in development projects and in cultural production, particularly on circuits where the grassroots and the intelligentsia intersect. An engineer in a transnational marriage, he is deeply rooted in the petite bourgeoisie of Port-au-Prince. He lives and works in Haiti, but also spends extended periods at home in Latin America, where his wife, a native of the region, lives with their daughter<sup>43</sup>. Well-read and worldly, he paints and writes poetry as a hobby. Over the course of my research he was to me (and in this ethnography) the poet-engineer. His late parents moved in each other's social orbit as adolescents in a middle-class neighborhood of Port-au-Prince, but met as university students in Germany in

the early 1950s. The father was from a black family of considerable land holdings, and the poet-engineer owns significant inherited real estate in the Port-au-Prince metropolitan area. His maternal grandfather was a physician from a family of the South, a department held as a mulatto bastion in the black elite's political imagination. However, his light-skinned daughter, the poet-engineer's mother, did not think of herself as a mulatto because, as the poet-engineer told me, "she saw the color question as an anachronism." His friends and acquaintances, including fellow social activists, nonetheless include countless mulattoes.

The poet-engineer unequivocally dismisses color determinism as political parochialism, invoking the Duvalier regime for its deployment of colorist ideologies despite its violence on the poor. When I asked him what the notion of Haiti as a black republic meant to him, he, too, was nevertheless baffled that such a question was being asked of him. Knowing that he reflected on issues of nationalism on a regular basis, I prodded him: "Is it for you a taken-for-granted?"<sup>44</sup> He answered that "it is first a taken-for-granted" before elaborating on the black Republic as "a historical reality," or "a working hypothesis," and ultimately seeing it as "a project that stopped with the death of Dessalines." He added that "the project was not later developed to redefine 'black independent republic' as a human grouping" in the wake of later arrivals from Europe and the Levant. He did not provide any suggestion on how that project might be revived. He nevertheless made it clear that however the black Republic might be redefined the new definition would be predicated on Dessalines as pivotal axis of nationalist expression. In that, like the teacher, he ultimately held onto a historical memory of the black slave's experience as undifferentiated and singular vector of national genesis.

The poet-engineer would not be the only liberal black nationalist who wishes to rethink Haiti as a "human grouping" that constructively contains mulatto formations deeply rooted in the

nation's history or inflected by 19<sup>th</sup> century fair-skinned immigrants. A problem would arise for a project of rethinking Haiti envisioned in a "black Republic" reified as static truth of the nation rather than in the nation as lived, dialectical history. The black Republic thesis rests on the premise that "blackness" once united the nation, or at least the "blacks" thereof, and – somatically, metaphorically, or culturally – can again. If this premise is blind to the historiographic evidence of the Bossales-Creoles war within the War of Independence and the divergent socio-cultural trajectories of losers and winners afterwards, it takes remarkably little effort on the ground to watch it crumble in the face of the materialities of contemporary Haitian life. Although the math teacher's answer to my question about the meaning of the black Republic was not as intellectually agile as the poet-engineer's, their respective answers had something in common: they were both the precipitate of intellectually mediated encounters with the archive. One thing neither answer was is the sum of concrete experiences lived day-to-day. This was brought home to me by answers to my question from the urban proletariat.

After I asked the twenty-six-year-old driver about the meaning of the black Republic, I also explored the theme with other poor Haitians. A sexagenarian messenger at the Ministry of the Environment, who can neither read nor write, told me that to say Haiti was the first black republic meant "it was the first country black people established." When I asked him what he meant by that, he added: "We were free. But we're not free anymore. It's the Republicans over there and the big shots over here who control everything." He continued seamlessly in a train of thought grounded in concrete experience by invoking "Magazen leta" (the State Store), which used to sell to the people, making life affordable. Now if a president wants to reopen Magazen leta, foreigners and the big shots get rid of you. That's what we pay for our freedom. When

Aristide asked France to repay the price we were forced to pay for our freedom, they came to take him away in the night. Under Duvalier you could eat, but you couldn't talk. Now you can talk.

I remain struck by how the man's spontaneous answer cohesively links state agency, the poor's concrete situation and global politics to describe his understanding of the black Republic. At the time of our conversation toward the end of 2011, he earned approximately US \$150 a month working at the ministry. Before I engaged him on Haiti's blackness, we were initially talking about the cost of living. After enumerating comparatively the costs then and now of various staples of the Haitian diet, he remarked that "Duvalier was mean, but always wanted the people to eat. It's the big shots who pushed people down." He explained that in the Duvalier years a vender who raised prices above official rates was at risk of violence at the hand of a "tonton makout."<sup>45</sup> Significantly, notwithstanding his reference to "Republicans" and France as external powers in national affairs, in speaking of "big shots who pushed people down," he did not place them in a colorist category. I thought of bringing up Haiti as a "republik nwa" at that point, precisely because he had not framed the situation in a colorist context<sup>46</sup>.

The man did not vote in the presidential elections of 2010, because it was clear that "his" candidate, Mirlande Manigat, would not win. "M te gen moun nan Maniga. M pa t gen pèsonn nan Mateli" [I had people in Manigat. I had nobody in Martelly], he told me before adding that "the mass of the people moved behind Martelly, so I didn't vote." When he said that, I realized how his understanding of the Republic's blackness would be informed by his practical experience of the Duvalierist state rather by the cultivation of historical memory. Haitians often give primordial importance to having "moun nan" [people in] – a connection to - a candidate for office or an office holder, because a significant connection to the state apparatus is a prized asset.

The man had worked at some point as a custodian at L'hôpital général, the public hospital in downtown Port-au-Prince. He befriended a physician there and the two kept in touch over the years. When the doctor eventually became involved with the Manigat campaign, he became the ministry messenger's "people in" a potential Manigat government. This potential connection to the state came in a pattern that was central to the man's urbanized experience.

He was born and grew into adulthood in the landless peasantry deep in the rural south. He migrated to Port-au-Prince in the middle of the 1970s. His first job in the capital was as the groundkeeper in the home of a family with an authoritative presence in middle- and upper-level state offices since at least the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The head of the household, an erudite black man with influential friendships in Duvalierist circles, found him his next (and better paying) job, on the ground crew of a fuel depot. When he lost that job in the late 1980s, a floral designer, a cousin of the erudite black man, hired him as a delivery man.

In the early 1990s, to pressure the de facto government that succeeded deposed President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the United Nations imposed a trade embargo on the country. The floral designer lost her last corporate client – the local Citibank – in the wake of the resulting recession. The florist then helped the man get the job at the hospital. About ten years later, she was an advisor in the administration of President René Préval – Aristide's former protégé – and got the man his current job in the Ministry of the Environment. Thus throughout the trajectory of his life in Port-au-Prince, the man earned a living linked to state power through subjects embodying the black-nationalist tradition. During the entire time, he would have been reading the populist ideological gestures which Duvalier articulated with the black Republic narrative. At no point of the entire time would he have had access to the French texts through which the black-nationalist tradition posits a colorist determinism in the course of national politics and history<sup>47</sup>.

The messenger at the Ministry of the Environment is a cousin of the twenty-six-year-old “tap-tap” driver. The latter’s sister is married to the driver of a minibus transporting passengers between Port-au-Prince and Saint-Marc, a city in the Artibonite region north of the capital. The minibus driver’s answer to the question of what it means to call Haiti a black Republic is a telling non-answer: “Black Republic, I know about it, I hear people say it, but I don’t really understand it. There are people in the country who are not black. There’s a place called Kazal. People you see in that area, they are light. They look different. They’re descendants of Germans. You also find people who look like that in another place, a place called Fondènèg.” When I mention to him that the folks of Kazal, also an Artibonite town, are generally thought to be descendants of Poles, and that perhaps it is folks from Fondènèg, a southern town, who may be of German descent, he answers: “Oh, ok. They look alike, but the difference between them, Kazal people are tall. Fondènèg people are shorties. Maybe that’s in a difference between Poland and Germany.”

Texts by educated people for educated people in Haiti generally invoke the populations of Casale and Fond-des-Nègres as exceptions that make salient the fact of a *black* Republic<sup>48</sup>. In such texts, these light-skinned groups in the rural interior become localized specificities in the broader history of the (black) peasantry, which itself is usually represented as bearer of the nation’s essence. However, the minibus driver invokes them to problematize rather than to reaffirm the presumption of the Republic’s blackness. He is obviously aware of his world at both local and global levels, but he is not aware of what it is that people are talking about when they speak of Haiti as the black Republic. Unlike the sexagenarian ministry messenger, he can read and write. He is a high school graduate. “I don’t really recall learning about the black Republic in school,” he says. Skeptical, I ask him whether none of his Haitian history teachers ever



mentioned the phrase. After hesitating a moment, reviewing his memory, he adds: “That would be in the lower grades, fifth, fourth grade of secondary school. I don’t remember. I wasn’t interested in those classes. They were boring. The teachers didn’t make these classes interesting. They made me sleepy.” He left his hometown of Saint-Marc to finish the last three years of secondary school in Port-au-Prince. I ask him whether he might have been exposed to discussions based on Haiti as a black republic in the higher grades. He answers assertively: “In the higher grades, second to philo, we didn’t talk about a black republic<sup>49</sup>.” I ask him, How about later on in life? He answers: “After school I never was in discussions or to be thinking about the subject ‘black republic.’ When I got onto the question with you, that was the first time I had somebody bring up this conversation with me.”

The minibus driver did not go to college, he says, because his father could not continue to send money home from Florida to support him through school. He began to scratch out a living in the informal economy and eventually started driving on the minibus circuit several years ago. His penmanship and the level of his fluency in written and spoken French do indicate a level of formal schooling where I would assume the black Republic thesis would have transpired at some point along the way in the Haitian history curriculum. If it did, he obviously has no firm recollection. What is significant here is not so much his relative lack of familiarity with the thesis as his utter lack of reverence toward it. It is also significant that the thesis does not evoke irony or disdain, either, in him – that would yet be affective engagement informed by acknowledged ideology. My questions about the black Republic to him elicited no emotive reaction, only a matter-of-fact consideration of an objective proposition. As he is now in his late thirties, much like the twenty-six-year-old “tap tap” driver, he would have had no significant exposure to Duvalier’s populist ideological gestures in his formative years. Whatever scholastic education in

the black Republic narrative he might have had, its underlying ideological positions must not have cohered with his practical experiences as national subject in the more than two decades since his formal education stopped. Yet to privileged adolescents of post-Duvalier Haiti the blackness of the nation can continue to be a taken-for-granted. It is not clear to me how the nation's blackness might be re-articulated in thought and practice to bridge the cleavage that inheres in realities of class between those who have historically narrate it and those who have been made silent to ensure the viability of the narrative. However, I found it clear in the field that the black Republic narrative being reproduced locally and globally does not yet acknowledge this problematic of positionality.

## Chapter Four Black-Nationalist Sociality

François Duvalier's ideological spectacles infused "noirisme" with the appearance of irrefutable historical coherence. Collapsing the national anthem with his Oath of Fidelity to the Flag in a singular statement on school-day mornings was one of the ways he achieved this. The two artifacts actually speak to different – arguably contradictory – nationalist visions. The anthem, composed in 1904 by a black lawyer and man of letters, can be seen as the capstone of a reclamation project that gathered increasing force over the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Named *La Dessalinienne*, it advances the black Republic narrative in reaffirming Jean-Jacques Dessalines, among The Heroes of The Independence, as the one who led the Revolution to its triumphant conclusion<sup>50</sup>. However, the hymn in no way reduces the national subject to an ethno-type of any kind. In urging Haitians to walk united "For the Country, For the Ancestors" and to raise sons who are "Free, Strong and Prosperous;" or in asserting that "For the Flag, For the Fatherland/To Die is Beautiful," the lyrics assiduously avoid any mention of race or color, or any evocation of an identitarian subjectivity. In the dominant reading of the anthem, it states that Haiti is the product of Dessalines's bravura, thus implicitly a product of the *slaves'* Revolution. The hymn's rhetoric nevertheless provides an ecumenical space for the construction of national identity, making the work a lot closer to Dessalines's delineation of national blackness than Duvalier's. The Duvalierist *nègre* arguably turns Dessalines's intent on its head in actively asserting an ideal national subject, which others within the nation could not be.

At the time of Duvalier's dictatorship his ideological project was already seen – particularly by Haitian Marxists - as mystifying the trampling of the interests of the vast majority of the nation's population (overwhelmingly *blacks*) mired in debilitating poverty. In the post-Duvalier moment, in ways that I find are not always understood by liberal black nationalists, the

persistent noiriste imprint in the dominant ideological reading of the nation complicates a potential civil society action toward making the state responsive to the public good. The complexities of the situation obtain in large part from the no less persistent fact of mulatto colorism.

In a telephone conversation with the poet-engineer after I returned to the US from the field I mentioned a book by the Haitian sociologist Michel Acacia, which I had been given as a gift and was looking forward to reading. He had not read the book, but his reservation about Acacia was as dismissively laconic as it was self-assured: “Musyeu se w nwaris” [He’s a “noiriste”]. As it happens, Acacia effectively addresses this critique in the book, asserting that “‘power to the greatest number’...which will be the slogan of the Parti National, is in fact nothing ‘noiriste.’ What is ‘noiriste’ is, after sorting out social agents by placing Blacks on one side and Mulattoes on the other, to pretend that ‘the black elite’ has more legitimacy to lead the masses by virtue of color proximity” (Acacia 2006: 73)<sup>51</sup>. In the very next sentence after Acacia posits the populist legacy of the Parti National away from “noirisme,” he effectively hedges his position: “In any event, it is rather ‘mulattoism’ that will introduce a bifurcation with respect to a common reference to the ancestors, by seeking a filiation with Freedmen or Whites or by taking to an endogamy of color” (2006: 73).

If Acacia fails in the attempt to distance himself from noirisme, the difficulty of doing so in the historical moment of contemporary Haiti appears yet deeper when the poet-engineer himself, someone who would summarily dismiss noirisme rather than argue its finer points, is, in effect, also unable to keep that distance. As we discussed the possibility of political alliances across lines of class and color in Haiti one afternoon, the poet-engineer told me of his relationship with a fair-complexioned Haitian intellectual whose work he deeply respects. At her

death, the woman had been living in a European capital for several decades. The poet-engineer considered her work to seek a cultural *rattrapage*, a remediation of the cultures of Haiti's dominant classes by legitimating and integrating therein the nation's vernacular practices and ideologies. The woman's husband, a white European engaged academic, similarly did extensive fieldwork in the Haitian countryside and his published work argued the legitimacy of the cultural practices of Haiti's rural world. Additionally, he and the poet-engineer once collaborated on building a well for a marginalized community. The poet-engineer is also an acquaintance of the couple's daughter, an artist born and reared in Europe, who, he said, for all practical purposes "is white, but she considers herself Haitian." To make the point of how she, too, was engaged with Haiti's realities, he invoked a series of works in clay which she created to speak to the plight of Haitians so desperately poor that they resort to eating patties of clay, fat, water and salt baked in the sun<sup>52</sup>. On the whole, the poet-engineer spoke fondly of the intellectual and her daughter as socially engaged Haitians, and he held his collaboration with the husband on the community development project as exemplary political engagement. The poet-engineer nonetheless argued that the woman "belongs to a category of Haitians" and as a result "is limited by her class." He added further along in our conversation: "Just like you and me: we are limited in what we can do within the class." The poet-engineer thus imagined us, on one side, and the woman and her family, on the other, in socio-economic classes that are first respectively indexed by our categories as citizens. Invoking the woman for her "category" of Haitians, the poet-engineer found that ultimately an alliance was notionally impossible between liberal black nationalists and liberal segments of the mulatto elite.

The distance which both Acacia and the poet-engineer want to keep from "noirisme" says much about current public esteem for Duvalier's ideological aggressivity. That the distance

cannot hold says as much about the magnitude of the challenge faced by a liberal black nationalism to confront mulatto colorism efficaciously. The stakes transpire in the context of Acacia's position on noirisme. Acacia makes his argument in rejecting Leslie Péan's critique of an analytic tradition that broadly classifies "Haitian thinkers on the founding fathers [between] noiristes or pro-noiristes [and] mûlatristes or pro-mûlatristes" (Péan 2003: 72). Péan brings critical attention to a strand of Haitian historiography that, on the one hand, is duly incisive on the failures of Pétion and other early mulatto chiefs of state while, on the other, taking Dessalines's initiatives at face value as progressive projects in the popular interest arrested by his assassination<sup>53</sup>. He calls for historical analysis that is as unsparingly critical of black leaders as it is of mulattoes, the object being critical engagement with processes and structures of corruption created in the state left the nation by the *pères fondateurs*. Yet Péan writes well within the black-nationalist tradition as he speaks "of the precursor and of the founder of Haitian independence, that is, respectively, Toussaint Louverture and Jean-Jacques Dessalines" (Péan 2003: 65). He assertively argues that the founding of Haiti came of the *slaves'* Revolution, making mincemeat of the Pétion authorship thesis along the way, because no other class in the colonial system had an uncompromising interest in destroying it (301-303). Péan takes the Haitian nation to realize "the experience of freedom and independence of a Black people" (2003:116), and he torpedoed the last shred of illusion one might hold about on the theme of principled republicanism that can permeate mulatto nationalist writing on the regime of Alexandre Pétion (122-131). Altogether, what distinguishes Péan from variations of noiriste black nationalism is his steadfast rejection of color as a determining mode of investigating social and political economies in Haiti.

Acacia's objection to Péan's critical approach typifies a pronounced black-nationalist resistance to interrogating not only Dessalines's policies, but also those of Louverture and

Christophe, considerably reducing the terrain of critical engagement with the state bequeathed by the Revolution<sup>54</sup>. What will not be countenanced in the narrow limits of that critical space is relegated to the mulatto section of the binary confines of the imagined nation. In the conversation between two black Haitian intellectuals here, Acacia does not call Péan a mulatto, but his argument is very evocative of Trouillot's reading the Parti National as the quintessential mulatto party through two blacks (Anténor Firmin and Edmond Paul) who are perhaps its most emblematic figures in historical memory (Trouillot 1990:127). Yet neither Acacia nor the poet-engineer arrives at his quasi-noiriste position in a socio-political vacuum.

It is quite understandable that black nationalists who would countenance neither the political excesses nor the corruption of the Duvalier dictatorship might no more abandon François Duvalier's forceful politicization of the symbolic power of blackness in Haiti. Mulattoes continue to dominate the upper ranks of privilege and mulatto color prejudice is as persistent as it is transparent. Moreover, educated blacks with a modicum of political alertness are all too aware of the grip of a generally mulatto oligarchy on state or state-regulated business. Where mulatto oligarchs controlled the economic terrain through a panoply of state-granted monopolies in the Duvalier era (see Fass 1988), the post-Duvalier space is controlled through a tight grip on access to credit. However, none of that would be lost on Péan, who details a history of "political weights feeding a consensual anemia between the elites [at] the root of so much drifting. [A] situation that creates an eternal deterioration and that explains [why] partisans of change fail as if stuck in an invincible molasses" (Péan 2003:303). Ultimately, Péan's argument that "this picture has been blurred by the corruption of the ideology of color" (Péan 2003:303) is quite congruent with my experience in the field. Two aspects of his project are particularly pertinent to my findings. On the one hand, a central concern is to bring the organizing rationality

of Western modernity to bear on a “predatory state, [a] state for which the welfare of its citizens has nothing to do with, or only makes up a tiny part, of its objective function” (Péan 2003:101, 103). This is not only very much in alignment with the central thesis of Trouillot 1990 and Fass 1988, but it also is fundamentally the vision of liberal black nationalists like the poet-engineer. On the other hand, Péan’s remark that “the corruption [of] the dominant ideology of color prefers to see [in liberalism] a Trojan horse of the mulattoes” (2003:10) points to the roots of not only the distance between his nationalism and that of the poet-engineer but also of the latter’s inability to break from noirisme despite his express intent. On the ground, I found a black qua black sociality in which a liberal black nationalism of relatively privileged people fails, on the one hand, to grasp its own “limit within the class” – parallel to that of the similarly privileged mulatto - and, on the other, to find efficacy and coherence in being conflated with currents of thought and practice not similarly in a movement toward the public good. I would argue that apprehending the situational limits of a liberal nationalism within the articulation of black privilege may begin to shrink the distance between contemporary liberal black nationalists and the Haitian liberal tradition for a common cause in addressing the phenomenon that Trouillot (1990) terms the state standing against the nation.

I speak of a black qua black sociality not because it requires a specified degree of black complexion of its constitutive subject, because it requires affirmation of the ideal of the black Haitian. For all practical purposes, it also requires affirmation of the peasantry – and its derivatives among the urban poor - as definitive repository of the ideal’s essential cultural values, although, in the privileged urban imaginary, these values are all too often reduced to the operative practices and beliefs of the vodou religion. Educated Haitians across colorist



boundaries reproduce the black Republic narrative as lived experience through this black qua black sociality.

The poet-engineer devotes enthusiastic energies – as consumer, producer, facilitator - to art and cultural events at the socio-economic margins, often in spaces generally perceived in privileged circles as dens of violence and insecurity. He is often joined in these events by a close black friend. The friend, a cultural impresario, is assertively dismissive of not only “noirisme” but also of the black Republic thesis itself, because to him, as he put it to me once, “the idea of Haiti as a ‘black’ Republic diminishes the achievement and does not place the Haitian Revolution with the French Revolution and the American Revolution in the history of modernity.” He nevertheless adamantly values the African heritage in Haitian life and its representation in both the mainstream and at the margins. He is also a close friend of the math teacher. The latter considered it reckless adventurism, when the cultural impresario and the poet-engineer to an art event on the Grand-Rue, an artery running through several slums in downtown Port-au-Prince, at an advanced hour of the night. Neither the math teacher nor her husband, the engineering contractor, had heard of the Ghetto Biennale, which opened that evening for the 2011 edition. Nor did they know about Atis Rezistans [Resistance Artists], the collective that hosted the art fair. This was art at the margins.

Atis Rezistans members produce works sculpted or assembled from refuse of urban life. The work of the two principal members has been exhibited in the USA and in Europe. They and the other exhibiting artists for the most part live and work in the surrounding slum. The art on display in this year’s edition of the fair range from the intimate to the monumental, shown in, on and around shacks spread about an unpaved lot, home base of the collective. Notwithstanding the particulars of the location, the scene – around 10 p.m. about two weeks before Christmas – is

reminiscent of trendy art-show openings at the margins of global art centers. Artists and early-career curators mingle with visitors that include local cognoscenti and enthusiasts from farther afield as well as neighborhood residents. The curators and enthusiasts from afar, that I can tell, are all whites (mostly Europeans, it seems), except for a smattering of Asians. A small group of Americans apparently affiliated with an NGO operating in Port-au-Prince come by for a brief visit with their Haitian guides. The local cognoscenti – tonight at least - are a handful of blacks from the intellectual elite. Not incidentally, Creole is *de rigueur* here as language of conversation amongst them. The poet-engineer and the impresario introduce me to a scholar who has founded a socialist political party and has taught at Haitian and French universities. All three seem to have acquaintances in the community.

The local cognoscenti's visit to the Biennale realizes a black qua black sociality not by the fact that visitors and artists are blacks. Rather, it is the visitors' operative presumption of an existential unity between them and the artists as well as the broader neighborhood. The assumption is there, when the cultural impresario leads me to the shack of a young artist who works with discarded tires and the two of them discuss a pending visit by a foreign collector arranged by the cultural impresario. It is there, when I later join the poet-engineer on the sidewalk on Grand-Rue while he chats with one of the leaders of the collective about the state of things – political and social - in the neighborhood. The privileged blacks' assumption of socio-political unity with their artist hosts is in the tone of no-pretense familiarity of their conversations. It is in the absence of false modesty as they partake of the camaraderie of equals that underlies the encounters. No one is concerned about my safety as I stroll alone around the darkest recesses of the grounds and over to an adjacent lot, where an NGO is showing a movie on a giant screen. It is not that any of the middle-class blacks here holds any illusion about the

state of insecurity in Port-au-Prince. Rather, I find, it is taken for granted that we are in a respectable community organized and maintained by subjects of legitimate and viable civic agency. Also, to the poet-engineer, the cultural impresario and the other educated blacks at the Biennale, the vodou cosmology underlying nearly all of the art on display would be another everyday dimension of national life, with nothing of the exotic, and certainly nothing of the questionable exceptionality that it can be made out to be in privileged circles. The privileged blacks present effectively presume that they share a political project with neighborhood residents over against the powers that be. For them, being here is a realization of the common cause with the dispossessed Haitian that is pivotal to the black-nationalist imaginary.

Yet class differentiation of national belonging remains, ever so subtly. The poet-engineer, the cultural impresario and a few others, including one of the Atis Rezistans leaders, briefly debate what might be found to drink around here at this time. I detect the smell of “klerin” on the artist’s breath, which I have also detected on the breath of others as I walked around the grounds. Potent and inexpensive, “klerin,” distilled from sugarcane, is the default spirit of the lower classes. It is likely to be available in a place like this at an event like this. By my experience dining and drinking with him, the poet-engineer drinks no other alcohol but the locally produced Prestige, long ago known as “la bière nationale” [the national beer], now as “la bière haitienne” and owned since 2011 by the Dutch company Heineken. The cultural impresario’s taste in alcohol is very versatile, ranging from red wine to Barbancourt rum to cognac and many things in between. However, “klerin” is not a consideration in the brief discussion about what we might find to drink. A sidewalk vender in the vicinity is still open, someone surmises; we are likely to find beer there, but it is likely to be warm. The poet-engineer

nonetheless sends for beer and we are all soon having Prestige, including the leader of the collective.

After we left the Biennale the cultural impresario and I were hungry, and the poet-engineer – who had already had dinner - set out to find us a place to eat. It would not have occurred to any of us to think of looking for a place to eat in the neighborhoods surrounding the grounds of Atis Rezistans. As we began to consider the options, the engineer steered his SUV as a matter of course toward the “residential” areas east of downtown Port-au-Prince. We first went to an open-air café kept by a French expatriate, where Haitians of all shades mingled with an international clientele in a jovial atmosphere of bourgeois good living. The bar was open, but the kitchen was closed; we left. We ended up at Presse Café, a trendy nightclub-restaurant in Pétiön-Ville.

The band playing tonight features a mulatto musician who has been entertaining the bourgeoisie and the middle classes since the 1970s. We take a table on the enclosed terrace. At the table behind me, three women, an older one with perhaps her daughters or nieces, converse mostly in French throughout the hour and a half or so that we are here. The host leads a man and a woman to the table beside me, and he turns out to be a classmate from elementary school. He introduces me to the woman, pointing out that she is the younger sister of a mutual friend. The latter currently teaches at a prestigious art college in the New England region of the USA. Several years ago in New York City the two of us had dinner together after attending a prominent museum exhibit on modernity in Africa. During the four or five hours of our date, discussing, among other subjects, colonialism and its legacy and our high school days (same institution, she one year ahead of me), my early attempts at using Creole did not seem welcome and we spoke French and English alternately. Tonight, the conversation between her sister and the man at the

table beside me at Presse Café is also in French. Creole is not the language of courtship in places of privilege in Haiti.

The man and the woman at the table beside me and the three women at the table behind me are of a lighter shade of “black” complexion. In a place like Presse Café that makes them *clair* [light]<sup>55</sup>. Several months later, I will be back here. At a large table prominently fronting the stage, a celebrated “clair” poet and playwright will sit with an entourage of five or six individuals that includes a black woman. The headliner that night will be a different mulatto musician, a guitarist whose solo jazz recital will alternate on stage with a small black combo. The “clair” poet is not an “engaged” artist, but he has performed his work with pop and folk musicians. If that did not make him an intellectual of the black Republic, his considerable literary production in Creole would. Of his children, a daughter married into dynastic mulatto wealth. The daughter tells her own daughter – the poet’s grand-daughter – in no uncertain terms the two fundamental characteristics of the husband she is expected to envision: light-skinned, and wealthy<sup>56</sup>. I in no way want to imply that the poet shares his daughter’s colorist (and classist) prejudice. Nonetheless, that night when I will return to Presse Café several months later, as I watch the clair poet enjoy the combo of black musicians with dreadlocks, I will wonder what befuddling incoherence one can miss reading Haiti uncritically through the black Republic narrative.

Not that I do not get to witness the potential incoherence tonight as well. I do after a mulatto man approaches the women at the table behind me to say hello. He chats with them in French. He wears a pink wristband symbolizing his personal allegiance to President Michel Martelly, a growing practice viewed warily as proto-Duvalierist affectation by those who would rather be rid of Duvalier’s ghost once and for all. The man’s face looks somewhat familiar,

although I am not sure whether he is who I think he is, the son of a Port-au-Prince mayor under Duvalier. He, too, may be thinking that we have met before, because after speaking with the women he steps up to my table. He shakes my hands, asking (in French) how I am doing. He also shakes hands cordially with my tablemates, two men who see degeneracy of the national project in the Duvalier dictatorship and its political heir in Michel Martelly. After the man walks away, I remain thoroughly uncertain about his identity. Meanwhile, inside, the music plays and fashionable couples dance. All in all, the sociality here is not the stuff of which the black Republic narrative is made. At Presse Café, a site of bourgeois conviviality, the poet-engineer, the cultural impresario and I are having a swell time capping off a night that started at the Ghetto Biennale in a slum of downtown Port-au-Prince. There, we lived the blackness of the nation as we would not here. Tonight at Presse Café, as will be the case every time I return here, there may be any number of black nationalists present, quite possibly the majority of those present, but the social relations that animate the place find their coherence in a commonality of privilege, not in the blackness of the nation.

This is not to say that black nationalists suspend circulation of the black Republic thesis, when they enter a place like Presse Café. The poet-engineer, the cultural impresario and I chat about big and small things here as we might at the Ghetto Biennale. This is, rather, to suggest that a place like Presse Café is not a site where black nationalists realize their ideological convictions about the blackness of the Republic. This is a place where privileged Haitians realize their privilege and reproduce the social relations that underlie it. Not long after the Martelly supporter walks away from our table, a black man and two women are brought to sit at the table behind the poet-engineer. The man seems to be a senator I saw discussing fiscal policy on television a few nights ago; the poet-engineer confirms that the man is indeed the senator. He is a

principal architect of the country's fiscal priorities. I will eventually recognize one of the women with him. She is a Haitian-born scholar who directs a research program at one of the most prestigious American universities. I met her earlier in the year at a conference abroad and discussed my research with her; she will facilitate a brief conversation between me and the senator at their table. However, before I recognize her, I ask the poet-engineer and the impresario whether one of them knows the senator, or knows someone who can introduce me to him. I would like to interview him for my project. The poet-engineer matter-of-factly recommends that I simply walk to the senator's table and introduce myself, the suggestion of someone accustomed to the routine articulation of socio-political privilege<sup>57</sup>.

Presse Café is not a place of ostentation. Its prices are moderate for a restaurant in Pétion-Ville that caters to the middle classes<sup>58</sup>. A few stock phrases lend themselves to its description: a "cool" place of "casual chic" with a vaguely "bohemian vibe." One evening, a congenial black woman of casual elegance stopped by my table to share a joke, and I was told she owns the place with her husband, a black man of equally easygoing elegance who at the moment was chatting amiably with another patron by the bar. Photographs of American jazz legends and other tasteful decorative touches enliven the walls of their restaurant. Prominent among the wall décor is a distinctly ideological artifact: a framed oversize reproduction of a front page of the daily *Le Matin*, which I first noticed the evening the celebrated mulatto poet and his entourage sat at the prominent table in front of the stage. It is the front page of the February 6, 2004 edition, and it features events of the previous day marking the onset of an armed rebellion that led to the ouster of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide about three weeks later<sup>59</sup>. It is evidently an anti-Aristide statement, in a place located in Pétion-Ville, an iconic bastion of privilege, and patronized by a clientèle of often exclusionary tendencies. The poster could reasonably be seen as a statement

against the inclusionary vision of the Lavalas movement that carried Aristide to his first Presidency in 1990. Yet I would hesitate to say so. By all indications, at the time of the 2004 coup Aristide enjoyed diminished but still considerable legitimacy among Haiti's poor as a representative of their interests. The poet-engineer nonetheless supported Aristide's ouster, and the cultural impresario did, too, although in quotidian actions they ceaselessly valorized the interests of the marginalized Haitian. If I hesitate on a finer reading of the Presse Café owners' ideological statement, it is because at the time I see the Le Matin poster on their wall I have already begun to understand that class profoundly undermines the colorist presumptions of the black Republic narrative, and in unpredictable directions. Only two days earlier, I had a cogent indication of that at another table on the terrace of the restaurant.

The poet-engineer has arranged for a small group of friends to get together. A fashionably slim middle-aged black woman sits next to me. Her hair is styled in lush dreadlocks and her outfit of jeans and chiffon blouse is meticulously accessorized. She studied architecture in the USA and runs her design firm with her sister, a fellow architect. Her two other siblings are physicians, as was her father. The cultural impresario is also here. Together with an artist who has returned for an extended visit from Canada, we are the core occupants of the table. Several others will join us temporarily at various points during the evening, much as we will also table-hop. At some point another black woman will sit across the table from me. Her close-cropped hair seems free of chemical treatment. Today, she worked her last day - in communications - at Fokal, a Haitian NGO lavishly funded by the Open Society Foundations of the Hungarian-American financier George Soros. It runs programs in education and cultural production from an imposing modernist campus in Port-au-Prince<sup>60</sup>. Significantly for such a preeminent institution in Haiti, Fokal is an acronym of its formal name said and written in Creole, notwithstanding the



fact that the use of Creole in formal agency communications more or less stops at the title<sup>61</sup>. Currently headed by a former Prime Minister, a *clair* woman who served under President René Préval, Aristide's former protégé, Fokal is an eminent institutional articulator of the black Republic thesis. The woman who stopped working there today, within a few minutes of joining the table, tells me about her "withdrawal symptoms" from not having been to Paris in a relatively long time, not since she returned home from her university studies. She muses wistfully, "the air in Paris, the atmosphere...oh, I just miss it."

Like the Atis Rezistans collective, the artist at the table this evening does reclamation art, creating original works from discarded objects of urban life. The poet-engineer, the cultural impresario and the woman with the lush dreadlocks have known him for a long time, since before he left for Canada nearly ten years ago. He returns to Haiti periodically and during the current visit he will have an exhibition at a local gallery. Like the rest of us at the table, the poet-engineer excepted, he routinely alternates between French and Creole as we chat while we eat and drink. The poet-engineer, as is his font, speaks strictly Creole in a setting like this, among friends. I have seen him speak French with Haitians on relatively limited occasions, for example in formal work-related conversations or speaking with an elder who would not speak Creole. This evening, he speaks French only when the Creole skills of a German woman at the table are too limited for her to understand him. She came to the restaurant at the cultural impresario's invitation. The three of us met her a few days ago at another restaurant, where, as it happens, Fokal was giving a cocktail reception. Notwithstanding the ideological underpinnings of the poet-engineer's commitment to speaking Creole at the table, language is the site where transpires the drama of class trumping color in Haiti.

When the reclamation artist speaks French, his accent is noticeable in a way that the

German woman's is not. His closed "e" (as in "je" [I]) sounds closer to "é" and his open "e" (as in "heure" [hour, time]) tends toward "è." His "u" similarly tends to sound like "i." Such diction is generally taken to mark origins in the lower classes and privileged Haitians use merciless humor to delegitimize people who speak this way as usurpers of spaces of privilege. The artist is now speaking with aggrieved intensity. He is holding forth about the insignificance of worldly concerns relative to spiritual forces, which, he implies, he now knows but others here don't. He wears a pendant with a Buddhist motif on a necklace and – as much as I can tell – his remarks reveal an inchoate spirituality with a vaguely Buddhist bent. As he speaks, his upper lips and brows are scrunched just so in something of a scowl. His facial gestures as much as his diction are distinctly those of Haitians without an organic education in bourgeois ways of body management. I become aware of this, when I notice the reaction of his Haitian tablemates as he speaks. They do not physically pull away from him, but they certainly disengage from the conversation. All three look at him in suspended animation. The woman with lush dreadlocks is turned toward him with a half-smile of thinly veiled embarrassment. The cultural impresario and the poet-engineer do not seem to have a better idea of how to react. I hypothetically read in their reaction a polite rejection of the artist's spirituality as mysticism at the margins, or, to put it differently, as reaction to a transgression of class boundaries. The artist stops talking. He stares in his drink before taking a sip, then looks straight ahead, seemingly holding to his position defiantly. The poet-engineer intervenes with "Eben" [Oh, well] to break the tension and deliberately changes the subject.

A few months later, as I tried to understand the moment in the broader scope of my observations, I returned to it in a conversation with the poet-engineer. He acknowledged the distinctions of class at the table, and the tension, but he persuaded me that my hypothesis was

wrong. He, the cultural impresario and the woman of lush dreadlocks had not at all meant to marginalize the man's spirituality. He told me that the three of them had in fact subsequently discussed the moment in independent conversations amongst one another. For a while now the artist had been showing an "inner aggressivity" after a few drinks in "certain environments," the poet-engineer told me. I asked, "In an environment like Presse Café?" The poet-engineer answered: "Yes, in a 'ti boujwa' [petit-bourgeois] environment. In other places, too, but much more in a bourgeois place. We attribute it to the experience of his accident." The artist hand was severed in the accident in question (in Canada) and surgically reattached to his forearm. He had since lost use of it. The head of an international art organization with links to Canada, Haiti and West Africa, informed the artist's friends of the accident, telling them that it happened on the job in a bakery. Upon a subsequent visit to Haiti, the artist was incensed, finding that the person who informed the art community of the accident had bad-mouthed him in saying that it happened while he worked in a bakery. He nevertheless never told his friends exactly what happened, only implying that the accident had to do instead with his print-making machinery. The "inner aggressivity" dates to that time, according to the poet-engineer, and, when it surfaced at Presse Café, his friends were again taken aback.

I may have misread the reaction to the artist's remarks at the table. It nonetheless remains that class mediated the artist's "inner aggressivity" and his tablemates' reaction of conversational paralysis. What if, I wonder, instead of speaking of "inner aggressivity," we speak of "festering anger?" How might liberal narrators of the black Republic speak to popular "festering anger" in negotiating the nation's political economy? Lavalas may have been a *popular* movement, but generally privileged black nationalists represented its political organization in seeking and gaining control of the state with Aristide's first aborted presidency. In the alliance across class

and color lines that was Lavalas from the late 1980s through the first Aristide presidency, how might *liberal* black nationalists, *progressive* Haitians and the poor of festering anger have spoken around the inner aggressivity from below? Might the encounter have similarly arrived at conversational paralysis, or worse? I find these questions cogently pertinent, because, at Presse Café, class differentiation challenged the coherence of the black Republic narrative within the boundaries of its blackness. As it happens, a few days before that particular afternoon at Presse Café, at another restaurant, I had found a different aspect of socio-political incoherence within the putatively unifying blackness of the nation.

It was a Saturday night, and the poet-engineer, the cultural impresario and I had gone for drinks and snacks at Vert Galant, another moderately-priced restaurant that is neither ostentatious nor pretentious. It is in a classic gingerbread house in the Bois-Verna section of Port-au-Prince, an area that long ago lost its high-end sheen from the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The place sometimes presents music and other cultural programs versed in the black Republic experience or the African diaspora. It is run by a slim French expatriate, apparently in his thirties. The lustrous black hair accented by sheer white spots at the belly of his dog makes the animal as much pet as fashion accessory, particularly as it gleefully darts around the bar area, sniffing patrons. A few blocks up the street is the “Institut français d’Haiti” [French Institute of Haiti], a prestigious instrument of French diplomacy on the cultural scene of the capital for several decades. Patrons often repair here for drinks following events there. The smart set, the literati and the artsy who want a fashionable setting of cosmopolitan flair without the elitism of Pétiön-Ville would find it here.

Tonight, a trio is covering standards from the folk and pop repertoire. An earlier plan was to meet with a friend of mine and the poet-engineer’s elsewhere. However, he expected us at an

upscale restaurant in Pétiion-Ville, where he was having dinner with his wife, as he regularly does every Saturday. With them, was a high-ranking officer of Jean-Bertrand Aristide's political organization. Both the poet-engineer and the cultural impresario found the thought of going there insufferable: they found that restaurant overly pretentious and overrated, and given what they considered Aristide's dismal legacy his aide did not inspire in them agreeable sentiments. They elected to show me Vert Galant instead. We are now sitting in the garden. Fokal is hosting a reception on the covered terrace. When we arrived earlier in the evening, access to the terrace by the front entrance was barred; a sign announced that it was closed to the public for a private reception. The sign gave no indication of who was giving the party or for whom it was being given, and it did not at all impress the cultural impresario or the poet-engineer. In a posture of entitlement, they walked through the interior of the restaurant and I followed them. Through a door in the dining room we reappeared on the other side of the wrap-around terrace in the middle of the reception. When the poet-engineer and the cultural impresario realized that Fokal was the host, without further ado they effectively made the three of us bona fide guests to the party. The majority of the other guests were youthful white people working on some project or other affiliated with the organization. The poet-engineer walked over to greet three black women holding court on a sofa, the Fokal officers hosting the reception. As the women acknowledged the goodwill of their guests with light-hearted conviviality, the moment distinctly struck me as a realization of the black Republic promise – educated, worldly black Haitians leaving no doubt about their self-confidence and their self-esteem as sovereign national subjects in the modern West. As the poet-engineers chatted with the Fokal hosts, the cultural impresario and I went to the serving station, where waiters helped guests to savory hors-d'œuvre, wine and rum punch.

Eventually, the three of us reconvened at the table in the garden. The German woman

who would join us a few days later at Presse Café was by herself at a nearby table. The impresario, ever the promoter, in short order struck up a conversation with her, introduced himself, and had her come to our table. A little later, he noticed an acquaintance, an older black woman, with a much younger female companion at another table on the other side of the garden. By now, the two have joined our table, too, at the invitation of the cultural impresario. The younger woman is a student in her early twenties at a nearby private university. The cultural impresario will later clarify for me that they are neither kin nor lovers. The younger woman is a “tchoul” [lackey] to the older woman, a social-climbing strategy for access to social spaces that might otherwise be closed to her. At the moment, in a voice of imperious elocution that matches her posture, the older woman is regaling us – in French - with a tale of her career trajectory before she retired. She started out as a secretary and after various detours in various fields the high point of her working life was as a consultant brought aboard by failing companies to right the enterprise. With evident pride, she tells us of her skills and lack of sentimentality in firing workers and cutting costs to bring companies back to profitability. I seem to be the only one who sees the incongruity in the story being told to an audience that includes the poet-engineer, a community activist highly critical of capitalist exploitation. Laughter and bonhomie continue unabated at the table.

At some point, the trio starts an instrumental cover of a ballad written and originally recorded by the Haitian actress and singer Toto Bissainthe, very much a privileged daughter of the black Republic<sup>62</sup>. The retired woman spontaneously leaves the table to claim the trio’s microphone, and she begins to sing. The first part of the song tells of a woman who leaves the popular neighborhood of Pòs Machan and arrives on the Champs-de-Mars. When the narrator first catches sight of her, he “is standing by [the statue of] Dessalines, feeling like chatting.” The

girl smiles at the narrator, he smiles at her. He eventually follows her past the statue of Pétion to the back of a reviewing stand. Night has just fallen; they “bite” and “squeeze” each other. “Girl, what a party!” continues the narration, leaving the rest of the story to the imagination. The second part of the song begins with the narrator at a café in the area, having a drink with “moun debyen” [people of good society]. The girl is passing by again. She approaches to talk; all of the narrator’s friends flee. “Girl, what’s going on?” he asks. He smiles; she cries, telling him that she’s pregnant. His answer is succinct: “Leu ti moun nan va fèt, si se yon ti milat, w a remèt li Babyòl” [When the baby’s born, if it’s a li’l mulatto, you’ll drop him off at Babiole], a hillside residential neighborhood that is geographically and socially clear across the city from Pòs Machan, the woman’s neighborhood.

The song is a lilting ballad from beginning to end, and throughout the lyrics remained innocuous behind the melody. Nonetheless, in the fictional narration of a mulatto man making a slut of a woman from the lower classes, the black woman who had just told her very real story of firing workers to enhance factory profits in effect reprised the trope of the mulatto as bogeyman of the nation. On the terrace of the restaurant, meanwhile, Haiti’s arguably best known “noiriste” intellectual of the day had arrived at the Fokal party. At the end of the song, the audience, including my table, applauds warmly. Because of his colorist positions, the poet-engineer and the cultural impresario hold no more agreeable sentiments for the “noiriste” intellectual than they do for the Aristide aide whom they deliberately avoided meeting that evening. They avoided the aide by invoking their distaste for pretentious and elitist places of the kind where the latter was dining with our friend and his wife in Pétion-Ville. In the black-nationalist imaginary, Vert Galant could not be such a place. Vert Galant produces cultural events that speak to the local and global African heritage; it is housed in a gingerbread house, a Haitian architectural vernacular,

albeit one initiated by the privileged. Our check this evening will nonetheless be comparable to our checks at Presse Café, and, while the poet-engineer, the cultural engineer and the rest of our table applaud the retired woman for her impromptu cover of *Pòs Machan*, warm applause also emanates from the terrace where the “noiriste” intellectual is hanging out with his Fokal hosts. Thus the cultural credo of the black Republic produced a cohesive sociality of blackness. It united privileged blacks of arguably irreconcilable political convictions in the realization of their class situation. That, they did with not one mulatto in sight and at a socio-economic distance from a place like Atis Rezistans that is as unbreachable as the distance between Presse Café and the Grand-rue collective. Moreover, much like at the Ghetto Biennale, within the black qua black sociality at Vert Galant, class differentiation was ever subtly expressed, here in the younger tchoul who accompanied the retired executive.

The limit on the poet-engineer’s political agency “within the class” that might be suggested by the evening at Vert Galant would be relatively similar to that of the *clair* or *mulâtre* at Presse Café, or that of the clientele at the more upscale restaurant where we did not join our friend with his wife and Aristide’s aide. The relative commonality in the limit across color lines and various settings of privilege suggests how the blurring of the picture by an ideology of color created a distinct category of Haitians at Vert Galant that nonetheless might not arrive at a coherent statement on material matters of political economy in the nation. It is in a similarly blurred picture that the poet-engineer could see in a mulatto intellectual whom he otherwise respects a category of Haitians with whom he could not envision a common political action on the national condition. That the ideology of blackness blurring the picture in either case is in reaction to a prior mulatto colorism deepens the complexities of the situation; it does not dismiss the situational problematic of a liberal politics fragmented in color. From the fieldwork, I argue



that it helps to restore clarity to the picture, when we apprehend mulatto prejudice as well as the deployment of national blackness as a dual articulation within broader socio-political processes.

Chapter Five  
**Mulatto, Prejudice and Other White Tidemarks of the Nation**

Pre-Revolutionary encounters produced a tangential presence of whiteness in authors of the Independence. It remained in post-Revolutionary leaders of the nation, and it survived in descendant social formations. Whiteness entered the nation afresh – cogently, somatically - in the 19<sup>th</sup> century onward through migration from Europe and elsewhere, and its re-entry reinforced its residual presence at the level of complexion in contemporary subjects. Irrespective of nationalist ideology, in general privileged light-skinned Haitians are grouped broadly as “*mulâtres*” (mulattoes) or “*clairs*” (lights) by Haitian thinkers and in popular discourse<sup>63</sup>. However, in elite mulatto social relations an elaborate terminology marks various intermediate types before the *mulâtre* proper who, in addition to fair complexion, bears somatic features – “straight” nose, supple hair, thin lips – indistinguishable from those of a *white* (cf. Labelle 1987 [1978]). Although it is hardly unusual for more or less light-skinned Haitians of privilege to assert the blackness of the nation, they may also lay claim to a national identity at varying distances from the fundamental blackness posited in the dominant nationalist narrative. When they do, what might seem like a movement away from the national identity, I have found, is rather a claim on the value of global whiteness suggested by Robotham 2000 within an alternate national imaginary. These relatively light-skinned nationals positing themselves subjectively at a distance from blackness came out of dialectical histories produced in a field of national social practice. Thus they practically remain organic subjects of the nation. If they are the most conspicuous tidemark of whiteness in the blackness of nation, the imbrication is a deeply complex matter.

As I chatted with the wealthy fair-complexioned executive in her office in downtown Port-au-Prince a few days after I was introduced to her, the concept of Haitian whiteness

transpired quite innocuously in our conversation. We were at the headquarters of the family enterprise founded by her late father. As we spoke about national belonging, I asked her whether she felt marginalized when Haitians spoke of Haiti as a *black* republic. Her assertive answer was, “No. It was abroad that I was first treated differently because I was white.” As she continued talking, I mulled over the thought that she had effectively staked a claim on whiteness. “White Haitian” is not a phrase generally uttered by Haitians. I had in fact never heard it spoken by anyone, in Haiti or abroad. That was the first time the very notion had ever entered my imagination. I became conscious of my relation to the woman’s somatic features. I had been talking to a *mulatto*. When the engineering contractor – the husband of the math teacher – introduced me to her two days earlier at another family business, I *knew* that she was white. In that moment, I took her for a foreigner. That lasted a short while – perhaps the ten or fifteen minutes after our introduction – before I ceased *seeing* her whiteness. That happened after it transpired to me that she was a native Haitian.

As I made my way to the fair-complexioned executive’s office after I arrived to her company’s headquarters, I noticed several commemorative portraits of her late father throughout the firm. I had seen him in person once as an adolescent, when he and my father stopped to greet each other in a setting that I no longer recalled. Although his somatic features, like his daughter’s, were markers of whiteness as it is known in dominant cultural centers of the West, then as now, to me, he was a *mulatto*. This erasure of whiteness in national identity fit in a Haitian intellectual tradition that far transcends *noirisme*. Jean Price-Mars, the founder of modern Haitian social science in the 1920s, wrote on Haiti’s politics of color well into the 1960s and nowhere in his work does he speak of an existing or potential white Haitian identity. Contemporary authors and cultural commentators do not speak of white Haitians either. A recent

popular history series sketching the “settlements” of Italians, Germans, Jews and Arabs in Haiti quite remarkably manage not to use the word white once in reference even to the original immigrants let alone to their Haitian-born descendants<sup>64</sup>. The man in the portraits became white to me imaginatively in retrospect, when his daughter alluded to her whiteness. Yet her claim on whiteness did not so much negate my reading of her racialized person as reveal how much such a reading was in keeping with both the nation’s disposition on race and the global intelligentsia’s construction of the Haitian subject.

Paradoxically, having arrived in the field after living nearly twice as long in the USA as I had in Haiti, if the executive’s self-identity caught me by surprise, that might be due less to Haiti’s intellectual tradition than to my reading in the Western academic literature on Haitian social organization. Trouillot, for example, arguably one of the most acclaimed contemporary Haitian scholars in the West and essential reading for a social science of modern Haiti, does not figure white in his typology of Haitian color identity<sup>65</sup>. A wide breath of scholarship by various foreign authors in different disciplines engages directly or incidentally with Haiti’s *question de couleur* (Herskovits 1937, Leyburn 1941, Nicholls 1974, 1979, 1985, Barthélemy 1989, Frick 1990, J. Smith 2001, M. Smith 2009). None speak of white Haitians either. Labelle (1987 [1979]) reports that in her survey 3% of mulatto “bourgeois” and 2% of black “petit-bourgeois” used “blanc” (“white”) in the repertory of color descriptions they applied to sketched human faces presented to them (111-112), but she herself does not use the term as a mode of Haitian identity. Where she finds Haitians using “blanc” routinely to describe the person of other Haitians, the usage is for the most part in the peasantry and is inevitably metaphorical, connoting outsider wealth and privilege (cf. 152). Thus, when I asked the executive whether she had ever

felt marginalized by the black Republic discourse, I had presumed her to *be* mulatto. Alluding to her whiteness, she answered me cogently as a *Haitian*.

As I speak with the executive in her office, she is undoubtedly Haitian. A practicing Roman Catholic, she has an iconographic poster of “Notre Dame du Perpetual Secours” (Our Lady of Perpetual Help) pinned to the inner side of her office door. The poster is by no means battered, but it seems to have been there for a long time. Like religious icons in homes and businesses throughout Haiti, the image seems integral to the place that holds it. “Notre Dame” is the patron saint of Haiti. She is a figure to which a religious Haitian might turn to during the kind of conversation that ensues between the executive and her maid, when the latter calls anxiously from the family’s residence. The maid has called to alert the executive of foodstuff that needs be stocked up in the house. In the next few days, results of the second round of the presidential elections are expected to be announced. In November, there were arsons and violent demonstrations in the capital, when the Conseil Electoral Provisoire (CEP), the decisive electoral authority, declared that Michel Martelly finished third in the first round of balloting, thereby eliminating him from the run-off. Calm returned after the CEP revised its decisions to find Martelly in second place and the governing party’s candidate third.

Like all who pay attention to the “word on the street,” the maid is aware that there is no certainty Martelly will be announced the winner of the run-off against Mirlande Manigat. At the moment, popular opinion holds again that Martelly won the presidency. Before the final results are eventually announced a few weeks later, several Manigat supporters will have indeed told me that they believed Martelly won the vote. However, in the Haitian political imagination he remains a candidate out of the proverbial left field. Manigat is of the political elite through and through. Her husband Leslie, noted historian and noiriste theorist, was himself President once.

Rumors hold it that the CEP will imminently announce the winner, and no one seems to know exactly when that will be. The fair-complexioned executive's family assets include two vast warehouses in different cities of the country and extensive real estate holdings. Before and after the call from the maid, a stream of employees seeking her attention intermittently interrupts our conversation. The family presumably has contingency plans that would speak to those business practicalities should political or civil disturbances shut the city down in coming days. However, the maid called to talk household provisions. The executive responds as a Haitian rooted in Haiti. The maid has called from the house in which the executive grew up and in which she and her husband later reared their four children. Her mother now lives in a house on an adjacent property. The maid and the executive carefully go through an inventory of what there is and what there isn't enough of in the house – from sugar to rice to oil. The family has homes in the neighboring Dominican Republic and in Florida, but the executive does not seem to give any thought to going abroad as a precaution. As it happens, one morning more than a year later, she will tell me that she travels on a Haitian passport and does not hold any other. Although she has held a US Alien Residency card for decades, she has no plan to seek American citizenship. She will not give up her Haitian citizenship, because “mwen pa vle pou w leu mwen ta vle fè w bagay nan peyi a pou m pa kapab paskeu m pa sitwayen” [I don't want one day not to be able to do something in the country because I'm not a citizen].

For nearly one and a half years after this encounter with a native Haitian referring to herself as white I did not speak with a single Haitian of any color in Haiti to whom the notion of a white Haitian was not intuitively nonsensical. I also searched the Internet periodically for “blanc haïtien” [white Haitian] through Google. I practically found no document at all in French mentioning the phrase as a fact of Haitian life<sup>66</sup>. I similarly searched “white Haitian” and the

results pointed to a relatively stable set of Web pages. None were discussions or artifacts by Haitians in Haiti about actual or potential white nationals. A fifty-minute video documentary released on YouTube in August 2010 was the only artifact yielded by the queries that presented a Haitian – a fair-skinned scion of the business elite - referring to people born and living in Haiti as whites<sup>67</sup>. Although in an on-screen interview he asserts being culturally Haitian and finding no contradiction in seeing himself as a white person, he had lived in North America since the 1980s and did not intend to return to Haiti<sup>68</sup>. The video also included interviews with three other native-born fair-skinned Haitians - an elderly woman in Cap Haïtien, the chief executive of Haiti’s best known publishing house and a transnational *konpa* music star based in Florida. The latter two might be taken to be white outside Haiti, but neither speaks of or alludes to being white. The publisher talks about race, color and being Haitian in a reasoned, dispassionate commentary. Invoking French and German ancestry and “Haitian roots as well, going back all the way to Independent time and colonial time,” he speaks of “fellow countrymen” who have dealings with him and do not consider him to be fully Haitian. He and the other three native-born interviewees speak qua Haitians of their relation to Haiti. However, except for the elderly woman, who spoke in Haitian, the interviews were conducted in English by the work’s white American producer-director<sup>69</sup>. Even on Haitian community sites, that I could tell, online discussions about them were exclusively in English occasionally mixed with Haitian Creole. No comments related the video to any socio-political process of the moment in Haiti. This documentary about white Haitians was outside Haiti’s public sphere; they interviewees were not in a national conversation.

In the few days after the fair-complexioned executive alluded to her whiteness, I separately asked an ad-hoc sample of three or four black friends in Haiti’s cultural elite whether they knew “white Haitians; not mulatto: white.” They all without exception were baffled by the

concept. This was not a representative sample by any stretch of the imagination, but the response was consistent with the total absence of the phrase “white Haitian” in Haiti’s public vocabulary. The phrase made no more sense to mulattoes whom I also asked. The response of a mulatto entrepreneur on my final trip to the field in the latter part of 2012 was particularly illuminating.

The mulatto entrepreneur grew up in the upper-middle-class of the business sector and owns a company that manufactures engineering components for various industries. His genealogy stretches back to the mulatto population of the colonial period. His skin is more or less as light as that of the fair-complexioned executive. As he drove around Port-au-Prince with me on various business errands one day, he talked about his color prejudice as candidly as the executive did. To him also it was just another fact of life. He just as freely spoke of his grandfather being black. Although he also spoke at some length about his great-grandfather being a physician whose children traveled to Europe to finish their education, he never told me specifically mentioned that he was a mulatto. He told me with a touch of family pride of his grandfather being the first black student admitted to his Paris high-school and eventually graduating from a polytechnic college. The grandfather married a French Jewish woman and they briefly lived elsewhere in the Americas before returning to Haiti to start a family, and their children married fair-skinned Haitians.

The mulatto entrepreneur jokes about putting his grandfather's color to tactical use when dealing with Haitians who taunt or tease him for his color (“wouj” [red]) and/or class. His grandfather was not simply “nwa” (black), he would say, but “nwè,” an idiomatic Creole word that connotes a particularly dark shade of black. Although he was currently in a committed relationship with a black woman, he freely told me that he would not have married a dark-skinned woman as he steered his SUV in slow-moving traffic in downtown Port-au-Prince. He in



fact never dated one until his current relationship. He married a white European woman, whom he met when she vacationed in Haiti, and they had two children before divorcing. When I asked him whether, in retrospect, his prejudice made sense to him, his full answer was a flat “Non” [No]. He also maintained that his parents never told him or otherwise communicated to him not to bring a black girl home. When I pressed him to explain how he learned to be prejudiced if not at home, he shrugged earnestly: “Stupidité. C’est le milieu” [Stupidity. It’s the milieu]. He described his constant effort to minimize encounters between his girlfriend and his ex-wife and daughter – practically, a white French adolescent – because they disapprove of the relationship on the basis of color. When I asked him what he would do if one of his children were to date a black person, he shrugged without actually answering me. It had been more than a year since the fair-complexioned executive alluded to her whiteness. It occurred to me to ask him whether he considered himself white. He had the same reaction as my black collaborators had to the notion of a white Haitian.

Steering his SUV near the slum of Bel Air, the mulatto entrepreneur answered matter-of-factly, “No. I’m Haitian.” He turned to me with a quizzical expression similar to that of my black friends’, when I asked them whether they knew any white Haitians. His reaction also reminded me of that of his younger brother, who is more or less of the same somatic appearance. A month earlier, while in New York, I had been on the phone with the brother, who also lived overseas, and wondered whether he might have considered himself white when he was growing up in Haiti. With a chuckle of amused surprise, he answered: “No. My education, the idea is absurd.” The mulatto entrepreneur continued his own thoughts on the subject in the car. Using “pè,” the Haitian word for “pop,” followed by the maiden name of the fair-complexioned executive, he invoked her father in a disparaging tone. Pop so-and-so, he told me, was the only Haitian he

knew who taught his children that they were white. His reference to the fair-complexioned executive's family came by sheer happenstance. No comment I had made in any of my conversations with him could have reasonably elicited this specific reference; nor could I have known that he knew her<sup>70</sup>. Be that as it may, he did know the executive as a young woman on the dating scene of their adolescence. In his recollection of those days, which was not necessarily reliable but nonetheless telling, his interest in the executive was precluded by the centrality of *being white* in her father's vision of the family. While he actively sought to reproduce a "white" phenotype in his family and seemed like he might rather want her daughter do the same, he objected without hesitation to the Haitian's presumption of whiteness. Haiti shall not grant whiteness transactional liquidity in its social economies, yet colorist practices in the nation are pegged to global whiteness as standard currency,.

Another academic of the left from the mulatto elite – not the Marxist who referred me to the *clair* executive - was to tell me a story of existential angst over the dissipation of lightness in a branch of his family. Looking at photographs on the Website of the institution where he was based outside Haiti, I could not summarily distinguish him by race from white faculty members. Throughout his tenure overseas he had remained actively engaged with Haiti's national life both privately and professionally. During a wedding in the family in Haiti, he found the father of the bride – his cousin - contemplating the proceedings with what seemed to him an expression of gloom that was not commensurate with the occasion. "The guy looked like he was at his child's funeral instead of her wedding," he related to me. When he asked his cousin what was the matter, the latter answered: "Bagay yo pa bon menm. Se yon ameriken nwa" [Things are not good at all. It's a black American]. The cousin's daughter was indeed marrying an African-American. Yet the cousin was himself dark-skinned, the academic said, chuckling in disbelief at the memory and

adding: “Leu m di w nwa, kòm si m t a di w ou senegalè” [When I tell you black, I mean like a Senegalese]. When I asked him about the rest of the man’s family, he told me in a mixture of Haitian and English that the man’s siblings as well as his daughter were “tankou m, yo mulatre, ou mèt di blan” [like me, they’re mulatto, you could say white], “some like people from Sweden.” When I asked whether the man was in any way marginalized in the family because of his color, the academic told me that he was not at all. He further asserted that his cousin’s color did not practically interfere with his belonging to the mulatto elite. Thus, as related by the academic, his cousin’s dark complexion did not constitute an encumbrance in affective family relations or in his material situation in the mulatto elite. The cousin’s despondency at the realization of his daughter’s marriage to a black man, it seems to me, expressed an anxiety at the forfeited possibility of a spouse whose complexion would augment rather than diminish the family’s store of lightness.

As the academic and I spoke of color, class and privilege in Haiti I thought of asking him in what color category Claudinette Fouchard might fit. I had been thinking over the moment she entered national memory in 1960 as an ideal of Haitian beauty after winning an international pageant in Columbia. In public photographs, she is of a lighter complexion than the American actress Lena Horne. On cover pictures of the American magazines *Jet* (February 4, 1960) and particularly *Ebony* (July 1960), her skin is made emphatically light. Her father was the noted historian and diplomat Jean Fouchard, who Haitians often classify in the broad category of mulatto<sup>71</sup>. Yet in media coverage of her crowning as a beauty pageant winner she is described as a “brune” (brown), a description that might be applied to noticeably darker skin tones. I raised the question of her color with the academic, because I had been intrigued by the ambiguity of the one assigned to her in popular discourse. He seemed personally familiar with the Fouchard

family and answered me unequivocally, with no undue thought to the issue: “Oh, Claudinette is black.” I told him that I found his assessment surprising, because her skin seems decidedly light in the Haitian context. He provided more contextual and descriptive details: “Cheveu l. Se pase l pase cheveu l. Ou konnen, lontan fi ki te konn pase cheveu yo” [Her hair. It’s a hot iron she uses for her hair. Y’know, back then women who used a hot iron in their hair], “whatever product they use today.” He also pointed out that she would in fact be not as light as she seemed in pictures, because she would apply cosmetic products that made her skin tone appear lighter than its natural state. He then added: “Brune is probably a good way to describe her color. Edwidge, [Claudinette’s sister] she is black. She’s darker than Claudinette. Her nose is flat. Their father, Jean, maybe you can say he was a mulatto. He had hair like mine. His nose is not. I have a flat nose. Jean’s nose was straight.”

In thinking his cousin’s existential experience of bearing a dark skin in the mulatto elite, the academic found a contradiction neither at the level of family nor at the level of class, and he derided his cousin’s prejudice of color without reservation. However, in his assessment of Fouchard’s color he adhered to the conventions of the colorist tradition identified by Labelle amongst mulattoes. Dark-skinned Haitians tend to elaborate ever more nuanced typological categories to differentiate “black,” while generally lumping subjects of relatively lighter complexion as “mulatto.” Amongst light-skinned Haitians the tendency is reversed: gradations of relatively darker complexion are conflated to “black,” while subjects of relatively lighter skin are filtered through ever more nuanced characteristics that create various sub-categories before arriving at the “true” mulatto (cf Labelle 1987 [1978]:98). Thus in speaking to the situation of the Fouchards in the scheme of social color amongst privileged Haitians, the academic became Gramsci’s organic intellectual who speaks to his community’s social order from within its lived

history, grappling with materialities that regulate its viability, here not simply the color of the skin, but the shape of the nose and the objective characteristics of the hair. The Haitian mulatto who would not condone color prejudice would nonetheless keep careful inventories of the material building blocks of whiteness. Haitian colorism effectively becomes a quasi-arithmetic accounting system: whiteness is meaningful as a social weight, not as a state of social being.

The fair-complexioned executive initially clung to a pragmatic logic in describing her color prejudice to me. Whiteness as definite social value appeared most cogently to, when she collapsed the rationality of the practice in her material appreciation of what makes the subject white. She first attributed to her grandmother the central and - from her point of view - highly practical argument for not marrying a black man: a marriage is hard and difficult work, to marry someone of a different race or color is to stack the deck yet more against conjugal success. After telling me the story of her sister's unhappy marriage to and bruising divorce from a philanderer, she said in Haitian with a touch of humor: "Imagine you've got to worry you're not marrying someone who's going to cheat on you, someone who's not going to treat you badly, and now for me to worry also about what kind of problems we're going to have about color."

Invoking her sister's experience, the executive told me that she passed her grandmother's wisdom on to her daughter. She also spoke of her anxiety, when her son insisted on pursuing a "serious" relationship with a black woman. Remarkably, only in passing remarks did she mention that the woman had a child from a previous relationship. The woman having had a child out of wedlock seemed to have played little or no part in her resistance to the relationship. In fact, if her son's relationship with the woman remained to her an irremediably doomed proposition, she found the rare encouraging sign in his relationship with the woman's toddler - they liked each other. It is the color issue that consumed her in telling me the history of the

relationship. She had resigned herself to the prospect of the union, she said, “men heureusement, pitit, bagay yo pa mache” [but luckily, dear, things didn’t work out]. The son and his girlfriend had recently broken up over reasons not having to do with color. Ultimately, however much the fair-complexioned executive attributed her prejudice to a pragmatic appreciation of the realities of marriage and other stress points of daily life, her prejudice was to reveal itself rooted in her concrete relation to the materialities of whiteness.

The political scientist Andrew Hacker speaks of a thought experiment in which “white students [would] ask for \$1 million for each future year they would” be made to live as black, revealing in the process that the value of being white “can be appreciated only after it has been taken away” (2003:42). Of her ethnographic subjects in the study of *Everyday Forms of Whiteness*, anthropologist Melanie Bush says “to be white means to be able to assume that race will not interfere with getting a job or taking care of business, so you do not need to think about it. [This] perspective often leads to whites’ denial of their own racial identity” (Bush 2004:60). In Bush’s resulting theorization “the concept of

whiteness...reveals the ways in which whites benefit from a variety of institutional and social arrangements that often appear (to whites) to have nothing to do with race. [Being] white has generally been associated with ancestry from the European continent...However, the claim to European heritage is often less significant than whether one is identified as white in everyday interactions (Alba 1990, 3). [Bush 2004:15]

For the subjects of both Hacker and Bush, the value of whiteness, though concretely realized in everyday life, is nonetheless intrinsic to a social condition of abstracted being. This is not so for

the fair-complexioned executive. Her consciousness of the materialities of whiteness was tactile as she waxed poetic in Haitian: “My grandmother used to tell me, Wouldn’t you want a baby with blue eyes? Beautiful li’l blue eyes! Oh! And blond hair, quite long. When you’re brushing it, holding it in your hands, it’s such a nice sensation.” As the executive spoke of a white’s blond hair, she cocked her head sideways wistfully and mimicked holding a child’s strand of hair in front of her with one hand while brushing it with the other. Like the mulattoes who would not be white but would want what makes whites white, and quite unlike Hacker’s and Bush’s subjects, the pragmatic logic of her prejudice of color ultimately grounded it in a consciousness of the somatic parts whose sum is the foundation of the edifice of whiteness. It is in the practical awareness of *how* one is tangibly white that the fair-complexioned executive might become alert that the edifice could be worth one million dollars a year in a North American imagination.

In the 1979 film *Manhattan*, as the seventeen-year-old character Tracy, the actress Mariel Hemingway performs to sublime affect a variation of the act of whiteness that the fair-complexioned executive found in brushing the hair of her imaginary child<sup>72</sup>. As is often the case in the work of US filmmaker Woody Allen, whatever else the story is about it is also about the cultivation of the self. Tracy is waiting for a taxi to go to the airport to fly off to London, where she will study acting. Standing in the lobby of her apartment building, she distractedly brushes hair that luminously cascades to her shoulders. Coming at the end of a tale substantively enacted entirely by white persons to depict existential afflictions of distinctly privileged modern subjects, the sheer visual lushness that supports Hemingway’s performance turns the scene into a normative moment of the universal non-race. To Hacker’s and Bush’s subjects, such hair would simply inhere in an ideal North Atlantic white self<sup>73</sup>. One would have such hair not because one is *white*, but because one simply *is*. The Haitian executive, I suggest, would not be so complacent

about the stakes of whiteness. To her, the hair is a primordial technique of the self. She may imagine herself white in Haiti, but she is practically cognizant of the tactile materiality of whiteness. Her assertive awareness of that materiality expresses the nation's pre-occupation with lightness of complexion as an object one attains through concrete social transactions. By the logic of transactional relations, lightness of complexion is thus a material value.

The mulatto academic's cousin's despair at his daughter's marriage to a black man arguably obtained from the inexorable forfeiture of concrete value in determinate somatic features. Around the potential of such anguish arises a mulatto qua mulatto sociality. Unlike black qua black sociality, mulatto qua mulatto sociality turns on an ideology not of the nation but of the self. The prejudiced mulatto sees ideal of physical being in European somatic appearance, and mulatto praxis aims to approximate it in biological reproduction. Mulatto parents may tell their children explicitly the characteristics that are expected in a potential spouse. Mulatto adolescents and young adults may measure obsessively somatic features of peers with whom they engage in social celebration. Privileged blacks and privileged mulattoes sharing enduring friendships will often be found distinctly clustered by color at restaurant tables. Congruently with my participant-observation, privileged light-skinned and dark-skinned Haitians uniformly told me that no clubs, restaurants and the like existed which blacks with the requisite socio-economic capitals did not unexceptionally enter together with mulattoes. Not incidentally, I would argue, blacks and mulattoes who came of age in the Duvalier dictatorship told me that mulatto prejudice was as rampant as ever in contemporary Haiti<sup>74</sup>. Such prejudice is a preemptive practice speaking to the possibility of the situation which the mulatto academic's cousin found himself in. Yet the colorist gaze nonetheless always assesses somatic characteristics in the context of the bearer's socioeconomic situation.



Trouillot (1990) notes that a light-skinned “young woman [of] lower-middle-class origins [will] probably not marry [into] the *mulâtre* elite, because the *mulâtre* aristocracy is endogamous” (123). Yet, Trouillot further points out, the young woman is unlikely to marry up the socio-economic ladder a similarly light-skinned “businessman[,] professional [or] well-placed public servant...since they are playing the same game. Hence it is most likely that the young lady will marry within the *noir* group. But not any *noir* will do. [H]is social direction will be unambiguously upward” (123). Trouillot persuasively concludes that in “inter- and intra-class alliances” color is an “exchange value” (1990:122). However, he also asserts in his argument that

the *mulâtre* sector of the Haitian elites has practiced an endogamous policy, marrying its sons to its daughters whenever possible. This choice can only be explained in terms of color prejudice, because class relations do not lend themselves to the same divisions. This is, moreover, the dilemma that (traditional) Marxist analysis of the *noirisme/mulâtrisme* duo refuses to confront. Either the color question is an immediate reflection of class relations – and then it would have no autonomy, for the *entire dominant class would be clair and all the clairs would be of the dominant class* (which is obviously [false]) – or color prejudice is relatively autonomous with regard to economic structures, and this autonomy must be taken into account. [119]

In taking color prejudice to be an instruments in social relations within and between elite segments and yet to operate outside political-economic relations, Trouillot ultimately sees such prejudice as an instrument deployed by mulattoes in the reproduction of their lightness.

If one does not neglect the dialectical dimensions of the process that Trouillot describes, it becomes possible to apprehend colorism in Haiti as a fundamental modality in the negotiation of social, political, and economic privilege by and among Haitians of any complexion. The young woman in the example undertakes this negotiation in spite of her modest origins through the management of her person, “by her dress, her discretion, and the places she frequents is in the end a social investment – her color” (Trouillot 1990:123). In Trouillot’s argument, since her “investment” would not be worth much to the similarly light-skinned subject better situated in the nation’s socio-economic stratification, the young woman would in all likelihood settle for a union with the “right” black man, one with the right socio-economic situation. Trouillot remains silent on how the black man might arrive at this union. Trouillot’s silence may suggest that the black man would enter the union because he merely *found* the young woman, whom he contingently wanted to marry. By the processual logic of the politics of color and class in Trouillot’s example, I suggest instead, the upwardly mobile black man would quite likely *settle* for a light-skinned woman of a more modest socio-economic pedigree because he *preferred* – if not *sought* – her by the color of her skin. Thus in Haiti subjective valuation of lightness of complexion is not co-terminus with political-economic ideological stance.

Albert Mangones and his first cousin Jacques Roumain, two mulatto public personalities who profoundly marked the aesthetics, arts and letters of the black Republic from the first half of the 20th century onward, illustrate the risk of disorientation, if one took to reading the quality of political engagement through the subjective negotiation of color. Their grand-father, Tancredi Auguste, was a successful mulatto businessman who served in the cabinet of three black presidents and rose to the presidency himself in 1913. Mangonès’s Marron Inconnu, which can otherwise be read as a transcendent symbol of combative resistance to oppression, became one of

the most definitive statements of Haiti's fundamental blackness in the context of Duvalierist *noirisme*. Roumain was one of the founders of the Haitian Communist Party in the 1930s and his 1944 classic novel *Gouverneurs de la rosée* was a seminal moment in the legitimation in the imaginary of the learned Haitian of what Barthélemy (1989) called the "Haitian rural universe." The assertive nationalism of the two could be found in the subsequent generation of the family, albeit more anonymously. One pair of parents named a son after an iconic leader of the slaves' general insurrection of August 1791. Another named a child after the most hallowed figure of the armed resistance to the American occupation of 1915-1934. Yet from Mangonès's and Roumain's grandfather Auguste through the second generations after them in their respective lines of the family everyone married a *clair*, everyone produced *clair* progeny, effecting – whether intending or not - the reproduction of color, which Trouillot incisively argues is typically achieved through strategic prejudice of color in the selection of a spouse.

In the field, among political liberals, I consistently found mulattoes managing the perennity of lightness of complexion while holding viewpoints on Haiti's political and economic dilemmas more or less in alignment with those of engaged black nationalists like the poet-engineer and the cultural impresario, or otherwise liberal blacks like the contractor and his wife. A wealthy erudite *clair* businessman told me unequivocally that not only did he consider himself black, "m se w nwaris" [I'm a *noiriste*]. One of his mulatto great-grandfathers served three black presidents in high-level posts beginning in the closing years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and was for a time one of the nation's most powerful politicians. He finds Dessalines to be a murderer for his massacres, and finds the mulatto icon Pétion no better a leader, "pou mwen l se w asasen pou wòl li nan asasinasyon Dessalines" [for me he's an assassin for his role in Dessalines's assassination]. He admires Christophe, the highest ranked black in the Revolutionary army after

Dessalines and founder of the Kingdom of the North, as a visionary nation builder and creator of state institutions. I first met him at an academic event, where he inconspicuously presented a paper. One Sunday morning, as he looked up a volume for a quote to buttress an argument in his library, a large, airy room of the same understated elegance as the rest of the house, I came to see him as a moneyed intellectual who wears his wealth lightly. Like similar homes overlooking Port-au-Prince in the hills of Boutiliers, his house affords a panoramic view of the city, but it does not look extravagant from the outside. Inside, the modern furnishings seem expensive, but not ostentatious.

As we spoke in Haitian Creole in his office one day not far from Delmas Road, the *clair* businessman denounced mulatto prejudice with disdainful anger: “It’s so stupid. In the US, I’m a black man. And a whole lot of others, it’s the same thing. This prejudice is a senseless thing. In the US, we’d all be suffering it as black people. You’d think that would make them think.” Alluding to the US presidential elections less than a month away, he added: “For real, if Obama weren’t black, there’d be no elections. If the best Republican is Romney, if Obama were white, nobody would bother. They’d just appoint him to a second term.” Over the few hours I was with him that morning, during which Haiti’s Ambassador to Washington returned his telephone call, he wholly rejected in equal measure what he considers Aristide’s reckless populism and the Duvalier dictatorship and its legacy. He also spoke at length of disheartening cynicism and corruption in the Martelly administration. When I raised the widely discussed issue of oligarchs’ clientelist business relations with the state, in careful allusions, he deplored the persistent influence of specific families on the state, giving me examples of Martelly’s own power being circumvented. He further sketched the broad lines of a case dating to the previous government of René Préval.

An enterprise with which the businessman was substantially associated currently operated under contract with the Haitian government. Under the terms of the agreement, the enterprise was paid distinctly less than what was paid to a competitor similarly contracted to the state to deliver the same product. Moreover, the competitor was effectively a former state enterprise whose control and ownership had been transferred to a family with a long history of deal-making with the state. As depicted by the businessman, the situation was as farcical as it was consistent with accounts of that family's long access to decisive state authority, which others would independently relate to me during my fieldwork. I told him that I had heard similar lines of criticism of both the Martelly government and of oligarchic influence. I also told him that I was increasingly noticing the lack of a transcendent civil society space where black and mulatto segments of the elite engaged in this critique together across lines of color. He was resistant to this notion. Since he was well acquainted with the intellectual elite and substantially engaged in poverty relief initiatives, I asked him whether he was in any sustained political conversation with dark-skinned nationalist thinkers or activists, either at the private level or in civil society projects. He became pensive for a brief moment, then shook his head. He named a prominent *noiriste* black public intellectual, asking me whether I knew him. He was the intellectual who joined the Fokal party the evening the poet-engineer, the cultural impresario and I were at the restaurant Le Vert Galant.

I knew the intellectual by reputation, but I was not familiar with his work. The businessman, who knew him, told me of an unsuccessful attempt to engage him in a common project. The intellectual had become an expert in a cultural form endemic to a region of the country's rural interior, which the businessman along with several business associates was interested in. He proposed to hire the intellectual to hold a series of workshops to educate them

in the tradition. The intellectual refused and suggested instead that the businessman go to the region himself and learn the culture by direct contact. I thought to myself that perhaps the intellectual had a point, then, as a man from the service staff came to take away our empty espresso cups, I began realizing that I and any number of Haitian friends and acquaintances, and in the moment it seemed like the vast majority of them, would *know* little, if anything at all, of any cultural form endemic to rural Haiti. The businessman somberly located the intellectual's rejection in the context of the "color question," which had consumed us for nearly an hour of conversation, and we left the subject at that. It is nonetheless not hard to understand that in the schema of black-nationalist subjectivity his political views could be subsumed in the *mulatto* – or the yet more damning *mulatto elite* – identity, which this subjectivity tends to take as axiomatically inimical to the condition of the nation's black majority. Like the *clair* mulatto executive engaged in community development, the erudite *clair* businessman is substantially engaged in concrete projects beyond his commercial enterprise that speak to the condition of the poor. Yet his wife and children being also distinctly *clair*, he is again the mulatto subject who, irrespective of intent, effectively conforms to Trouillot's mapping of the reproduction of color. Moreover, notwithstanding a brother's marriage to a black woman, through his parents and siblings, on the one hand, and his wife, on the other, this reproduction is situated in a network of *clair* genealogies. The *noiriste* intellectual, a subject of Haiti's black qua black sociality of privilege, effectively declined an invitation to visit the mulatto qua mulatto sociality of privilege. This is an effect of the nation's management of its white tidemarks, and in it we find again a rupture in the circulation of a liberal politics in the nation.

The Sunday following my conversation with the erudite *clair* businessman in his office about state corruption, he picked me up at my house to spend the morning with him after he

returned from church. As he drove, he came back to the theme of corruption in the Martelly administration. It was five days after hurricane Sandy hit the country in the fall of 2012. By Friday, the executive branch had requested and the Senate had authorized disbursement of emergency funds to assist populations affected by the hurricane. Also by Friday, the businessman had learned that, in the rural area where he did his poverty alleviation work, the assistance would consist of *trois mille plats chauds* [three thousand hot meals]. He had already visited the area and knew that the considerable storm damage there was caused almost exclusively by a local river that overflowed its bed. He reached out to a few key decision makers on the hurricane relief effort in the Martelly administration to suggest that merely distributing free meals to local residents would not address the root cause of the damage. He argued for a structural intervention. In a matter of days, he proposed, he would set up a project to employ local labor to shore up the banks of the local river with gabion walls. The project would cost no more than the meals, he told me he argued. He could even pull it off with only a portion of the funds allocated for the meals, he told his interlocutors in the Martelly administration. He summarized his argument for me in the Frenchified Creole of educated Haitians : “Au lieu w bay moun yo ou plat manje, embaucher yon gwoup pou yon mwa, w ap ba yo travay, y ap bay fanmi yo manje, e w ap enjekte menm kòb la nan ekonomi lokal la” [Instead of giving a meal to the people, hire a group for a month, you’ll give them work, they’ll feed their families, and you’ll inject the same money in the local economy]. In the end he was rebuffed, because, he said, “se youn ladan yo k ap bay pla cho yo. Korupsyon gen pluzyeu sans” [It’s one of them providing the hot meals. Corruption has many senses].

As the erudite *clair* businessman pulled into his driveway that Sunday morning in October of 2012, I felt a compounded sense of the stakes of a cohesive liberal politics in Haiti's

civil society. The previous Thursday I happened to have been at the mulatto entrepreneur's house. It is within view of the *clair* businessman's on the same street and like other residences of the well-to-do in Boutiliers it sits on a relatively large parcel of land, and the property is graced with lush vegetation. On the mulatto entrepreneur's patio the previous week, as we sipped Cuban rum during the trailing rains of Hurricane Sandy, he had inveighed against the decimation of local agricultural production by imports, his anger reaching a peak as he posited Haiti as “une société qui n'a plus une élite rurale” [a society that no longer has a rural elite] due to the collapse of agricultural production. Evoking Price Mars's (1919) theme of *La vocation de l'élite* [The Mission of the Elite], he found “enpòte du riz, se pa wòl yon elit” [importing rice, that's not the role of an elite], finding the activity unbecoming of the nation's elite, which – to him - should lead national development in all its dimensions.

The mulatto entrepreneur remained angry, when he spoke of various instances of oligarchic families' clientelist relation with the state. During our conversation that evening, more than once he objected, when, speaking of privileged Haitians' political engagement, I substituted “mulatto elite” for “economic elite.” The second time, with a hint of frustration, he repeated almost verbatim what he said the first time: “Il n'y a pas une tête de pont qui mène les mulâtres” [There's no head of the pack leading mulattoes]. As it happens, in the presidential elections of 2010-2011 neither he nor the erudite *clair* businessman voted for Charles Henri Baker. Yet Baker, a candidate as fair of complexion as the mulatto entrepreneur – effectively a white man in any dominant Western country – was generally described in foreign media as a wealthy businessman. The mulatto entrepreneur voted for Martelly, but he identified with PAIN, the Parti agricole industriel national [National Agricultural and Industrial Party] founded by Louis Déjoie, Duvalier's mulatto opponent in 1957, and now led by a black agronomist<sup>75</sup>. Like the erudite *clair*



businessman, the mulatto entrepreneur had not been in any private or civil society conversation on national politics with any black Haitians. When I asked him whether he discussed with other mulattoes his views on the oligarchic families' relations with the state, he shook his head with an ironic chuckle as he answered, "Teren an glise" [The ground is slippery].

## Chapter Six Unity in Colorism

“[To] bicker about the existence of some ‘mulatto’ slaves” in Saint-Domingue might lead one to misapply “the colonial color scale [as] a method of analysis and explication of social phenomena” (Casimir 2000:9). The scheme of social color in the colony regulated socio-political relations amongst free people of all phenotypes, who inexorably constituted a formation of privilege vis-à-vis the slaves<sup>76</sup>. In contemporary Haiti as well the colorist categories regulate social relations between and within the elites. From their articulation with elite power obtains their aspirational significance for subjects outside the elites. In both Saint-Domingue and contemporary Haiti, the typology of color is evidently concerned with an obsessive measurement of embodied race. Yet there is a significant difference between the respective modalities of measurement. In the colony, from the formally bi-racial *mulâtre* through the one-quarter black *quarteron* to the *octavon* of one-eighth black “blood,” the language of color insistently marks a residual blackness with arithmetic logic as the social subject approaches “whiteness” of the phenotype through the generations. In the sovereign nation, which by its fact vanquished white colonial power, the language of color affords imaginary lightness to the dark-skinned subject with the requisite capitals who wishes to efface blackness from the social person. In quotidian life, the nomenclature of colorist typology ranges from “black” to “mulatto,” but the practical meanings of this vocabulary range from “black” to “not-black” with various indications of “not-quite-black” between the two poles. This will transpire in any careful attention to popular discourses and practices in the privileged classes, or otherwise among aspirational subjects. The situation is consistent with the fact that post-Independence elites that yielded the contemporary formations of privilege merely turned the tables on European ethnic arrogance; they mapped the colonial logic of socio-political organization on a post-colonial iteration of colonial economics.

For Haitians “‘Haiti chérie’...is the country’s unofficial second national anthem. [The] force of the song as a vehicle [for] Haitian nationalism was made clear [when] Aristide returned to Haiti on October 15, 1994 after three years in exile. Before any speeches or official demonstrations, two women singers led the crowd and assembled dignitaries in a rousing rendition...” [Meehan 1999:112]

Various versions of the song have been adapted from a 1920 poem composed by a physician in the early phase of the *indigéniste* literary school. *Indigénisme* linked fierce opposition to the US Occupation of 1915-1934 and validation of the national vernacular experience, particularly as lived in the countryside. The lyrics cogently reveal the articulation of the colorist nomenclature with social privilege in the verse “When you’re in the whites’ country you see all faces in one color/There are no mulatto girls, beautiful marabouts, beautiful creole griffe girls/Who like nice dresses, good powder and good scent/Nor beautiful young negresses who can say sweet nothings”<sup>77</sup>. Keeping in mind that social lightness (from *griffe* to *clair* to even *mulâtre*) is not inaccessible to a dark-skinned subject with enough alternate requisite capitals to compensate for the deficit in lightness of complexion, we find the black woman here situated distinctly outside the formation of beautiful women who dress fashionably, make themselves up tastefully and wear the right perfume. Among those who do (or their male counterparts), a “griffe” might have more or less the complexion of the American golfer Tiger Woods and with unmistakably “black” nappy hair and a “marabou” would have unmitigatedly dark skin and hair that is naturally straight and supple. Thus, imagined as a marabou or a griffe, the subject who in dominant centers

of the West would bear an irreducible mark of blackness attains yet in Haiti a trait in the social person that is not held to be “black.”

The situation of the marabou relative to the “jenn nègès” [young negress] and her male counterpart transpires in the language of a development executive, a black man in his fifties, when he expressed his outrage at what he asserted was rampant color prejudice in President Michel Martelly’s close entourage. He considers Martelly a personal friend and enthusiastically looked forward to his presidency, when I arrived in the field shortly after the run-off of the elections in March 2011. Two and a half years later, he was thoroughly disillusioned. In a wide-ranging conversation about Martelly’s performance he returned to the theme of color, which he and I had intermittently talked about during my fieldwork: “There again, it’s not Michel himself. He’s a good man. It’s those

he surrounds himself with. Those guys brag even their mistresses are white women or mulattoes. How do you tell me you don’t fuck black women? I’ve got an issue with that. 98% of the country’s women are black. That’s not Michel; he’d never say such things. Michel fucks anybody. He’ll fuck servants, he’ll fuck street vendors. He’ll never have a problem fucking black women.

Haitians can and do innocuously identify one another in everyday practice by the empirical shading of their skin – “nèg klè lòt bò a” [the light guy over there], “eleman nwa devan n an” [the black fellow ahead of us]. However, in the imaginary of the black development executive and of the relatively dark-skinned privileged in general social subjects *become* black by their life conditions in the lower strata of the social hierarchy. Not only “Haiti chérie,” but pop music in general abundantly illuminates this phenomenon. In another widely popular and

universally admired ballad, the singer says of the titular object of his romantic longings “Choucounne se te yon marabou” [Choucounne was a marabou]. Like “Haiti chérie,” “Choucounne” originates in the privileged classes. It is based on a poem by the 19<sup>th</sup> century *clair* poet and politician Oswald Durand, grandson of Pompée Valentin de Vastey, the mulatto historian and secretary to King Henri Christophe also known as Baron de Vastey (cf. Reinsel 2008:113). Although the source poem in either case is notably innovative for its use of Haitian Creole as a literary medium, it is axiomatically addressed to the literate classes. Similarly, in the repertoire of romantic ballads directed primarily at an audience in the middle classes, where the color of the loved one is invoked, I could not find any in which the character is black unless she is specifically situated among the working poor, the destitute or the peasantry. The band Super Jazz des Jeunes and its lead singer Gerard Dupervil offer a sliver of musical history that quite expressly illustrates the articulation of this aesthetic sensibility with the aspirational disposition of the social subject. According to ethnomusicologist Gage Averill, “des Jeunes,” as the group is popularly known in Haiti, was founded “in 1942,

in the middle-class district of Morne-à-Tuff...developed a reputation for dance-band arrangements of ‘folkloric’ music and for having responded to the call of *noirisme* by fashioning an indigenous popular music. [The] band also recruited...Dupervil, who could handle French-style café songs such as ‘Fleur de mai’ as well as songs borrowed from Vodou temples and *rara* bands. Jazz des Jeunes was the first popular dance band to embody a *noiriste* ideology. [Averill 1997:58]

The discography of both des Jeunes and Dupervil as a solo crooner is peppered with “French-style” ballads. In addition to a rendition of “Choucoune,” the recordings include three other songs in which the objects of romantic or sexual longings are identified by their social color. In two of them, the color is the title of the song: “Marabou” and “Ma Brune” [My Brown Girl]. The first is based on a text by Emile Roumer, a mulatto *indigéniste* poet who was arguably the fiercest literary voice in the intellectual opposition to the 1915-1934 Occupation (cf. Berrou and Pompilus 1975:92). In both the color itself is what Dupervil pines for, not some woman bearing that color, as he croons (in French), “Marabou de mon cœur aux seins de mandarines/Tu es plus savoureux que crabe à l’aubergine” [Marabou of my heart with breasts of mandarins/You’re tastier than crabs and eggplant], or “Écoute mon cœur qui te parle/Et ma voix qui t’implore/[Ma] brune, entends ma chanson” [Listen to my heart which speaks to you/And my voice which implores you/[My] brown girl, hear my song]. In both songs Dupervil in effect longs for a personalized color rather than a colorized person. That is not the case in the third song, when the object of his longing is explicitly black. In that song - from a des Jeunes album released in 1961 and reissued in 1969 – the title, “Machann Kasav” [Kasav Peddler], announces the woman’s social status rather than her color. Singing (in Haitian) “M te gen w ti nègès bò Tigwav/Se te yon ti machann kasav” [I had a little negress near Tigwav/She was a little kasav peddler], Dupervil does not long for a type of blackness. He longs for a woman whose unmitigated blackness is inextricably linked not only to her occupation as a street vender of kasav, a cassava bread that is a staple of the poor’s diet, but also to her spatial situation *outside* Tigwav, which is itself already a provincial town.

“Marabou” and “Ma Brune” appropriate the musical syntax and sentimental vocabulary of the post-World War II French *chanson* to inscribe the worldly modern in a black middle-class

subjectivity. In “Machann Kasav,” part of the des Jeunes repertoire Averill would classify as “dance-band arrangements of ‘folkloric’ music,” this black middle-class subjectivity delineates simultaneously its paternalist affection for and its distance from the black poor and the peasantry. Significantly, Dupervil sings of a “*ti machann kasav*.” In Haitian, the modifier “*ti*” can be of similar meaning as the suffix “*ito*” in Spanish or the contraction “*li’l*” in English, denoting camaraderie or affection. In a different register, as is the case here, it can also be more literally akin to the English “*little*,” used to situate a subject at the bottom of the social hierarchy: “*ti bòn*” [little servant], “*ti abitan*” [little peasant], “*ti machann*.” Dupervil nonetheless reassures us this girl is “*moun bò Tigwav, se moun nan mòn, se moun de bien, se li m renmen*” [someone from near Tigwav, she’s mountain people, she’s good people, it’s her I love]. It is also significant that in his Haitian delivery Dupervil does not say “*debyen*” as a machann would, but effectively pronounces the French “*de bien*.” The French inflection marks his place in the middle class, of which he makes the machann and the moun nan mòn - the peasantry – an *other*<sup>78</sup>. Dupervil insistently asserts to his urban audiences the symbolic power to objectify this “*other*”: “*M te bal yon bèl ti non kreyòl/Ow, se nègès ki protokòl/Li gen w ti mach kloutoup-kloutap/Se kou yon ti machin Fòd kat*” [I gave her a nice Creole nickname/Ah, it’s a negress who presents herself well/She’s got a li’l gait kloutoup-kloutap/It’s like a li’l Ford “*kat*” car]. Thus, where Dupervil appropriates a trope of bourgeois romanticism to identify with his “*Brune*,” lamenting being “*un esclave amoureux à tes pieds prosterné*” [a slave in love prostrate at your feet], he foregrounds his social distance from the irremediably “*black*” machann kasav to measure the depth of his feelings for her in the breadth of the chasm between their social locations, a chasm which he actively cultivates while breaching it momentarily.

I asked an octogenarian to help me grasp the allusion to the Ford vehicle. He was born out of wedlock in Tigwav of a poor peasant woman and a scion of the local landed elite. The father became a physician, married and established residence in the capital, where he held rental real estate in a few middle-class neighborhoods. He also provided for his son and brought him to Port-au-Prince for secondary school. The boy eventually became a school teacher and heir to his father's holdings together with his half-siblings from the father's marriage. He became part of the respectable black petite-bourgeoisie, and of the des Jeunes audience during the band's most productive and popular decades through the 1960s. After he told me he knew the song, I said the verse about the car and asked him to help me understand it. Before answering me, he first hummed the verse about the machann walking "kloutoup-kloutap" then repeated the line about the Ford kat. The "kat" (four) qualifier referred to the number of wheels on a Ford vehicle that had typically been used for public transportation between Port-au-Prince and the provinces before the introduction of sturdier buses running on six wheels in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The "kloutoup-kloutap" of the machann's gait was a metaphor for the bouncing of the less steady Ford kat on the road. After explaining this to me, the octogenarian contextualized the singer's interest: "Se w ti fanm musyeu te gen yen nan zòn Tigwav lan" [It's a little] woman the fellow had in the Tigwav area]. Where Dupervil sings of a little "negress," the octogenarian hears "li'l woman," which distinctly denotes a mistress, a less than legitimate object of the singer's sexual interest - someone who could not be the singer's "brune" and whom a "brune" could not be. If the des Jeunes/Dupervil embodiment of noirisme seems incongruous with his pining for not-quite-blackness in the two ballads and his *other*-ing of blackness in Machann Kasav, the cultural coherence of the enterprise is in full evidence on "Anciens Jeunes," a lilting dance tune of French lyrics rhythmically similar to Machann Kasav on the same album.



“Anciens Jeunes” is a hymn to Claudinette Fouchard. In early January 1960, the year before the release of the album featuring Machann Kasav and Anciens Jeunes, Fouchard, a stunningly beautiful young woman just shy of her twenty-second birthday, returned triumphantly in Port-au-Prince. She had left a few weeks before as Miss Haiti to represent the nation in a beauty contest in Cali, Columbia. She returned crowned *La Reine du sucre* (The Queen of Sugar). Upon her return “La reine,” as she was often simply called, was lavishly feted in exclusive private clubs, and she paraded through town in a Mercury convertible. She was given the key to Port-au-Prince, and she addressed the populace at the national soccer stadium. *La Reine du sucre* was celebrated by all segments of the elites and the middle classes as the epitome of national beauty. Fouchard’s father, a well-known intellectual generally taken to be a mulatto, had been President Dumarsais Estimé’s ambassador to Cuba, although Estimé’s election in 1946 initiated the political concretization of the noiriste movement. President François Duvalier, a most aggressive “noiriste” ideologue, and the First Lady received her with great pomp at the National Palace. “Anciens Jeunes” speaks to the actual coherence of these apparent contradictions, and the song naturalizes the national social order. To appreciate better the socio-political import of the French lyrics, it helps to apprehend first the ideological processes that framed the Claudinette Fouchard moment in 1960.

*Le Nouvelliste*, the establishment daily, copiously covered Fouchard’s participation in the Cali contest. In an interview before boarding her flight to Colombia, the young woman declared to the reporter “I will do my best for my country and for my race,” a promise made in a discursive tradition by which black and light-skinned elites hold an utterly abstracted “race” as national avatar<sup>79</sup>. The young woman’s words were featured as a subhead across two columns at the top of the front page<sup>80</sup>. Upon her return, the newspaper published a number of florid poems

celebrating her charms, her color remaining nearly as unspoken as the national race remains free of color in the context of the moment. To an anonymous “Admirateur Patriote” [Patriotic Admirer], she was a “Fine Flower of the Race.” Another admirer adoringly asserts “ta brune couleur, la plus belle du monde” [your brown color, the most beautiful of the world]<sup>81</sup>. In four of his other nineteen verses, the author – a black man – addresses her four times by name: twice as Claudinette, twice as “Brunette,” an affectionate diminutive of *brune*. As with Dupervil’s “Brune,” the personified color of Fouchard is the object of the *Admirateur Patriote*’s sentiments, and here again the colored object of the learned black Haitian’s affection is distinctly not “black.” Indeed, “Brunette” expresses more about the elasticity of Haiti’s colorist vocabulary than about Fouchard’s complexion. Over five decades later, *Le Nouvelliste* will describe Miss Haiti 2013 also as *brune*<sup>82</sup>. Yet, on the one hand, in public photographs the latter appears more or less of the same complexion as US statesperson Condoleeza Rice, while the former appears noticeably lighter than the US actress Lena Horne. On the other hand, by the descriptive scales in effect in the colorist landscape of the mid-1960s (Price-Mars, n.d.:36-37) and early 1970s (Labelle 1987:119, 121), Claudinette Fouchard could be *claire* or *mulâtresse*<sup>83</sup>. Thus it is not because of a change in the valance of “brune” over the intervening decades that Fouchard and her 2013 counterpart are of the same social color despite – in Haiti - a considerable difference in their respective phenotypes. Rather, Fouchard was made “brune” in 1960 because of contextual requirements. Between the abstraction of the race she is held to represent and a discursive shading of her complexion that does not arrive at “clair” or “mulatto,” she was made an ideal of national beauty in which formations of privilege fragmented in color could commune coherently.

As happens with the machann (street vender) and the moun mòn (mountain people) in the *des Jeunes* song *Machann Kasav* – or with the *nègès* (negress) of “Haiti Chérie,” the unofficial

national anthem - in the *Le Nouvelliste* coverage of the Reine du sucre, the poor and the peasantry are expressly *othered* out of the formations of privilege authoring the celebration of the national beauty. Noting that “it would be difficult to list all of them,” in fifteen column inches of front page news, *Le Nouvelliste* provided a partial inventory of “The Presents Received by the Queen,” the headline spread over two columns: “a television set, the most beautiful model in town...the keys to the City in a tortoiseshell case set with gold labels, a work of art and of good taste...bouquets...flowers (orchids, roses, gladioli...etc)...a silver brush...a porcelain vase from Bavaria”<sup>84</sup>. The narrative of the gifts also informs of their sources, which include family names that resonate in *la société* (“society”), prominent individuals – cabinet ministers, industrialists, businesspeople – *et Madame*, where applicable. The inventory - as does the coverage of the moment on the whole - becomes the stuff of which the aspirational bourgeois is made. This includes the innocuous sleight of discourse that specifies with paternalist pathos the external provenance of the final set of presents concluding the narrative: “Fruits and vegetables – and that is the most touching of gestures – brought by peasant families from Boucassin.” Ultimately, the communion of the privileged classes in Fouchard as vessel of national beauty was possible because, in Haiti, class hierarchization by a colorist logic is not a singularly mulatto practice. Colorism is operative in the dark-skinned elites and middle classes to effect the exclusion of the black *masses*.

Partaking of the bourgeois pageantry around the crowning of the Reine du sucre were unnamed “society Circles of Port-au-Prince” and names of families and institutions generally taken to hew to exclusionary mulatto social practices. These “society” mulatto references were sprinkled indiscriminately among other vessels of symbolic significance generative of aspirations to bourgeois ideals of wealth, image, prestige and so forth. The black-nationalist presence in this

integrated field of privileged sociality reconciled its ideological coherence with the exclusion of the moun mòn through a methodical preoccupation with the formalist, decontextualized performance of their presumably “touching” ways. A front-page *Lettre aux Ethnologues et artistes folkloriques haïtiens* (Letter to Haitian Ethnologists and Folkloric Artists) about as long as the enumeration of the Reine’s presents assertively claimed the black-nationalist space in the proceedings<sup>85</sup>. Not quite incidentally, the author of the letter, an anthropologist, was at the time a cabinet minister in the government of François Duvalier with 19<sup>th</sup> century roots in the political elite. In 2007, he would be characterized in a news report as the “dean of the Duvalierists,” when he gave the keynote speech at the founding of the François Duvalier Foundation on the centennial of the dictator’s birth<sup>86</sup>. In 1960, he wrote to “My Dear Comrades in Arms,

To speak of Folklore and Ethnography in a certain time, not very long ago, was a crime that opened wide the gates of hell. It was a time when the author of ‘Ainsi Parla l’Oncle,’ the leaders of the Historico-Cultural school ‘Les Griots’ were for the jaded members of high society but so many vodou priests preaching paganism... This time is no more and today thanks to our spirit of continuity the Haitian Culture is celebrated. [Today] again when a young and charming Haitian carries high the symbolism of the beauty of the race[,] our great national Folkloric dance company is ranked ‘EXCEPTIONAL.’ The success of our folkloric artists is the triumph of Haitian culture, it is also the crowning of the great struggle of the initiators of the Haitian folkloric movement. If we are preparing to receive our dear Miss World of Sugar, let us also

prepare to receive our talented artists [of] the Troupe Nationale  
who carried Haitian Art so high.

The Troupe Nationale d'Haïti, the national dance company, had indeed accompanied the “brune” ideal of national womanhood in its engagement with the global modern in Cali, and it was seen as having represented the nation's blackness to acclaim. However, this blackness extended neither to Claudinette Fouchard's beauty nor to the predilection of her privileged dark-skinned admirers: she left “Brunette” (capital B) and returned “Brunette.” No less significant than Fouchard being of a color with no stable objective referent, at the service of a *noiriste* ideologue, a Duvalier partisan no less, the race of the nation is of no color at all in asserting the greatness of the national “Folkloric.” In Cali as in today's Haiti, the blackness of the Republic is to be found in the reduction of the moun mòn qua social subject to formally learned bodily movements performed in stage costumes.

In “Anciens Jeunes,” for fans then and now, des Jeunes collapsed those colorist contradictions of the nation into a mystifyingly coherent statement that proposes the narrative of blackness as modality of national unity: “Haitian folklore deserves

to be held very high/Its triumph in Cuba, Paris, Columbia/It makes  
Africa, source of life, live again in us/As it helped our ancestors at  
Vertières, Crête à Pierrot/Yanvalou, rabòday, petro, ibo, kongo,  
djouba/Are rhythms of our ancestors/Arada Negroes/Of all  
authentic, real Haitians without make-up/Tinting the entire beauty  
of Claudinette Fouchard/[The] most beautiful girl in  
Haiti/[Claudinette], Jazz des Jeunes and La Troupe Nationale, the  
most beautiful triad, the whole art of our country.

Thus an ensemble of seemingly incompatible ideologies and practices around color cohere in Haiti's economy of privilege. The coherence will be produced again around des Jeunes and Claudinette Fouchard nearly fifty years later, in December 2007, when local representatives of CIOFF, an international UNESCO affiliate of "Folklore Festivals and Folk Arts," commemorated the 1960 Reine du sucre moment in a posh gala in Port-au-Prince. Le Jazz des Jeunes provided the evening's entertainment and was itself a subject of the tribute<sup>87</sup>.

In the intervening decades, in a pattern of social reproduction noted in various studies, the Reine – and her sister, as it happens - "engaging in the endogamy of color" (Acacia 2007:73) in effect if not in intent, married a white European expatriate and had practically "white" children. The latter in turn married *clair* and their "own children - if they marry a *clair* – will become part of an endogamous circle" (Trouillot 1990:123). At the CIOFF event, privileged people ate and drank on white tablecloth in evening wear. Des Jeunes's musicians played in suits and ties and the band's female backup singer performed in a formal floor-length gown. A dark-skinned man of cosmopolitan bearing in a stylish suit mastered the ceremony with a mellifluous elocution of such normative precision that it could not mark any particular point in the geography of global *francophonie*. His diction could quite reasonably be said to be "French." The man, at the time a local radio announcer, is a black Haitian living in Haiti. He is no lighter than Miss Haiti 2013, whom Le Nouvelliste found to be a "brune;" in the setting of the gala, the master of ceremony would similarly be "brun," not "black." Des Jeunes predictably played "Anciens Jeunes," reasserting the value of "Haitian folklore," the primacy of "authentic Haitians" and the "beauty of Claudinette Fouchard," and conflating it all with "the art of our country." This gala, as much as the Reine du sucre moment in 1960, was a site in which privileged Haitians staked a claim of belonging in global bourgeois modernity. At such times of bourgeois aesthetics, elegance or

solemnity in Haiti, social blackness of the actually existing person does not hold much aspirational allure. With blackness contained in a *cultural* ideation, in the black nationalist imaginary the dark-skinned privileged as well as those aspiring to privilege can remain *historic* blacks without *becoming* black as actual social subjects.

The discursive creativity that keeps social blackness at bay from the person is not limited to such specific terms as “brun” or “griffe.” Between trips to the field in Port-au-Prince, over a few days in 2012 in Quebec I drove a widow in her eighties on errands related to the funeral of a family friend. She had come from her home in the north-east United States. I had come to the region to see the deceased's grandson, a Haitian-Canadian who was circulating a proposal for an urbanization project in the Martelly government. The widow's son in Haiti, a high-ranking executive in the finance sector, was one of my collaborators there. Of her four other children, one was a physician in Port-au-Prince, three had successful professional careers in the US. The family home in a suburb in the hills east of the capital was now leased to an NGO. She had come to live in the US after the death of her husband, motivated in part to look after her grandchildren, who had come to the US to study. She and the grandchildren lived in a house that she and her husband had bought a few decades earlier – while they lived in Haiti - as a stepping stone for their children, when they successively left Haiti to study in the US.

On one of our drives a dark-skinned woman in her late thirties joined us for the ride. She had also come to Quebec for the funeral. The widow had known the woman since her infancy. The woman's parents were of modest working-class background; of limited formal schooling, they were not French-speaking Haitians. When they left Haiti for the US in search of job opportunities, they left the woman as a baby in the care of a relative. The relative was the deceased's niece, and had been a neighbor of the widow in Port-au-Prince. The woman joined her

parents in the US in early adolescence. After high school, she briefly attended a local community college before enrolling in a vocational school. Eventually, she began working in her present occupation as a nursing assistant in a medical facility. She and her husband had purchased a house a few years before in the widow's neighborhood, and they lived there with their daughter. That had renewed bonds of community born in her childhood in the care of widow's neighbor. This community was renewed as the widow, the woman and the relative who raised the latter came to Quebec to attend the funeral together.

As I drove the widow and the younger woman around, the social distance between them in the car remained not only in their age difference but also in their social origins in the Haitian class context. The younger woman managed the distance in the aspirational margins of the moment. Although she spoke French haltingly and the widow didn't seem to mind speaking Haitian Creole, she returned to French every once in a while during the conversation. Moreover, the widow did not speak English, but the younger woman spoke in English probably at least as often as she spoke in Haitian. As they acquainted me with the deceased's family history, they came to speak of a daughter's untimely death of AIDS about fifteen years earlier.

The younger woman told me of the beauty of the deceased's late daughter in a mixture of English and Haitian: "She was gorgeous. Ou konn tande y ap pale w yon dam ki byen kanpe? Leu dam sa a ap mache nan Petyonvil, mesyeu yo kanpe sou de ran pou yo gade. Li te gen w ti kouleu" [...You've heard of a well-shaped lady? When that girl's walking in Pétion-Ville, guys line up in rows to watch. She had a li'l color]. I expected some precision to follow about the color of the deceased's late daughter, but there was none. That was the full extent of the description. The widow interjected some details about the deceased's trip to Haiti at the time of her daughter's death to fetch the latter's infant child, whom she brought back to Quebec to rear. After that, I



sought some clarity from the younger woman about the late daughter's complexion: “Ki koulè l te ye?” [What color was she?], I asked. “Yon ti kouleu kòm si m ta di w” [A li'l color as if, say], she answered, and her voice trailed off for a fraction of a second. She then spoke a new thought: “Li te reyèlman ou bote” [She was really a beauty]. I would know nothing more about the dead woman's complexion. In the imaginary of the woman telling me the story in the car there simply was no more clarity to be added about the social color of the beautiful woman she had described. “Yon ti kouleu,” for all its literal vagueness was in effect no less precise than “brune.” Just as “brune” might have, the phrase had fully described the color of a Haitian person. The beautiful woman who died of AIDS was not-quite-black.

At the time I began my conversations around the color issue in early 2011, Haitians were no longer relying solely on the vocabulary of social color to attain not-quite-blackness. Imported creams and bleach-based homemade products were now being applied to the skin to lighten the natural phenotype. The black gynecologist brought up the practice as we spoke about the politics of color in his office. It seems to be a relatively recent cultural development. He began noticing the phenomenon after the 1990s. A tell-tale sign of skin-lightening in a patient, he said, is the contrast between the color of the cavity between the knuckles and the color of the rest of the back of the hand. In such cases the lightening agent did not adequately penetrate the folds of the skin between the knuckles during application. Although I did not investigate skin-lightening as a subject per se, reading the practice incidentally in my fieldwork shed additional light on what I would call an economy of color articulating with other economies in Haitian social life. The gynecologist spoke of patients who lightened their skin using homemade concoctions. They were considerably lower in Haiti's socio-economic hierarchy than others in his practice<sup>88</sup>. These patients were generally economically insecure young women who relied considerably on

amorous relationships for their subsistence. They lightened their skin, the gynecologist said, because they believed that would give them an advantage with men. A product of the entrepreneurial petite-bourgeoisie, himself a medical entrepreneur, he discussed the choice of these young women in purely pragmatic terms. As he described their situation, these women lacked the material means that might render them socially *clair*. Thus their reach for a materially lighter skin would be a tactical adaptation of their resources to prevailing social conditions. They would be negotiating their socio-economic situation with Port-au-Prince men who are capable of financially supporting a lover, and they presumably prefer women of a skin color that is not overly dark.

The subject of skin lightening came up incidentally in conversation with a divorced middle-class mother, when she disdainfully mentioned her former husband's use of a lightening cream on his face during their marriage in the early 2000s. His family has been well connected to the political elite for at least a few generations and at the time evoked by his former wife he was a well-paid private-sector executive with a lucrative business relation with the presidential palace. However, none of the privileged Haitians with whom I broached the subject in Haiti admitted to or showed signs of engaging in the practice<sup>89</sup>. The owner of a working-class beauty salon was the only practitioner of skin-lightening with whom I discussed the practice at some length. In her, I was able to read the articulation of colorism in the aspiration to privilege.

The beautician operates her shop on the ground floor of a two-family house. She lives with her husband and their two young daughters in the smaller of two rooms that constitute an outbuilding. Structures like these were typically intended as quarters of the domestic staff, when Delmas, in the 1970s and 1980s, was a solidly middle-class destination. The beautician shares this one with an unrelated woman who sublets the larger room. Residents of the outbuilding do

not have access to the four modern bathrooms in the two apartments of the main house. They share an outhouse and an outdoor bathing alcove tucked in a corner of the backyard. The beautician acts as de facto property manager for an absentee owner, who lives in the US. In exchange for looking after the house, she has rent-free use of two rooms, the one in which she lives and another at the back of the main building which she uses for her salon. When it is particularly hot, or when more than a few clients are being served, pedicures, manicures and hair care are provided outside in the courtyard. The clientele is strictly from the ranks of the working class and the urban poor. Altogether the set-up reflects the nearly total erosion of Delmas's middle-class shine.

The beautician's mother still lives in their rural hometown in the South Department. Her husband is the driver who took me around during my fieldwork, when he was off his regular job operating a minibus between Port-au-Prince and his hometown of Saint-Marc. Her natural complexion is similar to or perhaps slightly lighter than that of United States President Barack Obama. Given the social context of her everyday life, her skin color would nonetheless not count for much in the socio-economic hierarchy of privileged Haitians. She would not be meaningfully *clair* in social transactions with elite subjects, because her person is socially embedded in the world of Haiti's working poor. However, she might yet operationalize her skin color in managing her status within the hierarchy of her social plane. Although her natural complexion is relatively light, she applies a lightening cream to her face. According to her, the practice of skin lightening is widespread among her clients and more or less overt, but with a clear distinction: "Mwen, m sèvi avè l pou fè figi m fre men lòt moun yo, yo black, yo fè l pou yo ka vin klè" [Me, I use it to freshen my face, but the other people, they're black, they do it so they can become light]. She further differentiated herself from her darker clients by pointing out that she only used one cream

whereas “lòt yo ta gen dwa sèvi ak menm ven krèm yo melanje ansanm” [the others could use up to twenty creams they mix together]<sup>90</sup>”. She added that for her the practice was a *foli*, a Creole word that retains the connotation of extravagant fancy of its French origin “folie” (madness). When I asked her whether she knew anyone who used a bleach-based homemade product, she differentiated yet further her and her clients collectively from a stratum further down the social hierarchy: “Machann nan lari a. Yo pa kab achte krèm yo. Yo ka itilize zafè pa yo. Yo mete l sou figi yo pou solèy la. Yo chita nan solèy la tout jounen” [Vendors on the street. They can’t buy the creams. They might use their own stuff. They apply it to their face for the sun. They sit in the sun all day].

Where the gynecologist’s patients may lighten their skin as a pragmatic maneuver in negotiating their socio-economic situation, in the beautician we find the aspirational allure of an approximation of whiteness for a certain modern subject. As it happens, her husband was to confide in me: “Now that things are working out for her, she doesn’t need me anymore. I’m there, it’s as if I wasn’t. I’m not enough for her now.” Significantly, although the beautician does not speak English, she used the word “black” to refer to darker-skinned Haitians (“lòt moun yo, yo black”). In doing so she did not appropriate an Americanism or a Britishism but rather a French usage. Since at least the late 1980s urban black and white French have routinely referred to a black person as “un black” rather than “un noir”<sup>91</sup>. However the word entered the beautician’s lexicon, her use of it makes salient that colorist operations in Haiti, in the lower social strata no less than in the middle classes, obtain from an aspirational reach for the global modern.

If complexion – the somatic in general - is but one operator in a totalizing system of colorist practices and ideologies that articulates with the reproduction of privilege and inequality in Haiti, the integration of economic capital and of cultural capital (in being Western) with the

somatic as signifiers in the field of colorist praxis opens this field up to dark-skinned Haitians. Colorist thought and practice by dark-skinned Haitians parallels color prejudice by light-skinned Haitians in social spheres where privilege is negotiated, realized and reproduced. Color thus becomes one of various forms of capital – including mobility capital in addition to the cultural, social, political etc. – operating in the reproduction of privilege. This unity of color with other operators in privileged social practice makes Haiti’s identitarian fragments historically fluid social formations. This explains Trouillot’s observation that fewer and fewer light-skinned Haitians are “found among the underprivileged classes” and “that the movement of those two lines, color and income, is connected” (1990:120”.

At three successive annual meetings of the Caribbean Studies Association a *clair* Haitian male in his late twenties attended panel sessions during which I presented papers on various aspects of the color question in Haiti. At the first two conferences, after my first and second trips to the field in Port-au-Prince, respectively, we exchanged pleasantries in post-session discussions and we crossed path on conference grounds. Given his first name along with skin color and hair texture similar to those of the star US professional baseball player Alex Rodriguez, I presumed he was an Arab Haitian. He was neither an academic nor a presenter; he attended the conferences simply for the joy of it. We laughed together, when I teasingly called him a CSA groupie. The third time, a little over half a year after my third and final trip to the field in Port-au-Prince, over the week of the conference, my companion and I developed a sustained conversation with him. He turned out to have friends in common with my companion, and close relatives who were close friends of my family over the two preceding generations. My companion eventually remembered him from his late adolescence, when he courted the daughter of a close friend of hers, a light-skinned girl whose father – my companion’s friend’s former husband – is from a

well-known family of the mulatto upper-middle-class. His connection to my family was grounded in the *noiriste* political elite of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

The CSA groupie is indeed partly of Arab descent. His father and his mother, a native of the Middle East, met and married overseas, and he was born in London. In pre-adolescence, he moved to Haiti with his parents. His father established a business in the manufacturing sector, and he attended an exclusive school. At the time of the third CSA conference, he had left the country nearly a decade earlier due to the climate of insecurity surrounding the end of the second Aristide presidency, ahead of his parents, who eventually followed. He and they now lived separately in a metropolitan region of the southwestern United States. If by the somatic features presumably inherited from his mother he can be taken for an Arab Haitian, by his father's lineage he is a direct product of the dark-skinned "noiriste" elite<sup>92</sup>. His paternal grandfather was one of the most important *authentiques*, a pivotal group of dark-skinned *noiriste* intellectuals and politicians who made the election of President Dumarsais Estimé possible in the wake of the 1946 "revolution." "Blessed with the social and educational privileges denied most blacks in the country, the *authentiques* [were] essentially *noiristes* with political power" (Smith 2009:109). They ultimately found Estimé's "reforms limited" (Trouillot 1994:169) and were particularly frustrated by his 1950 successor, Paul Eugène Magloire, "whom they saw as the very negation of the 1946 revolution, a reign of 'noirs without color' at the service of the mulâtre bourgeoisie (Bonhomme 1957:40)" (Trouillot 1994:169). The *authentique's* son who became the CSA groupie's father nevertheless – in effect, if not necessarily in intent - embodied through his marriage to the Arab woman the family's claim on the symbolic capital of lightness of complexion. This history helped advance a dual colorist process teased out by Trouillot. It helped make privilege in Haiti a little more the object of light-skinned social formations, and quite

possibly his “children, already lighter than their father, will freely associate with those who match their status, family income, and perceived phenotype...in doing so continuing to guarantee the domination of color” (Trouillot 1990:123-124). Yet it would be nonetheless chimerical to read in this trajectory of the *authentique*'s lineage some qualitative flaw in the family's nationalist engagement, because in Haiti it could be utterly misleading to read a definite relation between political-economic ideology and colorist thought and action.

Much more revealing than the CSA groupie's respective social connections to my companion and me was the discovery of genealogical histories originating deep in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with consistent linkages across boundaries of color that come to encompass the mulatto entrepreneur, the erudite *clair* businessman and the *authentique*'s family. Taking the mulatto entrepreneur arbitrarily as central point of reference, we can sketch a broad web of genealogical linkages that ultimately becomes significant to the demystification of color in the reproduction of privilege in Haiti<sup>93</sup>. Let us recall here that the great-grandfather of the mulatto entrepreneur was a mulatto physician and that he himself would be a white man in the global West, and that his grandfather – son of the mulatto great-grandfather – was effectively a dark-skinned member of the mulatto elite.

A sister of the great-grandfather – a great-grandaunt - of the mulatto entrepreneur – was born in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the great-grandfather in the second half. She had seven children with her husband. Two of the children produced lineages that arrived at dark-skinned - *black* – Haitians who remained socially rooted in the middle classes of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and formed a notable family group through the Duvalier years. One group of siblings, through the post-Duvalier moment, had highly successful careers – a few of some international renown - in the liberal professions in Haiti and North America, and among their children are again

practitioners of medicine and other liberal professions in the Americas. Another of the great-grandaunt's children produced *clair* lines in contemporary Haiti that also include physicians along with entrepreneurs as well as nationalist artists and activists. Although the mulatto entrepreneur knew of his great-grandfather and his social position, unsurprisingly he knew nothing at all of his great-grandaunt or other branches that far back in the generations of his genealogy. Yet in their youth – unbeknownst to all involved – the mulatto entrepreneur and his brother had regular social relations with black and *clair* direct descendants of the great-grandaunt in the yard and classrooms of their high school, not incidentally a classic site of social reproduction.

When marriage linkages are added, the genealogical lineages departing from the great-grandfather and the great-grandaunt of the mulatto entrepreneur suggest yet more cogently that Haiti's privileged social formations fragmented in color become united in the negotiation of their shared spheres of privilege. A black great-great-grandchild of the great-grandaunt married a PhD who twice served in a ministerial cabinet of the Duvalier regime. A pair of first cousins were fathers-in-law of, respectively, a *clair* great-great-grandchild of the great-grandaunt and a light-skinned grandchild of the great-grandfather of the mulatto entrepreneur. The father-in-law of the great-grandfather's grandchild was a noted mulatto intellectual whose career flourished before and through the Duvalier years until his death of natural causes after the collapse of the regime. The other father-in-law – of the great-grandaunt's great-great-grandchild - was a former military officer who perished at the hands of Duvalier henchmen on April 26, 1963, a day of widespread arbitrary executions in streets and homes throughout Port-au-Prince. The spouse of another *clair* great-great-grandchild of the great-grandaunt is the nephew of another *clair* military officer assassinated during the infamous massacre of April 26, 1963. Furthermore, while the line



departing from the mulatto entrepreneur's great-grandfather intersects in marriage an old mulatto family of the political elite in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the *clair* line from the son of his great-grandaunt, through another pair of first cousins, similarly intersects the family of presidential candidate Charles Henri Baker and the family of a cabinet minister in Aristide's first presidency who was assassinated in the early 1990s in the aftermath of the coup against him.

When the genealogy of the mulatto entrepreneur encompasses the husband of his great-grandaunt, through marriage linkages, his family connects in a fairly straightforward movement with that of Jean-Bertrand Aristide himself. The great-grandaunt's husband's family directly produced the father of Aristide's *clair* wife, and from a point elsewhere on his line the progression leads directly to a few of the best known contemporary *noiriste* intellectuals in Haiti. Along the way the preceding generation on this line produced a historian who earned the esteem of the ideologically combative Duvalier apologist René Piquion, flourished during the dictatorship, and linked the family in marriage to another post-Duvalier President of the Republic before Aristide. The historian's generation – descending from the mulatto entrepreneur's great-grandaunt's husband's family – also linked in marriage to a family that produced a *clair* poet championed by François Duvalier and the Les Griots *noiriste* literary school in the 1960s; the mother of Jean-Claude Duvalier's *clair* wife; and an economist who spearheaded neoliberal reforms that accelerated the devastation of the peasantry under Aristide. Elsewhere on the line that carries Aristide – still departing from the mulatto entrepreneur's great-grandaunt's husband - a branch links also in marriage to the *clair* family of the nation's treasurer under Duvalier, and this fiscal officer's son will be a minister in the cabinet of Aristide's successor René Préval.

The genealogy of the mulatto entrepreneur, through rational progression of conventional lineage linkages, could be made to cover an astounding spatial, temporal and ideological distance

in Haitian history and geography. Privilege would remain the transcendent unifying theme. We might find some ideological unity in lines departing from Stenio Vincent, the country's mulatto strongman from 1930 to 1941 who arguably bequeathed the dictatorial template to François Duvalier, including the nickname “Papa.” Departing from a line bearing Vincent and his siblings, the lineage is eventually intersected by a marriage to an army general who attempted to maintain the dictatorship without a Duvalier after the fall of the regime in February 1986. The line originating from the Vincents that intersects the family of the army general intersects the political elite again in another marriage, to a child of a Duvalier finance minister whose father had been a senator in the first half of the century. Yet further linkages uniting the political elite proceed from the Duvalier finance minister's wife and the wife of the historian esteemed by Duvalier's champion René Piquion. They are sisters of the mother-in-law of a child of the 1946 black-nationalist *authentique* who became through a son the grandfather of the CSA groupie. The *authentique* through the marriage of yet another child would also link this cluster to the family of the neoliberal reformist who contributed to the devastation of the peasantry under Aristide.

In this genealogical matrix – traced departing from the mulatto entrepreneur - a further intersection of political elite lineages is worthy of note. It occurs in the marriage of another child of the Duvalier finance minister to a grandchild of a first cousin – the great-grandchild of a brother of the father - of Paul-Eugène Magloire (1950-1956), François Duvalier's exiled black predecessor whose father, born a full century before his son's rise to the Presidency in 1950, had been an army general. The connection to the Magloire lines most cogently suggests the systemic quality of the production of these linkages. Of 19<sup>th</sup> century siblings in the family, as we see here, one, the army general born in 1850, produces a son who rises to the Presidency as an army officer in 1950, and another produces a great-grandchild who marries the child of a Duvalier

finance minister. Yet a third produces a great-great-grandchild who in the final decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century marries into one of the country's richest mulatto oligarch families.

Through a fourth child of the *authentique* grandfather of the CSA groupie we might yet again imagine – in public personalities - a genealogical cluster representing unequivocal liberal activism in contemporary Haitian civil society. From this marriage, we would proceed from the *authentique* to the families of the *clair* geographer Georges Anglade, an assertive supporter of the Lavalas movement that carried Aristide to the Presidency in 1990; the eminent *clair* journalist Jean Dominique, a no less assertive supporter of the movement; and the black communist intellectual Jacques-Stephen Alexis, whose seminal novel *Compère général soleil* remains a moving classic in the liberal nationalist imaginary. From the core of the imagined liberal cluster here we could follow lineages and linkages that take us back to our point of departure with the mulatto entrepreneur. However, the itinerary would not return us to him through the mixed – black and mulatto - lineages from his great-grandaunt, whence we left, but through lineages from his great-grandfather that are emblematic of mulatto endogamy. Moreover, we would return through linkages to the family of the erudite *clair* businessman.

If the matrix of genealogical intersections sketched here were stretched a bit further, it could capture linkages to the wealthy fair-complexioned executive and the mulatto oligarchy. These genealogical linkages, I find, reveal a socio-historical cohesiveness that expresses the unity of the nation's identitarian fragments in colorism in the reproduction of privilege. They also underscore an everyday material unity in privilege that I found in Haiti's elites and middle classes across boundaries of color.

Chapter Seven  
**Material Unity in Privilege**

Privileged Haitians having to reproduce the social situation of privilege through social practice that extends across lines of color, they arrive at a material unity in privilege that is not disrupted by ideologies of color. In the field, I found this social fact expressed in the daily life of my collaborators through linkages between rural elites and urban elites across time and space, between the elites proper and the middle classes, between the political elite and the mulatto oligarchy, between the relatively light-skinned and the relatively dark-skinned privileged, the unity always mediated by bourgeois norms of social behavior often inflected by local particularities.

The day the mulatto entrepreneur told me of his color prejudice he had been acutely broke. By the end of the day, he had momentarily resolved his pecuniary jam distinctly at the expense of poor Haitians. However, in the process he would not have been a prejudiced mulatto so much as a moral subject enacting everyday banalities of national life and speaking to its concrete conditions in a sphere of relative privilege that transcends boundaries of color. After he picked me up in the morning, as he drove through a maze of side streets in the Delmas area, a friend – a black man, he would tell me, when I asked - called him on his cellular telephone. He humorously chastised the friend for not having answered his phone calls earlier. He laughed at the friend's response, and he chuckled again when he related the humor to me after he hung up the phone: “M se w kapitalis kounye a. M pa gen pasyans pou nou” [I'm a capitalist now. I have no patience for you], the friend had said, alluding to Haitians in general. The friend had called him to say that he had been granted a visa by the US consulate. Putting the humor in context, he told me the friend was a former member of the Haitian Communist Party and had lived for seven years in the former East Germany, where he studied political propaganda. He remarked in

passing that he “hated” communism after he traveled to Moscow in the early 1990s (when he lived in Europe), and later did not find Cuba any better. That he knew, the friend had not been much engaged in contemporary Haitian politics and the two of them did not generally discuss it.

The mulatto entrepreneur stopped at a gas station and had the attendant fill a 5-gallon gasoline container in the trunk of his SUV. Chatting about his friend the lapsed communist had gotten us back to the theme of political engagement in the elites of Haiti, which we had spoken about at length on his patio during the final rains of Hurricane Sandy about a week earlier. As he drove out of the station, he mentioned with an expression of resigned discontent that ethanol, the gasoline additive, was now imported and marketed to Haiti's poor as a substitute for *kleren*, the locally-produced cheap rum that had been the poor's hard liquor since time immemorial. I asked who imported it. Driving on to his factory in the vicinity of Boulevard Jean-Jacques Dessalines, he turned to look at me with a hint of contempt as he spoke the surname of an oligarch family. When we got there, fewer than a dozen monolingual black men were at work in the factory, it is mostly an open-air plant, where structural components are manufactured for construction projects. After one of the workers removed the gasoline – fuel for the plant's machinery - from the trunk of the SUV, the mulatto entrepreneur conferred with a foreman. Throughout the ten or fifteen minutes we were there, his rapport with the workers was friendly and easy-going. We then left to visit a work site on which his company had a contract. Fokal, the prominent local NGO, owned the project, a cultural and architectural preservation initiative.

Earlier, before the stop at the gas station, speaking about his struggling business, the mulatto entrepreneur had told me “m pa gen kòb pou m fè makèt” [I have no money for grocery shopping]. After we left the factory, he eagerly made his way to Fokal's headquarters to pick up a check of about US \$5000, a scheduled disbursement on his contract. While driving he made a

telephone call and frantically negotiated the sale of a piece of equipment from the factory. The deal did not come through. After he hung up, I argued that selling a piece of equipment to raise cash seemed to be a prescription for a worse cash flow problem in the future. He shrugged and told me he would deal with the future problem, when he got there. After he picked up the check at the Fokal office, we drove on the work site. There, after conferring with a foreman, the mulatto entrepreneur anxiously reviewed his home electricity bill with a (black) technician for the possibility of challenging it with Electicité d'Haïti, the power company. While at it, he solicited suggestions on how he might more economically use his pool's water pump. The technician was on the crew of a black engineer to whom the mulatto entrepreneur had subcontracted some of his responsibilities on the project.

On the way back from the work site after reviewing progress on the project, the mulatto entrepreneur met the engineer to whom he had subcontracted part of the work. The latter was driving in the opposite direction to the site. They stopped long enough on the street to greet each other from their respective cars, and the mulatto entrepreneur told the engineer to come over to his house that evening. We then drove on to a trading house on the other side of town to cash the Fokal check. He needed the funds that day and did not have a bank account with a balance large enough against which he could draw, if he deposited the check. After he got back in the car in the parking lot of the trading house with the cash stuffed in an envelope, he told me that he was relieved to have the money to pay the engineer later in the evening for the subcontracted work. The factory is not far from the trading house, but to my surprise we headed home after he drove out of the parking lot. I asked him why we were not stopping at the plant to see how things were going. He answered: “M pa kapab. M pa ka peye yo. Si m ale, l ap pi difisil, y ap atann m ap peye yo” [I can't. I can't pay them. If I go, it'd be more difficult, they'd expect I'm paying them].

There was no trace of venality in his voice. His tone was not matter of fact either, like the time he told me of his color prejudice. It was in the emotional register of someone arriving at an unpleasant resolution of an unpleasant dilemma.

Several months before I visited the Fokal project with the mulatto entrepreneur, alternating between French and Haitian, the moneyed black intellectual – the husband of the wealthy *clair* executive – had remarked to me that mulattoes are said to be an elite class, but “these are people who struggle, too, to keep up a social standing.” Pointing out “there are poor mulattoes, rich mulattoes,” he might well have been describing the mulatto entrepreneur in emphasizing “lè m di w mulat pòv, nèg la pa gen kòb. Nèg la plen pwoblèm” [When I tell you poor mulattoes, the guy's got no money. The guy's full of problems]. In estimating the requirements to reproduce his “social standing” for the time being, the mulatto entrepreneur effectively evaluated his respective social relations with the black engineer, whom he would invite to his house as a social peer, and with his black factory workers, monolingual Haitians who could not *become* his peers. He further, in effect, concluded that \$5000 US could not at the moment provide for the materialities minimally needed to realize both his social standing – including his business expenses and his obligations to the black engineer - and the subsistence of his factory workers.

If the mulatto entrepreneur’s choice of paying his engineering partner over his employees was a particularly explicit instantiation of the unity of dark-skinned and light-skinned Haitians in the materialities of privilege, I was able to tease out the multi-dimensional complexity of the unity from an expansive canvas of social relations and phenomena drawn from the filed experience around the business relationship between the engineering contractor – the husband of

the math teacher – and the fair-complexioned executive who would be white. Again, the material unity in privilege easily contained colorist ideologies, and it is a unity of bourgeois sociality.

The day I first met the executive the engineering contractor picked me up at my house early in the morning. The day's agenda included a site visit to a renovation project at a real estate development owned by the executive and her husband. The complex comprises several buildings, a pool and a private beach, with ornamental shrubs and flowering plants dotting the grounds. As investment, the complex is neither ephemeral nor movable. It is the object of a grounded elite. When we arrived, the contractor met up with a crew of technicians from his company working on a block of rooms. After briefly reviewing the work of his own employees, he made his way to a suite being rebuilt by two masons in a different wing of the building. A light-skinned man bantered amiably in Haitian Creole with the masons as he inspected the space; his was most definitely not a "foreign" accent. The contractor introduced me to him. I initially thought that he was the owner of the property, but he wasn't. He was the architect of the renovations and had overall responsibility for the project. The contractor made the introduction in French, but soon we were all three alternately also speaking Haitian as I shared in the informality of their rapport. The architect had a droll sense of humor. The contractor had occasionally appeared in local venues as a humorist. Inveterate jokesters, the two maintained an intermittent stream of humor in idiomatic Haitian as they discussed their collaboration on the renovations. Thus from the moment I met the architect I took it for granted that he was Haitian. Much later, during the analysis of my field notes after I returned to the US, I would re-read his features in retrospect through pictures on his Facebook page. In a North American setting, his phenotype together with his dark eyes and close-cropped supple black hair might make him appear a white subject, perhaps one with origins in Mediterranean Europe<sup>94</sup>. In the field, I would



at no time think he was white. In the moments following our introduction I distinctly felt this was a propitious day for my own work: observing and participating in the collaboration of a black Haitian and a *mulatto* Haitian doing business together.

. Eventually, the architect, the engineering contractor and I met the civil engineer on the project, a black man of noticeably darker complexion than the contractor, at a restaurant located on a veranda of the complex. I noted the distinction in skin shadings between the contractor and the civil engineer, because gradations of complexion can unpredictably become significant at the intersection of identity, color and privilege in Haiti<sup>95</sup>.

The contractor, the architect, the civil engineer and I wait at a table of the restaurant for the owner of the property, the executive who would be white. We have been told that she has been delayed at a staff meeting elsewhere on the property. The contractor and I mention the civil disturbance that we noticed on our way from Port-au-Prince. We describe the sizable crowd of angry protesters that we saw agitating outside the *Tribunal de Paix* (Peace Tribunal) in a town about twenty minutes down the highway<sup>96</sup>. The contractor remarks that as these things go, driving back may get a bit problematic. I wonder whether we could spend the night here, should it prove impossible to drive back to Port-au-Prince. The architect answers that “here is not a bad place to get stuck and spend the night.” He nonetheless makes a call on his cell phone to ask someone whether there has been any news about a disturbance on that highway; the person has not heard any such news. This leads the architect and the contractor to trade “war stories” on the theme of travel. The contractor, a man who unabashedly admits to his predilection for modern comfort and his taste for good food and fine drink, tells of his wife making him walk a trail through the mountains east of Port-au-Prince to the town of Jacmel in the South-East Department. The architect, whose mother is a white European woman, speaks of juggling his

luggage and that of a gaggle of younger cousins in a rainstorm outside a train station on a family trip in his mother's native country. The settings of their experiences are vastly different, but they are otherwise two modern professionals humorously telling tales of woe on a distinctively bourgeois pursuit of leisure. The civil engineer, apparently the youngest at the table, is of a more reserved demeanor and laughs at the jokes with considerably more restraint than any of us. I have noticed a pronounced provincial accent when he speaks either French or Haitian; perhaps he is from the proverbially conservative rural elite. We are all nonetheless cohesively Haitian. A business meeting will soon start during which stratified class situations of relative privilege will be reproduced through commonly understood customs and vocabularies of the nation. Haitians who axiomatically could not be at the table would be differentiated not by color, but by lack of competence in definite cultural modalities, linguistic expression being but the most cogent.

When the executive arrives on the veranda, she approaches the table from the direction I am facing. She is wearing Capri pants, a pastel polo shirt and tasteful mules, her blond hair reaching to her shoulders, her skin tone reminiscent of the French actress Catherine Deneuve's, an international icon of whiteness that randomly comes to mind at the time of this writing. She sits down next to me and the contractor introduces us, and we make small talk in French. The architect announces with mock seriousness in English that the "anthropologist is here to study our customs." I will not have an opportunity to discuss with him what might be behind his irony, but he seems to be alluding with a hint of ridicule to what Gérarde Magloire and Kevin Yelvington critically refer to as "the Haiti of anthropology," the one that "has been used in what we call the 'anthropological imaginary'" (Magloire and Yelvington 2008:2). Not for the last time, I become distinctly cognizant of doing the anthropology of a Haiti that can talk back to the discipline with the symbolic wherewithal to challenge its assigned meanings. I repeat a mental

note that I made while having dinner with the contractor and his family two days earlier: this Haiti needs to be situated in the context of Western modernity without such qualifiers as “periphery” or “alternative.” As the conversation continues, although the contractor and the civil engineer have limited fluency in English, they do not mind the brief spells of it. The executive soon asks a waiter, “Ki sa w gen pou w ofri envite n yo?” [What do you have to offer our guests?]. Her amiable paternalism – accentuating rather than negating the respective class situations in the exchange – is often deployed by privileged Haitians across the colorist map toward their domestic staff and “le petit personnel” [the little personnel] of their businesses. It is about five minutes after she joined the other four of us. When she pulled up a chair to the table and until now, she was a white woman, and I saw the possibility of gaining a modicum of insight on foreign entrepreneurs operating in the country. Now, I know she is Haitian. This is probably when I begin to cease seeing her whiteness. By the time I leave the complex in a few hours, she certainly will have become a mulatto to me.

As we eat chunks of fresh fish marinated in vinegar from a platter in the center of the table, the conversation remains centered on the progress of the renovation project (or lack thereof, from the owner’s anxious perspective). At some point, the woman remarks with pride that the kitchen is supplied by local fishermen. All the while, amidst talks of ballooning cost overruns and missed deadlines, the mood at the table remains relaxed and friendly among four Haitian professionals of diverse social and ethnic backgrounds negotiating the realities of a business process. The contractor is a product of the public-sector petite bourgeoisie. His father led a government development agency in the 1970s and the 1980s in the southern city of Les Cayes. His brother is a mathematics PhD and the chairperson of his department at a US university. The architect’s father was a light-skinned physician, whose ancestors migrated to

Haiti from the Windward Islands in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. He was respected as a teacher and mentor at the Faculty of Medicine of the State University and for his volunteer work with disadvantaged groups. Unlike the architect and the contractor, the civil engineer does not live in the Port-au-Prince metropolitan area, and he shows little of their worldly jollity. He lives in his hometown, which, with a population of around sixteen thousand, is the urban center of a provincial administrative district that is over eighty percent rural. The social unity of the five of us at the table is nonetheless not forced, and the arrival of the owner's daughter makes that quite salient.

The daughter approaches the table as we finish off the succulent ceviche. In a defining ritual of the well-bred Haitian child, the young woman, who is about twenty six years old, successively plants a kiss on the cheek of each one of her mother's four guests around the table. In Haiti, this is an utterly innocuous gesture. However, it is not now, not to me. A wealthy mulatto businesswoman is barely done speaking her pride in supporting the local rural economy and her no less cogently fair-skinned daughter is *being* a quintessential Haitian. Moreover, to paraphrase sociologist Alex Dupuy (private communication) on the significance of class in that greeting, the young woman would not similarly kiss her parents' domestic staff. Haiti has just gotten remarkably more complicated than the black Republic schema I brought with me a week ago from the North American academy.

A kiss on the cheek is not uncommon in fashionable precincts of urban life in the Americas or Europe. The practice may be termed "air-kissing," when the parties' respective cheeks make tangential contact as the lips go through the motion of a kiss more or less in the air. This is a reciprocal gesture, and it indicates more or less effervescent friendliness. This is how the contractor's wife and I greeted each other, when I arrived for dinner at their home the

previous Sunday. In a quintessentially Haitian variant of the practice, the kisser's lips, in an expression of respect for one's elder, squarely press against the recipient's cheek more or less at a right angle with no expectation of reciprocity. This is how the contractor's daughter greeted me, when I arrived for dinner on Sunday. I had seen her only once previously, when she traveled briefly with her mother to the New York metropolitan area ten months earlier. She had been doing school work with a classmate, who had never seen me before. As the classmate left shortly thereafter, she kissed me goodbye along with the contractor and his wife in the manner their daughter greeted me when I arrived.

Now, at the table on the veranda, the executive's daughter follows the practice with ritual precision. She first kisses the architect, then me. After walking around the end of the table where her mother is sitting, she kisses the contractor. The civil engineer is sitting directly across from me. The young woman leans down toward him in the same gesture of understated deference she has just done thrice and her fair lips press softly against his deep black skin without hesitation. More than a year later, her mother will candidly discuss the color prejudice that she inherited from her family, and how she endeavored to pass it to her own children. The daughter would indeed hardly be immune to the pervasive prejudice among mulattoes against dark-skinned fellow citizens. The daughter's kiss here already challenges any reductive understanding of color identity as a modality of social organization in Haiti. On the one hand, the moment reveals the young woman and her mother embodying distinctive *national* mores, while they foreground virtually none of the African heritage in their Haitian identity. On the other, the daughter's lips met the skin of the black engineer with deferent humility – he may be a man of a color she would not date much less marry, but he is evidently of a class she would respect. The politics of color in

Haiti is revealing itself here to be an intricate code that regulates a unified national economy of privilege.

The executive's daughter joins the conversation after she sits down, although she listens more than she talks. She is particularly attentive when her mother speaks, in the manner of a mentee learning the ropes from a mentor. When speaking specifically to her mother, she addresses her in English, and does so without any noticeable "Haitian" accent. The rest of us at the table have sporadically been using Haitian in addition to French, both of which the owner speaks not with the accent of a foreigner but with that of an educated Haitian. However, the daughter speaks Haitian and French with a distinctly "foreign" accent. The youngest child, she was educated entirely in English. The mother's other children were born in Haiti. However, when she was pregnant with her daughter, in a practice that seems widespread among Haitians with the requisite mobility capital, she traveled to the US to give birth to an American citizen. The black woman who introduced me to the wife of the contractor did so for all three of her children. In another relatively banal practice across color lines among Haitians who can afford it, the executive's daughter grew up in Haiti attending an English-language institution from kindergarten through high school. These surface similarities suggest parallel access – however differentiated in the magnitude of various deployed capitals – to a system of social reproduction.

Ultimately, at the table on the veranda, processes of class reproduction deeply fragmented in time and space realized their coherence in the contingent moment of a business meeting. I met the contractor's wife in the summer of 2009 at a fundraising party hosted by a physician couple at their home in a suburb on the east coast of the United States. The fundraiser was to support a potential candidate in Haiti's presidential elections the following year, but the candidacy ultimately did not come to be. My friendship with the contractor's wife did take hold and she

eventually agreed to collaborate on this ethnographic project. We were introduced by a sister of the husband hosting the party, the two being her first cousins, and all three being children of two brothers who were born and reared deep in the Haitian countryside. The two brothers completed their studies and established themselves professionally in Port-au-Prince, and their children belong to the first generation of the family to be born in the capital. The father of the host of the party and of his sister was himself a doctor, and a colonel in the Forces Armées d'Haïti (Armed Forces of Haiti). He and the father of the contractor's wife together with their parents – who never left their rural homes - negotiated their situation in the privileged classes of Port-au-Prince from an ancestral position in the rural elite.

The sister of the husband hosting the fundraiser would occasionally tell me in amusement of her paternal grandparents' central logic in assessing potential marriage prospects for their children. According to family lore, the grandparents, substantial landowners, systematically discouraged their children from romantic relationships with anyone in their hamlet. Since they held themselves to be at the apex of the socio-economic order of the village, any local potential match was to them a priori an inferior prospect. The grandparents made an exception in the case of the daughter they married to her first cousin, who brought considerable land of his own to the alliance. A daughter of the grandparents' daughter was another cousin of the contractor's wife present at the fundraising party. The host's sister would one day remark to me that, among her generation of cousins who inherited ancestral lands, this one – her grandparents' daughter's daughter present at the fundraiser – had the largest holdings. This cousin or her husband makes regular trips to the ancestral village from their home in the US to manage their land, which is under cultivation. Although she graduated from the Faculty of Medicine of the State University of Haiti, after moving to the US she did not manage to pass the examinations regulating access to

a medical career there. She nonetheless became a successful professional in a related field. She and her husband, an engineer, purchased a house relatively early in the suburbs of the metropolitan area in the eastern part of the country where the fundraiser's host and his sister also currently lived. After the latter two migrated to the US with their mother, they lived with this cousin (the paternal grandparents' daughter's daughter) until they found their footing.

The host's sister had returned to the United States several years before the fundraiser. For the better part of the decade prior to that, she lived in Haiti. Much like the owner of the real estate complex I would visit with the contractor, her parents sent her to the US to finish high school and she remained there for college. Afterward, she went back to Haiti to marry a man in the early stages of a promising career, a man from a family as well connected to the political elite under President René Préval as it was under Duvalier. For each of her pregnancies she traveled to the US to give birth to an American citizen then returned to Haiti to rear an effectively Haitian child. When her marriage foundered, she came back to the US and lived in her brother's expansive house. The home provided ample living space for her and her three children as well as her brother, his wife and their four children. Within the year she began to live with her brother, she returned to school at a prestigious institution and completed a post-baccalaureate program in an allied health profession. Upon her professional licensure she began working in the field and shortly thereafter, with major financial contribution from her estranged husband in Haiti, she purchased a house on the picturesque waterfront of a respectably middle-class suburb.

Both the husband and the wife hosting the fundraising party also graduated from the Faculty of Medicine of the State University, where they studied under the father of the architect of the renovations at the fair-complexioned executive's real estate complex. For his primary and secondary education, the husband was schooled at what Haitians of the middle and upper classes



generally considered through the end of the Duvalier dictatorship the most desirable – or viewed differently, the most elitist – parochial boy school in the country. The wife, a daughter of the provincial petite bourgeoisie, went to primary school in her hometown<sup>97</sup>. She was sent to the capital for secondary school. In Port-au-Prince, she attended a parochial school for girl whose reputed elitism is the stuff of legend. Both she and the husband – not yet married at the time - moved to the United States after completing medical school in Haiti. An old friend of his family with a well-established career as a physician helped them secure twin residencies at a large urban hospital in one of the most lucrative specialties of American medical practice. Nearly two decades later, their combined income in the neighborhood of three-quarters of a million dollars a year, it was eminently sensible for an aspirant to Haiti's Presidency contemplating the cost of an electoral campaign to tap into the financial potential in the network of professional and personal relationships that would gather for a catered dinner in the couple's elegant backyard.. Thus my introduction to the contractor's wife, the proximate encounter that led me to the contractor himself, incidentally occurred in the articulation of Haitian privilege with the reproduction of Haiti's political class.

The mobility capital that underlay access to professional credentials and concomitant employment markets in the US was passed down to the fundraiser's host and to his sister by their mother. She had obtained a US Permanent Residency permit – the “green card” – in the late 1960s or early 1970s through her own sister, the aunt of the host and of the host's sister. The aunt left Haiti for Europe in the mid-1960s to study in an allied health program on a scholarship from the Haitian government. After completing these studies, she applied for and was granted a US immigrant visa under a protocol that fast-tracked issuance of such visas to professionals. She subsequently sponsored several siblings for the Permanent Residency permit, and in many cases

the siblings in turn sponsored their children born in Haiti. The host and the sister eventually leveraged the residency permit to naturalized citizenship.

The mother of the fundraiser's host and her siblings (including the sister with the family's initial US "green card") were born and reared in a provincial city that constituted the urban center of its region, which included the village of the host's paternal grandparents deep in the interior. Although her parents were not landowners, her father was a prominent artisan and tradesman in his native city, the region's dominant figure in his field. His daughters, by all indications, in adolescence and young adulthood were young women of proper petit-bourgeois upbringing, including the all-important competence in French and French-derived social etiquette<sup>98</sup>. The host's life trajectory and that of his sister have thus deep roots in definite sectors of privilege in Haiti's national order. If my introduction to the contractor incidentally originated in these trajectories, his initial engagement with the family of the owner of the real estate complex was similarly incidental to his position in the Port-au-Prince petite bourgeoisie. The son of a civil servant, he attended the same parochial institution as the host of the fundraiser. Upon completion of secondary school, he pursued a degree at a private engineering college. After finishing his course work, well before he ever met the owner of the real estate development, he did his practicum by happenstance at one of her family's enterprises.

As we rose from the table after the business meeting ended on the veranda of the fair-complexioned executive's real estate development, I gave my business card to the mulatto architect, and he gave me two distinct cards, one representing his professional practice in the construction industry and one representing his volunteer engagement in Haiti's environmental movement. I gave a card to the owner of the complex and she handed me hers along with one of her daughter's. The latter humorously repeated their respective names to ensure that I

remembered who was who of the two. The civil engineer did not have a business card, and I had none left. We each wrote down our respective contact information for the other on a piece of paper. After we all said goodbye to one another, the civil engineer, the contractor and the architect strolled away. I stayed behind by the table long enough to ask the owner whether she might want to participate in my research on the *sentiment d'appartenance* (belonging), identity and socio-political engagement in “les classes privilégiées” (the privileged classes) in Haiti. She summarily agreed to collaborate on the project; I thanked her for her hospitality and bid her goodbye again before walking away to join the contractor in his car.

As the contractor began the drive back to Port-au-Prince, I read the family name on the women's business cards; I was not at all familiar with it. To reassure myself that they were Haitians, I asked the contractor whether they were foreigners. He said they were Haitians, and he identified the owner of the complex by her maiden name. That surname, I recognized. Although I had no recollection of ever having seen the executive before today, she and the poet-engineer grew up about half a mile apart in the same neighborhood. As a child and through young adulthood I had a great number of relationships in the area. I made a mental note to speak with the poet-engineer for what contextual insight I might gain on the woman's position in Haiti's business elite.

Where the mechanics of class reproduction can be apprehended in the relational histories sketched here, an experiential moment with the contractor in the midst of a civil disturbance on the way back to Port-au-Prince suggests yet further that material privilege is a more meaningful site of Haitian social unity than blackness. We left the real estate complex about twenty minutes ago and we are now perhaps half a mile from the Tribunal de Paix, where we saw a commotion on the way from Port-au-Prince earlier in the day. Broad footpaths on either side of the highway

separate it from bordering communities, and we have been seeing increasingly more people milling around, looking in the direction of the Tribunal de Paix, with increasing pedestrian traffic crossing the roadway. We eventually realize that a mass of people occupy the breadth of the road about a quarter of a mile ahead of us. We happen to be traveling directly behind a UN military vehicle on the highway. I suggest that behind a UN vehicle is not a bad place to be whatever might be going on up ahead. The contractor doesn't answer immediately as he slows down, keeping his eyes intently far down the road ahead of him. He eventually answers "that depends." He pulls up to the side of the road and lowers the glass on my door to call out to a passer-by: "What's happening up ahead?" The amiable answer from a man on the dirt path is as succinct as cavalier: "Action." In retrospect the nonchalant answer will seem quite ironic, but not in the moment it is spoken, given the gathering anxiety in the contractor's air-conditioned SUV. Meanwhile, another SUV drives past. It is a sleek late-model vehicle with a metallic black shine.

The contractor begins driving again, moving cautiously. When we are within several hundred feet from the Tribunal de Paix, it is clear that a demonstration is taking place. The contractor pulls to the side of the road again. He lowers the glass on my side again to speak with a woman sitting in front of a cement-block wall on a *ti chèz*, a scaled down chair that stands about half a foot from the ground. He asks the woman whether there is a side road he can use to get to that side of the Tribunal de Paix. The woman recognizes him from some television appearance as a humorist and warmly advises him. Following the woman's directions, the contractor eases his vehicle off the roadway and goes through an opening in the wall beyond the spot where the woman is sitting. We drive through an empty lot and cross a footpath to arrive in a narrow passage behind a house. An older man and a child good-naturedly get up and step back to make room for the vehicle to get through. The contractor asks the older man whether he is on

track to get to the road that runs alongside the Tribunal de Paix. The man nods and tells him to keep going straight, pointing ahead of us. We eventually come out of the narrow passage, cross some vague expanse that seems to be another empty lot or a commons, after which we are on the sidewalk of the paved road that will take us to that side of the Tribunal de Paix at the intersection with the highway.

When we get to the intersection, to our right the highway continues toward Port-au-Prince. From what I can see to our left, I get a sense of diffused tension among a sizable group of people milling outside the building. The contractor turns right. Not a hundred feet later, we are in crawling traffic. Further ahead there is a roadblock, which we cannot see, and traffic soon comes to a standstill. Moments later the shiny black SUV drives past in the opposite direction. The driver, a light-skinned man, gazes intently ahead of him with noticeable anxiety. When I notice his expression, I conjure the image of someone futilely looking for an exit in a boxed yard that has none. The contractor lowers the glass on my door to ask a passer-by what is going on. The full answer vaguely alludes to “mè a ak ekip ki pa dakò ak li” [the mayor and groups that don’t agree with him], and the man continues on his way. The only vehicular traffic is of motorcycle taxis easing their way past the contractor’s car among the pedestrians on the dirt path alongside the road. That soon stops as well. Suddenly, stones begin raining down on the road and the pedestrians dart this way and that. They hit cars or they land on the pavement every few seconds, sometimes a few at a time. They are coming down with such frequency and such intensity that it cannot possibly be a lone individual throwing them. I cannot tell the radius of the target field; it is at least two car lengths in front of the contractor’s SUV and probably the same behind it.

From my perspective in the car, the stones are coming at a slightly diagonal angle from an elevated position. Across the road, there are houses lining the dirt path, then a clearing where

a slope rises from the dirt path. The stones seem to be coming from quite beyond a tree that stands on the slope about ten to twenty feet from the edge of the highway. They are relatively big; none seem smaller than an adult fist. Neither the contractor nor I saw it coming, the first stone that hits his car. A dull but violent thud simply pops inches from the contractor's head. The stone hit the metal band between the front and rear doors. We are startled, but we both remain calm. Through the windshield, I have a clear view of the next stone hurtling toward the car; it seems to be the size of a grapefruit. I am relieved, when it lands on the hood of the vehicle and not on the glass. The vehicle behind us, and slightly more toward the middle of the roadway than we are, is a large commercial bus. In a flash of inspiration, the contractor eases the car forward then, with the two right wheels now onto the dirt path, switches gear into reverse to ease his way back until his SUV is completely in the shadow of the bus.

Now sheltered, the contractor's car cannot be hit. We do hear stones occasionally hitting the other side of the bus. We are so close to the bus, and it is so tall next to us, that I cannot see its roofline without leaning forward. Generally, whatever else might be on the cargo rack, there quite likely would be food stuff and perhaps some small animals of country people heading to market in the capital. Thus in this palpably concrete experience of Haiti's existential volatility, our cover is a domain of the socio-economically marginalized Haitian. As I live the moment, its allegorical power is not lost on me. Two years later, at the time I will write this, I will recall from my notes the last moto-taxi that rode on the dirt path by the contractor's SUV after car traffic came to a halt on the highway. Two local women scrunched up behind the driver made for three Haitians as black as the contractor on a precarious motorcycle ride. If I imaginatively substitute the motorcycle for the contractor's air-conditioned SUV next to the bus, the allegory no longer holds – poor people finding protection at the expense of other poor people's exposure does not

express much allegorically on class relations. I replace the contractor's vehicle with the light-skinned driver's shiny black SUV, and the allegory holds again.

The stones stopped, when security forces showed up on the scene. In their beige fatigues, the men looked like military troops to me. I remarked to the contractor that they all seemed to be Haitians and asked him whether that could be MINUSTAH, the UN occupation force. That would not be MINUSTAH, whose soldiers wear green and are foreigners, he said. These were CIMO, he told me, the Corps d'intervention et de maintien de l'ordre, the Intervention and Maintenance of Order Unit of the national police<sup>99</sup>. At the time traffic started moving again there was no indication that any stone throwers had been apprehended. I never found out the precise cause of the disturbance. Early the next morning, the fair-complexioned executive emailed me the address of her office in downtown Port-in-Prince and we agreed that I would visit her the next day. In the evening, I telephoned the poet-engineer to chat about their childhood neighborhood. The conversation would punctuate the various dimensions of the unity in privilege drawn here.

That evening on the day after I visited the real estate complex with the engineering contractor, I engaged the poet-engineer in conversation about how his neighborhood had changed and how it had not since I left Haiti. Incidentally, he had returned to live in his childhood home after losing his house in the earthquake of January 2010. I brought up the maiden name of my host at the real estate complex. I asked him whether anyone from the woman's family still lived in the house in which she grew up, about six blocks and two streets from his. He had been an acquaintance of one of the woman's brothers in their youth. He told me that he did not know who of that generation of the family now lived in their home. I would later learn that the woman and her husband did. As we spoke further, to illustrate social continuity in the neighborhood, the

poet-engineer invoked the architect by name. I was flabbergasted. I told him that, incredibly, I had been introduced to the architect the day before. He now was the one surprised: “Don’t you remember him?” he asked me. “I knew him?” I asked in turn. “Maybe you don’t remember him, but you have to have known him. When I was at the faculty, he was often at my house. We studied together. Very funny guy, always telling one joke or another.” The poet-engineer further pointed out that the architect grew up in the neighborhood as well and that he, too, still lived in his childhood home. The two no longer socialized together, but, the poet-engineer added, “nonetheless we see, we greet each other every morning when he drives past my house.”

The poet-engineer enumerated others beside the architect who studied in a group that gathered at his house in their days at the Faculty of Sciences of the State University of Haiti. I remembered several of them. I, in secondary school at the time, was frequently at the house as well, linked to the poet-engineer and his younger brother as much by our interest in soccer and other youthful pursuits as by our families’ multi-generational friendship. At the time - in the Duvalier years – at one end of the street lived a pillar of the business elite, a (mulatto) family whose eponymous trading house was perhaps the largest of the day. At the other end another (mulatto) family lived in what was still remembered at the time as a “Déjoieist” house, because in the elections of 1957 its residents then had supported the light-skinned Louis Déjoie over François Duvalier. On the intervening five blocks of the street lived a remarkable array of families of various degrees of privilege, some less anonymous than others. Between the Déjoieist house and that of the poet-engineer, was a luxury rental property that was home to expatriates of significant status, and it remains so today. On the other side of the poet-engineer’s house lived a (clair) civil servant of august stature, the nominal head of a branch of government. Today, a former post-Duvalier (black) Prime Minister keeps his private offices in a genteel house around



the corner. Then, (black) Duvalier in-laws lived inconspicuously seven houses up the street from the poet-engineer's family. A (black) cousin of the Duvalier in-laws on a different kinship line occupied the second house of their residential complex. Across the street from the Duvalier in-laws lived an equally inconspicuous middle-class (mulatto) family and next-door a (black) household that produced a major candidate in the presidential elections of 2010. The other next-door neighbor of this household was a prominent (clair) civil servant, one of the principal custodians of the nation's finances under Jean-Claude Duvalier.

Three of the finance official's seven children became physicians; one became a prominent cabinet minister in one of the governments of René Préval, the current President of Haiti. Yet this is not the most remarkable link of the street's past to present political power. It is rather the Duvalier in-laws' cousin - on their non-Duvalier side - who lived in the second house of their residential complex. The cousin, who on a few occasions hosted at his house none other than Jean-Claude Duvalier, was also on another kinship line a second cousin of President Préval<sup>100</sup>. To restate this link yet more remarkably, at the height of the euphoric promise of transformative change borne by the immensely popular Lavalas movement in 1991, the Duvalier cousin was also a second cousin of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide's Prime Minister, René Préval.

It is evident that in the world depicted here the nation's colorist fragments are socially united in the practice and reproduction of privilege. However, colorism was not dormant, much less absent in that world. The Duvalier in-laws relocated in a foreign country several years before the fall of the dictatorship, and in the fall of 2012 I was the family's guest at its regular Sunday dinner at the current home of the surviving parent. As usual, the meal brought together children, grandchildren and other members of the extended family living in the surrounding area,

including one of François Duvalier's children. Discussing class and color in Haitian society as we ate, a daughter of the Duvalier in-laws shared her own memories of growing up in their Port-au-Prince neighborhood. She spoke of friends and homes with whom and in which she played in her youth. Across the street she played with the daughter of the mulatto family, and next door with children of the black family who produced the 2010 presidential candidate. Reminiscing about her visits to her mulatto friend across the street, she said: "When I went to her house, I felt sorry for her, truthfully. I felt like she was in prison. She used to watch the kids play in the yard across the street with envy." Yet, in the reminiscences of the poet-engineer and his brother, through her adolescence and young adulthood the same mulatto girl routinely walked down the street to visit the daughter of the other mulatto family living at the time in the Dejoieist house two doors from the poet-engineer's family home. Neither of the mulatto young women had any relationship to speak of with their dark-skinned peers who lived on the three-block stretch of the street between their houses. The one who occasionally hosted her dark-skinned neighbor from across the street did not have just any dark-skinned girl over her house but the first cousin of the President for Life. The situation fits Trouillot's description of the tactical management of color and social status by middle-class "mothers [who] strictly control those whom their sons and (especially) their daughters associate with...reducing the field [of] the trade-off between social promotion and phenotype" (1990:124). The mulatto girl who seemed to the Duvalier in-laws' daughter to be imprisoned in her own home was simply not permitted to play with her peers across the street on a whim, because, I would argue, her parents were mindful of the colorist stakes in conjugating various forms of capital toward the reproduction of privilege. Thus "the reproduction of prejudice continues along on its merry way," as Trouillot puts it (1990:124), but

while nonetheless remaining inscribed in the material unity in class of privileged black Haitians and privileged mulatto Haitians.

## Chapter Eight **Knowing White**

In early April 2011 I had dinner to the sound of a live jazz trio at Pizza Garden, a hip trattoria in Pétion-Ville, with the poet-engineer, the cultural impresario and a third middle-class Haitian in his late thirties. Toward the end of the meal one of my companions noted a corpulent young black woman at a table across the dining terrace of the restaurant, which by menu, price and décor would not be out of place in a trendy section of cosmopolitan America. My tablemate remarked that the young woman was the daughter of so-and-so, one of the most prominent figures in contemporary Haitian journalism. As we later walked to our car, I learned further that the father had risen from rather modest beginnings, at which point two random thoughts occurred to me in tandem, perhaps facilitated by the tab of nearly \$90 US, excluding tip, for 4 small pizzas, 3 or 4 bottles of local beer and 3 glasses of red wine in a place axiomatically represented in foreign media as the poorest country in the Western hemisphere. It occurred to me first that the young woman's father would have negotiated his current socio-economic status principally by deploying a virtuosic command of the French language on a daily basis in one of Haiti's most prestigious press organizations. Then I recalled advice offered to me with paternal concern 25 years earlier by the "noiriste" public intellectual René Piquion, a close friend of my own father and a pugilistic polemicist if ever there was one: "In this country, if someone tells you not to speak French, he's your enemy - shoot him."

While a relatively small minority of Haitians – more or less dark-skinned, more or less light-skinned - is truly fluent in French as well as Creole, all Haitians reared in Haiti speak Creole, and Creole is the sole mean of verbal communication of the vast majority of Haitians, with monolingual Creole speakers being overwhelmingly black, illiterate and poor. There are also vast numbers of Creole speakers from the lower strata of the petite-bourgeoisie - and to a

lesser extent in the working-class - with functional competence in French that does not rise to true fluency. Creole is the lingua franca of the Republic. At the time of my conversation with Piquion, and perhaps still today if less likely, a privileged Haitian might not find it self-evident that Creole is an actual language. Piquion was one of the leading lights of a cadre of intellectuals who turned fulminating anger in the black middle class into the blistering black nationalism of the *noirisme* movement<sup>101</sup>. Notwithstanding the unimaginable political and economic violence visited by the Duvalier regime upon poor Haitians, the first steps toward official sanction of Creole as a national language were taken in the 1970s with initiatives to formalize its orthography and to introduce it in the school curriculum. As we spoke, Piquion seemed utterly unapologetic as a “noiriste.” More than baffled, I was intellectually disoriented by his radical skepticism on my embrace of Creole.

Quite significantly, despite an international reputation resting on masterful expression in French, Piquion did not exhibit a widespread habit of educated Haitians to turn to French periodically during a conversation otherwise conducted in Creole<sup>102</sup>. Our conversation took place entirely in Creole from the time I arrived at his house until I left about an hour later<sup>103</sup>. He was not interested in French-speaking as performative act but as political tactic. From my ethnographic findings in the privileged classes of Port-au-Prince over two decades later, I would indeed argue that postcolonial circulation of Western symbolic values originating in Europe and its diaspora – from language to fashion to social etiquette – is not a *cultural* problematic but a straightforward matter of political economy.

The French language is hardly a historical development that organically united populations of continental France. Not quite ten years prior to the declaration of Haiti’s Independence, parallel to Robespierre’s political Terror, the bourgeois Revolution was in the

midst of a brutal *terreur linguistique* to impose the French language on more than twenty-two million people who spoke a collection of some thirty tongues. Most of the fewer than three million people who spoke French at the time were concentrated in Ile-de-France, an administrative region with Paris, the seat of state power, at its center. For a few years after 1789 Revolutionary directives were promulgated in various so-called patois in addition to French; by 1794 the disposition of the Revolutionary state toward regional identities had changed radically. Local tongues were not just condemned by legislative action; their militant speakers were ruthlessly persecuted. Not surprisingly, the campaign to force linguistic homogeneity is undertaken at a time when the *nouveau régime* faces increasing rural resistance, which explodes in the counter-revolutionary war of Vendée in western France in March 1793. Thus, if the French Revolution remains a seminal moment in the construction of “Europe” and of the “West,” it must be remembered that it articulated the French language, a most cogent site of Western symbolic power, not as cultural value but as political instrument. And the political instrumentality of language is at the service of the economic interests of a class aborning as “bourgeois” in its confrontation with the social conjuncture imposed by the *ancien régime*. Significantly, much as in postcolonial Haiti, the French language is appropriated by the French Revolution from the vanquished *ancien régime*. Moreover, the language comes with a host of institutions – *L’Académie française, l’Opéra de Paris, le Musée du Louvre* – and forms of expression – opera, ballet – which the bourgeoisie will make its own and redeploy in various reconfigurations over the following centuries.

The full measure of the historical effect of French as political instrument in Haiti – and more generally of the colonial language in the postcolony – should begin in the fact that it is not a natural phenomenon, and it is not a universal value. In late 18<sup>th</sup> century France (and throughout

the 19<sup>th</sup>) no less than in 21<sup>st</sup> century Haiti, the French language is a cultural capital to which access is negotiated in the political project. Its geographic origin nevertheless remains most certainly inscribed in the collective memory of the global West, and its norms of standard practice are defined or sanctioned in a definite center of global power – it is of France, it is of Europe, and in the last instance it is *white*. To propose French as inevitably an object of whiteness might open culturalist arguments around the identity of the national or nationalist practitioner of color, particularly one with masterly command of the language. However, besides the argument of geographic origins of globally dominant cultural forms, the proposition makes of “whiteness” a heuristic device that makes salient a problematic of positionality confronting a nationalism from above inscribed locally with an assertive blackness and articulated globally with dominant Western powers. In Haiti, the French language and associated cultures remain an irreducible vector of social differentiation between privileged people and non-privileged people, not between the colorist fragments within spheres of privilege, much less between dark-skinned subjects and light-skinned subjects of the nation in general.

Don Robotham (2000) argues a definite correlation in the global order between a hierarchy of political-economic power and a hierarchy of socio-cultural prestige, with Anglo-Saxon/western European at the apex and black/African at the base of either system. He further finds that the correlation on the global scale informs correlations at the local level between postcolonial economics and nationalist expression. Robotham persuasively argues that postcolonial nationalists, particularly black or Africanist, cannot be overly strident in asserting the symbolic power of indigenous histories at the local level, because on the global stage they will not be countenanced by dominant white cultural-political-economic power. Local nationalist expression must be mindful of what it says at home, Robotham argues, because it articulates with

national political economy and the local economy is in turn inextricably linked to global exchanges, including trade and investment. The Haitian national experience would seem to defy the imposition of restraint that Robotham finds imposed by the global order on local nationalist expression. Even though the Haitian Act of Independence itself is hardly ever studied in the Haitian school curriculum, a rhetorical flourish of its author has entered Haitian historical memory practically as a preamble: “To construct the Act of Independence we need a white’s skin as parchment, his skull as tablet, his blood as ink”<sup>104</sup>. In this, Haitian schoolchildren are taught relatively early that they are modern people who gave themselves a nation-state, and, when peeved by white folks, to remember what Haitians did to whites<sup>105</sup>. That this quasi-preamble is written and memorized in French makes it, like the Act, an object of privilege produced at a distance from the vast majority of the population, and suggests how thoroughly French unites privileged Haitians across lines of color as a distinct national formation linked to the global order.

Mulattoes’ finely coded color prejudice and their visibility in dominant positions in the nation’s economy have sustained an antipathetic stance in Haiti’s black-nationalist elites. The poet-engineer expresses this axiomatic oppositional attitude in conflating the mulatto’s color and political-economic class. Yet he unequivocally rejects *noirisme* for its color determinism. It would seem that he embodies the logic of Jean-Paul Sartre’s presentation of the *négritude* movement to postwar France as a *racisme anti-raciste*, “the moment of separation or negativity” in the colony, the antithesis of white supremacy which must precede “the final unity that will bring together all the oppressed” (Sartre 1948:XIV). In the Haiti situation, the anti-colorist colorism of the black nationalist rejecting the mulatto subject *qua* mulatto would similarly be “the only path that might lead to the abolition of [color] differences” (Sartre 1948:XIV)<sup>106</sup>. The



logic of Sartre's argument does indeed inform post-Duvalier Haitian black-nationalist thought and action, and *négritude* is a prime proxy through which to apprehend the historical implications of the political instrumentality of French culture in Haiti's social relations. In it, like in Haiti's Act of Independence, colonized people claimed a stake in Western modernity in their own voice but in the vocabulary – in the “education” - of the colonizer.

Both the text and the context of Sartre's elaboration of the anti-racist racism thesis cogently indicate that its premise in a black cultural essentialism would ultimately mystify social, political, and economic violences inflicted on disadvantaged populations by postcolonial elites, who are fundamentally engaged across boundaries of race – or color – in the negotiation of their integration in the global hierarchy of Western privilege. Sartre made his argument to preface a seminal *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache de langue française*. Léopold Sédar Senghor, the volume's editor and founding President of the Republic of Sénégal a little more than a decade later, introduced it as “part of a series of works published [on] the occasion of the centenary of the Revolution of 1848, [because,] undoubtedly more than the others, it was concerned with man. Allow us to recall only the decree of 27 April 1848, which abolished slavery definitively, and this other decree, dated the same day, which instituted free and compulsory schooling in the colonies” (1948:1). The second decree invoked by Senghor articulated in the colony an education in the academic codification of Western ways, which made relatively privileged people of the colonized so educated. This education inexorably makes an aberration of Sartre's assertion that “the subjective, existential, ethnic notion of *négritude* ‘passes,’ as Hegel says, in the one – objective, positive, exact – of *proletariat*.” It makes no less an aberration of Senghor's assessment – cited by Sartre - of the work of Aimé Césaire, his fellow co-founder of *négritude*: “Through the men with black skin of his race, it is the struggle of the

global proletariat that [Césaire] sings” (Sartre 1948:XL). It would also be no less aberrant to read a priori in educated Haitians “with black skin” the struggle of the country's poor majority.

If mulattoes came out of the colonial experience equipped with the Europeans' education, privileged black Haitians have assiduously pursued it at least since Toussaint Louverture sent his sons off to France to be educated. In this socio-political history obtains the social fact that the symbolic and cultural fields beyond phenotype that articulate with global whiteness become, in Haiti, a site of common national experience across boundaries of color onto which the colorist matrix is mapped. As they do globally, locally these fields of social practice – from language to aesthetics to the management of the body – articulate a priori with social, political, and economic privilege irrespective of nationalist or colorist ideology. Subjects ranging in complexion from the darkest to the fairest partake of these existential fields. As we have seen, colorism preferring whiteness and its approximation is operative amongst those subjects – from the darkest-skinned to the fairest-skinned – in the negotiation of privilege prefigured by competence in those distinctive modalities of social being. As cumbersome as it is, the situation has not ceased to be a social fact of the Haitian experience.

The education Senghor speaks of, by the very evidence of the persons of the creators of *negritude*, did in the colonies what it did in Europe and its diaspora. To understand better the implications of what it did do, let us first understand what it did not do: it did not produce people of fair complexion in the colonies any more than it did in Europe. It did produce and still produces everywhere it is dispensed social subjects of various capacities to reproduce, adapt and innovate the vast and unstable complex of practices and ideologies articulating with global systems of economic production that emerged in the centuries following Columbus's travels across the Atlantic. Skin complexion was to become an organizational technological innovation

at the dawn of that global order. It became a signal of *whiteness*, the pivotal regulatory instrument that was comprehensible in determinate privileges which simultaneously produced and expressed its significance (cf. Buck 2002). Over the history of capitalist modernity, lightness of complexion, given its foundational significance in the phenomenal instantiation of whiteness, retained universal value in the domain of Western capital. However, it did not retain indispensability in the complex of interlocking economies that produce various forms of social advantage. Such advantage may yet be called white privilege while remaining inaccessible to fair-complexioned subjects; or it might be called bourgeois privilege in a transcendent vocabulary, when attained by “people of color.”

In the final years of the colony, under Toussaint Louverture, privileged Saint-Domingue blacks gained a decisive foothold on *their* terms in the local node of the global system of whiteness. A few years later, in alliance with mulattoes, they formally entered the system as a sovereign and very specifically non-white people. Yet post-Independence Haitians in positions of privilege made a quasi-political project of the pursuit of a bourgeois education. In an expressly non-white modern Haiti, *blackness* appears soon enough as no less an innovative phenomenon of governmentality as *whiteness*, and bearing in its own political instrumentality as many contradictions to be managed. Today, if in “centers” of the modern West subjects of all color realize and reproduce amidst persistent racism social, political and economic power which fair-complexioned subjects do not necessarily attain, dominant Haitian social formations are no less agile in managing across color boundaries the contradictions in the reproduction of their privilege amidst a mass of poor black subjects in a “black” country. Consistent with Robotham’s (2000) insight on local reverberations of the dual global articulation of European cultural and economic powers, command of symbolic systems bequeathed by colonial powers became pivotal

to the contestation of privilege in Haiti, while Casimir 2000 sees *La suppression de la culture africaine dans l'histoire d'Haïti* [The Suppression of African Culture in Haitian History]. Not incidentally, the local intelligentsia's increasing legitimation of popular vernaculars within controlled limits since the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has mystified rather than diminished the centrality of fluency in pan-European cultures in the reproduction of privilege. The process ultimately turned the African heritage into a cultural mascot of the privileged, while making the peasantry "in its own home, exotic and folkloric" (Casimir 2009:43). The logic of this very complex socio-political economic instrumentalization of the Western education in Haiti – and ultimately of Robotham's dual articulation thesis - inheres in the invention of the whiteness/blackness binary by colonial powers that Pem Buck (2001) reveals.

Through an anthropological reading of the 1676 Bacon Rebellion, Buck (2001) lays bare the social architecture of the phenomenon of whiteness as it emerges in the North American British colony of Virginia. The uprising presented the colonial aristocracy of royal representatives and rich plantation owners with a formidable alliance of yeoman frontiersmen, African slaves and indentured European immigrants. The farmers wanted power to expropriate Native Americans' land at the frontier. Slaves and indentured laborers constituted a distinct faction. They had lived and loved together in similar material conditions irrespective of ancestral origins, and they were now united in demanding better terms for their work from the current regime of labor extraction. The strategic response of the colonial elite to worker solidarity was the introduction of modalities of radical social differentiation based on ancestral origins and somatic features. The condition of bondage of African slaves was systematically made absolute and unforgiving. European laborers did not receive better wages as they demanded. Instead, they were granted political rights that effectively included rights of violence with impunity against

peoples of African descent. These European laborers eventually came to an imaginary identification with the rich European planters based on somatic characteristics – altogether, they became one privileged grouping of *whites*. However, just as now, not all white people were powerful (see Buck 2001:19-27).

In early colonial Virginia - a gestational moment of Western modernity, one might say - as well as in subsequent centers of bourgeois power that came to define the modern West, elite Europeans structurally cordoned off domains of decisive political-economic authority from other Europeans situated lower in the social hierarchy<sup>107</sup>. They were all bound together in the “white” identity, but the elite retained sole power of defining the conditions of this identity. Since then presumptively white social formations have been kept away from domains of power indexed by whiteness, while categorically non-white people have increasingly had access to these domains. The situation has complicated analysis of inequality both in the “periphery” and in “centers” of Western power, because of the intricacies of containing race and class coherently in one analytic matrix. In apprehending the functional interplay of race and culture in guarding elite-class boundaries, I find it useful to read the phenomenology of race in a schema of the historic context captured by Buck. In colonial Virginia skin complexion eventually indexes race, but its significance arises after the socio-juridical innovations by which the colonial elites resolve an economic challenge. Complexion becomes race in the wake of purposeful and capricious violence that now differentiates laborers. One category of workers in alliance with the elites can now inflict violence on another whose bondage is extraordinarily intensified. It is the extreme degradation of Africans’ existential conditions which now comes to signal the inferiority of “Black.” Africans suffer their *racial* condition – they experience racism - because of the degradation of their persons, not the other way around. Laborers of European origins read the

integrity of their person in that of the elites, a reading abetted by the non-experience of the kinds of violence reserved for the African. The arbitrary power to degrade all that is not-white together with the integrity of the European person signals the superiority of “White”<sup>108</sup>. Yet the elites of whiteness must yet manage the exclusion of the non-privileged white from spheres of transcendent socio-political economic power.

W.E.B. DuBois’s (1935) snapshot of social structuration in the southern United States in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century affords a glimpse of the operations of cultural power in the process of class reproduction from the colonial period onward. By 1860, “among the two million slaveholders, an oligarchy of 8,000 really ruled the South” (DuBois 1935:26). DuBois reports an anonymous source who could “not recollect ever to have seen or heard [the] non-slaveholding whites referred to by the Southern gentleman as constituting any part of what they called the South” (26). Of these “largely ignorant and degraded [whites,] only 25% could read and write” (26). The structural instrumentality of cultural practices in American social stratification ultimately transpires in DuBois’s account:

Thus, the planters who owned from fifty to one thousand slaves and from one to ten thousand acres of land came to fill the whole picture of the South. [They] certainly dominated politics and social life...All their ideas of gentility and education went back to the days of European privilege and caste. They cultivated a surface acquaintance with literature and they threw Latin quotations even into Congress. Some few had a cultural education at Princeton and at Yale...Most of the planters, like most Americans, were of humble descent...Yet the Southerner’s assumptions impressed the

North [and] the Yankees had more recently been reënforced by immigration and were strenuous, hard-working, ruthlessly pushing themselves into the leadership of the new industry. Such folk not only “love a lord,” but even the fair imitation of one. [1935:35]

European colonial elite begat European bourgeois elite. Ever since global capitalism arose in the West out of the colonial enterprise, transcendent Western political-economic power never ceased to rest principally with elite formations of European origins. Nor did the white/not-white alterity ever cease to be the pivot of symbolic economy in the world order that grew out of European colonialism. It remains that in the Virginia described by Buck as well as in the American South studied by DuBois white is white, but not all whites are whites of power. Du Bois makes clear that it is not somatic characteristics that differentiate whites of transcendent power as a distinct social stratum from whites with no such power. The elites of Virginia as much as the elites of the federated States of the republic later on reproduced themselves as a distinct class through cultural practices, and cultural practices made their power legible to the intermediate social strata which articulated the colonial (and later capitalist) project on the ground with the laboring classes. Yet culture is transmissible, making for exceedingly elastic social economies in a capitalism that requires constant social transformation.

Bourgeois power posits as transcendent civilizational ideals ways of thinking and acting, of ruling and following, of nurturing and killing, of showing and seeing, of taking and giving, of knowing and teaching, of loving and hating – an infinite corpus of prescriptive and proscriptive directions that encompass the totality of the social process of existing. DuBois speaks of “literature and the propaganda which is usually called history” (1935:34) projecting the cultural power of the Southern aristocracy to the rest of mid-19<sup>th</sup> century America on a scale far

disproportionate to its size. Ultimately, a true cosmos of media – in and out of the academe, in and out of state functions, for one’s education and for one’s recreation – was to comprise “literature” and “history” to produce and reproduce the global impression of bourgeois symbolic systems as the universal, inevitable, *modern* way of representing and being in the world. These ideal ways of being social become cultural ways of being white, because they are instrumental in regulating access to political-economic privilege controlled by transcendent power with roots in Europe and its diaspora. Whiteness begins at the phenotype, but it is fully realized in those Western bourgeois ways of being. Thus the non-European subject, without ceasing to be Europe’s *other* and without ceasing to be the object of the racialist gaze, can approximate whiteness in its cultural dimensions to concrete political-economic effect.

Haiti presents two centuries of a postcolonial society managing the conjugation of race and culture toward the reproduction of privilege in a local system of social inequalities linked to the global bourgeois order that grew out of the colonial enterprise. Across boundaries of color and race in a cohesive field of social practice relatively dark-skinned subjects of privilege expertly deploy determinate modes of bourgeois culture to arrest in their person the existential degradation that arrives at social blackness, and they deploy bourgeois culture again to degrade non-privileged dark-skinned subjects existentially and render them socially black. Relatively light-skinned privileged subjects contest the valuation of lightness of complexion with the relatively dark-skinned on the consensus understanding that they could not *be* white. All the while, education in the ways which globally dominant bourgeois power posits as ideal remains an object of intense socio-political attention to the elite and middle classes.



Chapter Nine  
**The Political Economy of Knowing White**

The immense amount of attention and resources afforded Haiti by the global philanthropy industry in the aftermath of the earthquake of January 2010 has been problematic in many ways (cf. Schuller 2012, Schuller and Morales 2012). However, little has been said of the insertion of the global symbolic power of whiteness in Haiti's already complex articulation of privilege with the politics of color. To privileged Haitians the situation was not something to pussyfoot about, if one is to believe the May 12, 2010 report of the respected daily *Le Nouvelliste* on

a very intense trade in whites who frequent the country, particularly after the earthquake...in search of contracts for their companies based mostly in the big Western capitals. [This] practice on the part of Haitians...seeking to “own” investors or other foreign operators (generally white) intervening in Haiti is not really a new phenomenon...Certain of these correspondents, more fortunate, may even get to set up joint ventures with their foreign investors or even receive shares in foreign firms wishing to get involved in the reconstruction process...Some Haitians, including intellectuals and members of the Haitian elite, are ready to fight furiously, even violently, to safeguard the privilege of “possessing” one or more Whites.

On the ground, the Haitian prospecting for “her” or “his” white might need to know what to make of foods segregated as “appetizers” and “entrees” on a restaurant menu, or what exactly it means for an enterprise to “lose” money in a “fiscal” year; or yet again, speaking French, that “ant,” “woman” and “car” are all as equally feminine as “mosquito,” “man” and “truck” are all

equally masculine, and an adjective qualifying any of these words would need to be in “accord” with its “gender.” Haitians attaining the “privilege of ‘possessing’ one or more Whites” bearing the economic (and incidentally political) power of global donors would thus a priori tend to be Haitians possessing the prior privilege of knowing the ways of those whites.

Haiti has been a place of illuminating practice in the politics of knowing white. In French the word “education” denotes more than scholastic knowledge; it also refers to good breeding, good manners. When Haitians use the word in conversation, the subject is almost always class and the object is almost inevitably to locate someone or some group in the social pecking order, and the referent then is the whole spectrum of bourgeois values, however locally adapted, from morals to table manners to diction. A man in his late 30s made typical use of the term, while he related to me a business partnership gone sour. He came of age in the orbit of socio-economic privilege as a son outside the marriage of an army general who for a brief period was Haiti’s Head of State. After an adolescence and young adulthood split between France, Haiti and the US, he now lives in much reduced economic circumstances in a working-class neighborhood of a US city. He started a pop-cultural enterprise with a partner, who provided the financing. The venture rested on a “hand-shake” agreement until the partner unceremoniously changed the terms of the arrangement. Rather than submit to the new terms, the man quit the project altogether. After he finished telling me the history of the venture in a mix of Creole and English, with particular emphasis on the partner’s lack of grace in violating terms of the partnership, he added with disdain: “y’know, education,” the second word said with the French pronunciation. While the partner drove a luxury SUV, dressed nattily and solely financed their venture, the man did not presently own a car. It is the practiced use of “education” that would indicate all that the partner lacked which he possessed, and which presumably would situate him for me in the Haitian social

order relative to the partner. The man briefly attended a college in California, but did not graduate. However, academic credentials are irrelevant here. The referent of “education” is bourgeois cultural attributes. Among the qualities left to my imagination to deduce, fluency in the French language is a priori.

Haiti is hardly the only postcolonial place where fluency in the dominant form of a Western tongue is a practical prerequisite to manage an elite socio-economic position. Research and development grants and university scholarships remain to be had from modern powers, and calls for proposals remain available and applications acceptable solely through European languages bequeathed by European colonists. As a filmmaker of Haitian citizenship I would be a qualified applicant for financing from the Rotterdam-based Hubert Bals Fund to make a film in Papiamentu about Curaçao as a destination of Creole-speaking *madan sara*, Haitian tradeswomen who link Haiti to various Caribbean economies. However, neither Haitian Creole nor Papiamentu, a creole official language of Curaçao, gives access to the Fund; French and English do. This is the global context of a physician’s dismissive assessment (in Creole) of Wyclef Jean’s aborted candidacy in Haiti’s 2010 presidential elections: “Wyclef pa pale okenn lang. Li pa pale anglè. Li pa pale Fransè. Li pa pale kreyòl” [Wyclef doesn’t speak any language. He doesn’t speak English. He doesn’t speak French. He doesn’t speak Creole]. Jean, an international music star who immigrated to the USA with his family around age 10, manifestly speaks English and is also fluent in Haitian Creole. However, accurately or not, the physician was assessing a different practical reality – he did not find Jean adequately prepared in the West’s dominant modalities of rational discourse. In other words, he found Jean so lacking in knowing white that his candidacy was notionally a joke.

It is socio-political experience that informs the physician’s assessment, not linguistic

elitism. He runs an autonomous US-financed public-medicine agency in affiliation with a government ministry. He expresses himself impeccably in spoken and written Creole and uses these skills without self-consciousness. At work he speaks French or Creole, or French and Creole alternately in a conversation, presumably according to prevailing norms of using one or the other. To a chauffeur, he gives directions in Creole to take me home after a morning spent on the campus that his agency shares with its state ministry partner. Discussing a work project with an older female aide, he speaks French except for a few asides spoken in mock conspiratorial tones. After he introduces me to a manager of an operational unit of the agency, a youthful and amiable man neatly dressed in “business casual,” the three of us discuss their work at length in Creole. A son of the provincial middle class, the physician grew up and attended school in his native town in southern Haiti until the middle of the secondary level, the limit of the local institution. He then went to live with kin in Port-au-Prince, the capital, to continue his studies. Now in his mid-40s, after medical school at the State University of Haiti he continued with five years of specialization in France on a scholarship. When I asked him why he chose to return to Haiti, he seems sincerely baffled as he answered, “But I’m Haitian!”

The physician was financially supported through secondary and medical schools in Port-au-Prince by an aunt and uncle (half-siblings of his father) from the “noiriste” middle classes connected to the political elite who left Haiti decades earlier. The uncle was a student of Marx and labor activist in the US; the aunt had studied in Europe, married a white American, and worked in the US, with stints at the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. I met the physician at the funeral of the uncle several weeks before my first trip to the field in March 2011. He was traveling back home with his wife from a conference in South Africa and stopped over for the funeral in the eastern US city where the uncle had lived and worked for nearly forty

years. He delivered a moving eulogy in Haitian Creole. Having known the uncle's political ideological positions and his labor activism, I imagine he would have been in agreement with both form and content of the eulogy. However, I was to learn that the aunt was bitterly disappointed by her nephew's choice of Haitian Creole to deliver her brother's eulogy, seeing in the choice a sign of the nephew's lack of gratitude for all she and the uncle had done for him.

Fluent in English, several years ago the physician led an application for financing from the United States Center for Disease Control for a medical-service project. Based on figures he provides, the project became is a multi-million-dollar agency funded by the CDC, which he directs under the auspices but independently of the Haitian state. He is cognizant that he directs a modern system through the state apparatus but is protected from the vagaries of Haitian politics. He describes with understated nationalist passion how the agency provides an essential service without which great numbers of Haitians across age, sex and class lines die every year. He says he is on schedule in gradually expanding the coverage area of his agency across the country and expects to make its service accessible nationally within the next five years<sup>109</sup>. Within the constraints of the global neo-liberal moment, he is arguably an exemplary model of postcolonial nationalist engagement, with a feminist bent to boot: "Without this, scores of women die in childbirth every month and nobody pays attention. Imagine what the media would make of it, if twice a month on a regular basis a small plane full of passengers crashed and everybody died."

The physician would probably understand Piquion's cautionary insistence on knowing French. However, his position on Jean's candidacy suggests that elite competence in Western ways of being is not reducible to mere fluency in this or that language. His assessment that Jean cannot "speak" is effectively a concern that Jean is not adequately familiar with dominant modern ontologies. He does not believe that Jean can adequately engage with the human

experience on the global stage in vocabularies proposed by the normative symbolic systems of Western powers. His assessment is consistent with Robotham's finding of the global articulation of political economic power with cultural prestige. I find the underlying logic also at work with the fair-complexioned executive and her daughter at the meeting on the veranda of their real estate complex about the renovation of the property. The daughter is not fully fluent in French, her primary and secondary schooling in Haiti as well as her college education in the US having been entirely in English. Her mother and father (who was not at the meeting on the veranda) utilize Creole and French alternately in conversation in a pattern that is not noticeably different from the physician's. At the meeting, noticing that the younger woman speaks flawless English with an American accent, I ask her whether she studied in the States. She is barely done telling me the name of the US institution that she attended, when her mother interjects matter-of-factly but emphatically that she had first spent a year in Spain. This is certainly an innocuous intervention, but nevertheless remarkable. The mother is a blue-eyed fair-skinned heiress with blond hair who exudes self-confidence as an executive in the family firm. Yet she reflexively feels compelled to add the year of study in Spain – a native site of normative Western ways – to her daughter's off-hand snapshot of her education. The snap remark pointedly gives the full scope of her daughter's preparation in Western culture - where whiteness matters in delineating one's situation in the social order, one cannot have too much of it and one asserts all of it that one has got.

Postcolonial politics require attention to the politics of knowing white. Haiti's Constitution of 1987 added Creole to French as an official language of the Republic. Today the state cogently asserts Creole as a language of public life. Haitian passports, government ministries and other expressions of state agency are presented and explicated in a bilingual

format. Yet certain spaces nevertheless remain exclusively French, birth certificates being a prime example pointed out by the linguist Michel Degraff (private communication). The website of the Haitian Parliament is a national space from which Creole is yet more conspicuously absent. Thus despite undeniable successes by social activists in advancing the legitimacy of Creole as a national language, French still obtains as a currency of pivotal value in social economy of the nation.

President Michel Martelly used the French language instrumentally in constructing the legitimacy of his successful electoral campaign in 2010-2011. I became interested in Martelly's linguistic strategy about a month before the run-off election in March 2011 after speaking in New York with the former principal of a modest private school in Carrefour, a municipality southwest of Port-au-Prince. The 29-year-old educator had moved to New York in January after being granted a visa to visit his fiancée, a professional Haitian woman living in the New York Metropolitan area. With great enthusiasm he described what he considered Martelly's winning performance against several candidates in a televised debate prior to the first round of the election the preceding November. Urging me to review the debate on an Internet site, he concluded with a series of exclamations: "Micky pale fransè tout deba a! Pa yon grenn mo kreyòl! Moun sezi!" [Micky spoke French the entire debate! Not one single word of Creole! People were stunned!]. The Internet address he gave me was a Creole phrase – [avannvote.org](http://avannvote.org). The irony was lost on him<sup>110</sup>. Yet on the entire website, which is maintained by a civil society organization, among vast amounts of information about the candidates, the debates, the electoral process and the host group, other than an occasional visitor's post, I counted a grand total of 4 other Creole words in a small-print slogan.

The principal nevertheless does not have an aspirational preference for the French

language – like Degraff (private communication), he unequivocally argues for the establishment of Creole as the language of instruction in primary and secondary school. In a subsequent conversation he elaborated on his assessment of Martelly’s performance in the debate. Alluding to their gravitas, he enumerated Martelly’s rivals, which included Mirlande Manigat, the former first lady and a Sorbonne political science PhD, and two former Prime Ministers. According to him, the press had been partial to the RDNP, Manigat’s party, and journalists directed questions at Martelly which they expected him to fumble. In effect, in the assessment of the school principal, Martelly turned the table on the journalists – rather than revealing himself to be shallow and bumbling in his answers as expected, he was intelligent, self-confident and substantial. In the principal’s summary of the performance, Martelly’s winning strategy in the debate is ultimately reducible to his French expression

The first time I had heard the principal talk about Martelly’s use of French, it was in the context of a wine-fueled Saturday-night impromptu gathering of family and friends munching on traditional Haitian food and bantering about Haitian politics; his animated chatter gave the impression that he was awed by Martelly’s use of French. Here, he dissects Martelly’s performance more analytically while also sharing his experience educating socio-economically disadvantaged students who are asked to learn in French while they think and live their lives entirely in Creole outside the classroom. He sees the political implications in the disproportionate number of these children who fail the *baccalauréat*, the rigorous national exams that cap the secondary education cycle. These children, he argues, may think their answers correctly in Creole, but they have difficulty formulating them appropriately in written French on the answer sheet. He makes a clear and persuasive argument that Creole should be the language of instruction in Haitian schools. It occurs to me then that the man is not in awe of French per se in



his appreciation of Martelly's debate performance, but rather is impressed by Martelly's agility in wielding a most potent socio-political instrument. Martelly's past probably also figures significantly in popular assessment of his performance in the electoral debates. His stage antics as a hugely successful pop musician are well documented – wearing diapers, mooning audiences, requesting oral sex from President Jean-Bertrand Aristide and other prominent personalities. In a debate with a cohort of solemn candidates against the background of his stage persona, his accomplished use of a transcendent symbol of “civilization” gave his performance the quality of staggering revelation.

Linguistic practices in Haiti often entail a negotiation between nationalist affect and the refracted effect of the global symbolic economy, particularly with privileged Haitians of sympathy for the condition of the urban poor and the peasantry. This negotiation was an undercurrent of the first conversation I had with the engineering contractor. His wife, the “noiriste” math teacher with roots in the rural landed elite, is known among family and friends for her nationalist fervor and for her deep personal loyalty to Aristide. After they married they used her family connections in the so-called Duvalierist bourgeoisie to launch their engineering service firm. Today they are a solidly middle-class couple by the standards of the industrial West. Their company employs twelve to fifteen technicians and an administrative assistant. They travel to Florida and New York to shop for clothes and home accessories. In the course of my fieldwork, their son began graduate studies in the southern United States at an institution where he also received his undergraduate degree and where the contractor's brother is a full professor of mathematics and department chairperson, and their daughter left for college in France.

I made acquaintance of the wife first in the USA, through family links. I met the engineering contractor when I visited their home for the first time in the context of my research.

After she introduced me to him she left us on the porch and went inside to attend to dinner preparations. As is customary among Haitians of any income level with a certain amount of formal education meeting for the first time, his first few sentences to me were in French. He correctly presumed that I spoke French. In such a situation, answering in Creole would be tantamount to stating an ideological position on prevailing norms of linguistic practice. As political subject in a similar situation in a different context, I might indeed answer in Haitian Creole. The ethnographer answers in French. The engineering contractor continues to address me in French and our conversation remains in French for about a half hour or so without either of us turning to Creole. We speak about many subjects – Haitian politics, hip hop, the artist in society, stand-up comedy. Although he does not say so, he leaves me to think that he sees the two of us as sharing a common liberal political perspective on the Haitian condition. He gradually switches to Creole, and eventually that is what we speak the rest of the night. Since we finished dinner that evening, we probably have not spoken more than two or three successive sentences in French to each other in any of the innumerable conversations that we have had. French ceased to be necessary between us the first time I met him at his house at the point he no longer had an interest to mark his social situation relative to me.

Bourdieu's (1982) says that “discourses are not only (or only exceptionally) signs intended to be understood, decoded; they are also *signs of wealth* intended to be evaluated, appreciated and *signs of authority*, intended to be believed and obeyed” (1982:60). Furthermore, language entails a “quest, often subconscious, for symbolic profit” (1982:60). This leaves privileged nationalist Haitians in a constant dilemma of linguistic practice. Haitian Creole may be lingua franca and one official language of the nation, but there is the unavoidable requirement of French as link to the global order of privilege. The contractor's wife periodically visits her

family's village in Haiti's southeast. She speaks emphatically about her active management of the family land, which is farmed by sharecroppers. When her son failed the admission exam to the Faculty of Sciences of the State University, she adamantly opposed her husband's alternative plan to enroll him in a private college in Haiti. Her children would attend the *national* university, she insisted. She also opposed any notion of using her social connections to secure her son's admission to the Faculty outside the formal protocol of admission, and she does not see any necessity for Haitian children to go abroad for college, be it to France or to America. For that reason, when her husband eventually arranged for their son's enrollment at the American university where his brother teaches, she was informed after the fact. Yet the engineering contractor's wife is nonetheless one of many privileged Haitians whom I have heard bemoan a diminished aptitude at speaking French in the "new" generation. Who is being taught what amount of French is indeed not a trivial question, particularly given the active movement to make Creole the language of primary and secondary schooling.

Esdras Fabien, a Deputy who represented the district of Carrefour in the 48<sup>th</sup> Legislature of 2006-2010, urged Parliamentary action toward mandating Creole as the language of instruction in Haitian schools. The effort did not go far. According to the school principal from Carrefour who discussed language use with me in New York, educators who like him served disadvantaged children generally supported Fabien. However, parochial schools and upscale institutions were vocally opposed. As he said, "these schools do not permit students to speak Creole in the recess yard, and their parents don't permit them to speak Creole at home." Yet his observations on the ground at his own school in a poor community bring back the problematic of French as symbolic capital in Haitian social practice. He relates that a particular classroom might be remarkably quiet amidst the din of pupils' chatter emanating from other rooms. On such

occasions, he says, students in the quiet classroom could simply be in thrall of a given teacher's singular virtuosity in the French language. He adds that on these occasions students for the most part are not substantively engaged with the lecture but with the oratorical skills of the teacher. Further, he says, the teacher will often have to draw back from the elaborate rhetoric in French and turn to an anecdote from the Haitian vernacular experience in order to bring the students' attention to the substance of the lesson. To the extent there is any validity to the principal's description of the situation, he related a baroque quality to the teacher's lecture – the linguistic virtuosity is deployed for its own sake. In other words, the teacher seems to be interested not so much in dispensing the lesson but in establishing that he is not just any Haitian but a Haitian who knows French well.

In 2011, it was a generation since all Haitian schoolchildren began receiving formal Creole language instruction in a universal curriculum mandated by the National Ministry of Education. In the primary six years and the first three years of the secondary level, children are taught proper Creole syntax and morphology as well as the history of the language, including the social context of contemporary usage. Students are tested on their Creole writing and reading skills in the *certificat d'études primaires*, the national exam that concludes the primary cycle, and they take the culminating exam at the end of their ninth year of schooling. The principal from Carrefour outlines a hypothetical lesson on the distinction between language and speech, emphasizing to his hypothetical pupils that language is a social issue – what language you use matters; how you use it matters. It is nevertheless not surprising that a teacher in his school might enthrall students in the classroom not by the substance of a lecture but by a virtuosic performance of French. At the time of the 1975 publication of *Dezafi*, which is generally considered the first Haitian novel written in Creole, both author and readers were French-literate

ahead of the current aptitude to execute and comprehend the written expression of Creole<sup>111</sup>. When Creole was made the second official language of the Republic by the Constitution of 1987, the moment was the culmination of a movement by activist intellectuals who were a priori bilingual, and whose fluency in French marked their situation in a cultural elite. Thus the legitimacy of Creole as a bona fide language of the nation was arrived at through an elite agency that articulates distinctly with competency in knowing white rather than in Haitian vernaculars. It remains today that French literacy precedes the command of Creole orthography necessary for its “*objectification* in the written form” (Bourdieu 1982:28). Not nearly all Haitians who are fluent in French can read and write Creole, but almost inevitably the Haitian who can read and write Creole fluently is bilingual. The situation is not unique to Haiti in the postcolony, but scant attention seems to be paid in postcolonial literatures to the political ramifications<sup>112</sup>.

The legitimation of Creole in Haiti is reasonably linked to the articulation of the monolingual poor’s interests in national politics, and for privileged Haitians it can justifiably be a mark of undeniable commitment to liberal politics. Activists for instruction in Creole may nevertheless find a note of caution in Bourdieu’s insight that “for one mode

of expression among others (a language in the case of bilingualism, a form of the language in the case of a stratified society) to impose itself as the sole legitimate one, the linguistic market has to be unified and the different dialects (of class, region or ethnicity) have to be practically measured against the legitimate language or form. Integration into one ‘linguistic community’ ...is the condition for the establishment of relations of linguistic domination. [1982:28]

Haiti’s French-literate population is fluent in French and in Creole. It is equally competent in the

signals to engage one rather than the other language in any given exchange based on how Creole measures for the occasion. Bilingual Haitians, I would argue, indeed constitute a linguistic community, and it excludes the vast majority of Creole speakers, they who are overwhelmingly the illiterate, marginalized poor. Bilingual liberal Haitians who inscribe the legitimation of Creole in a broader agenda of social justice in Haiti remain caught in a dilemma. Not only does their fluency in French and other dominant Western ways – their skills at knowing white – give them access to global flows of goods, ideas and opportunities that define and reproduce relative privilege, but it also distinguishes them from the vast majority of poor, monolingual Creole-speaking Haitians. On the one hand, they find in Creole expression a tactical option rather than an existential requirement in what Bourdieu would call Haiti's linguistic market; on the other, they can and do tap their competence in dominant Western cultural modes both to make claim on socio-political privilege and to differentiate themselves from the monolingual Haitian.

All three of my dinner companions in April of 2011 at Pizza Garden, the hip trattoria in Pétion-Ville, were activists in the Lavalas movement at its inception in the late 1980s. With varying degree of critical distance from contemporary Lavalas institutions, they remain committed to the movement's original platform of social justice. Besides the poet-engineer and the cultural impresario, my third tablemate that evening was an artist in his late thirties who remained unwavering in his support of Jean-Bertrand Aristide. The cultural impresario took part in civil-society initiatives that successfully sought the removal of Aristide from the Presidency in 2004, but he nevertheless remains close to Aristide's political heirs, both institutional and individual. The poet-engineer by profession ran a public-works firm financed by the European Union and by avocation facilitates grassroots art cooperatives. They are friends who assess one another's respective political positions with critical honesty, and all three have cooperated

formally and informally for over a decade in various projects that validate, defend and represent experiences and interests of the poor, both urban and rural. They speak Creole among themselves as a matter of course and are as at home in dismally degraded neighborhoods as in learned salons. It is nevertheless not incidentally that they are fluent in French and other dominant modes of Western culture. The artist discusses Picasso, Dali and other icons of 20<sup>th</sup> century modernism with informed authority. The cultural impresario invokes Bourdieu in discussing social reproduction in Haiti. The poet-engineer is well read in Haitian and French literary histories. All three belong to Haiti's cultural elite, with concomitant social capital from which monolingual Haitians are precluded. A month or so before our supper at Pizza Garden all three were engaged in the 2011 edition of *Quinzaine de la Francophonie*. The "Quinzaine" is a globally coordinated fortnight during which peoples of *francophonie* (small "f"), the global community of French competence outside France, celebrate the French heritage in member nations of the *Organisation internationale de la francophonie*<sup>113</sup>. *Francophonie* (big "F"), as the organization is sometimes referred to, is an agency of the French government through which it dispenses symbolic and material resources to advance the postcolonial project of reproducing French cultural prestige and political influence on the global stage.

The artist is married to a French professional woman. He lives in France with his wife. When we met for the first time in 2002 at a Day of the Dead party where I was as a guest of the poet-engineer, his emerging career was a struggling pursuit<sup>114</sup>. The party was at the home of a Belgian expatriate and his Haitian wife, also a painter. The centerpiece of the party was a service by a Vodou house from downtown Port-au-Prince, where the couple occasionally practiced the faith. Guests were from Haiti's cultural, political, and economic elites. Among those present from the mulatto elite was a businessman whose daughter would be "white" in any major

Western country and is the only Haitian that know named after the nation itself, and in its Haitian Creole spelling, Nonetheless, except for the priests and assistants of the Vodou house and the hosts' service personnel, everyone on the premises assuredly was skilled at knowing white. The American Ambassador dropped by for a drink. In the wee hours of the morning, I randomly asked two *clair* young Haitian women whom I didn't know whether they could give me ride to my hotel<sup>115</sup>. They did in a late-model Range Rover, a relatively expensive British SUV. The web of social relationships we see converging that night in 2002 suggests the social rationality by which, in 2006, the artist was able to travel to an art workshop in France on a grant from the French government, and is now in a transnational marriage with a French citizen. At the time we are eating together this evening of April 2011, he is in the middle of his regular stay of several months a year in Haiti before returning to the marital home in France.

A few days before we ate with the artist at Pizza Garden the cultural impresario and I went on a leisurely drive with the poet-engineer in one of the latter's two SUVs officially registered to the Haitian state. With us in the car were two younger friends of theirs, lovers who seemed to be in their 20s. He is a surveyor for the Institute for the Protection of the National Heritage, a state agency. She is an aide in the Port-au-Prince City Hall with a bachelor's degree in ethnology from the State University's Faculty of Human Sciences. With their hair in dreadlocks and their intellectual energy, they are not unlike politically-engaged hip young urbanites of the moment elsewhere in the West. Before heading toward the countryside in the region of saline lakes about thirty minutes northeast of Port-au-Prince, we stop at a street vender's stand near the airport for candy and bottled water (and cigarettes for the lone smoker in the group). The cultural impresario lowers the glass of the front passenger door and the afternoon heat rushes in the air-conditioned cabin as the vender, an amiable middle-age woman,



approaches the vehicle. On that side of the window is stifling sun, dusty sidewalk and varying degrees of poverty, an environment emblematic of the social field in which the vender conducts her business and lives her life. As we have done among ourselves before we stopped at her stand, we address the vender in Creole unadorned with any French. The younger anthropologist in the car greets her with warm familiarity, and the vender cheerfully returns the greeting. The young woman inquires after a common acquaintance (another woman). From her chit-chat with the vender I infer that this acquaintance lives on the same social plane as the vender and is thus known to my companion in the car at a certain social distance. The young woman's inquiry after her welfare effectively mediates our engagement in the vender's quotidian social universe. In this moment, for all its contradictions, we enact the unitary black Republic of the black-nationalist imagination. After we conclude our purchase the vender retreats to her stand, the engineer drives off, the cultural impresario closes the passenger-door window, and again the air-conditioned cabin is sealed off from the world outside. We continue toward the countryside with no purpose other than the enjoyment of our camaraderie at a time when motor vehicle fuel costs about five US dollars a gallon, the amount of the daily minimum wage passed by Parliament in 2009 and bitterly contested by the light-assembly industry. What unites the five of us in the car could not be the blackness that might unite us with the vender. The blackness that we share subjectively as nationalist Haitians, the inter-subjective terrain of our engagement in the car, is fundamentally defined by our competence in dominant cultural modalities of the modern West<sup>116</sup>.

Two recurring themes percolate in our chat the rest of our drive: French as cultural capital and marker of class boundaries, and the significance of official recognition of Creole as a national language. The Constitutional affirmation of Creole as an official language is seen as a move that begins to counter the prestige presumptuously ascribed to all things foreign, the

French language in particular, in preference to the national culture. After we hang out in the woods on the outskirts of the town of Thomazeau, we drive back to Port-au-Prince after nightfall. The themes resurface after the poet-engineer tunes in an English-language jazz program on Radio Métropole, a station associated with an elite audience since its founding in the early 1970s. At the sound of the barely accented English of the host, I wonder whether the English-speaking expatriate population is now big enough to be the target audience of a prime-time program on a major station. I am reminded that the program has been on the air for at least 30 years. Now as then, the host is a scion of the mulatto family that founded the station. To unanimous agreement, the poet-engineer remarks that quite likely the majority of Haitians who listen to the program do not speak English. The remark prompts the cultural impresario to lament wistfully what he finds to be a crisis of *authenticité* in the Haitian.

Haitians, in the view of the cultural impresario, have lost touch with their culture in their predilection for the foreign. To illustrate the depth of the crisis he invokes a conversation he had recently with a poor illiterate woman. Although thoroughly marginalized socially and economically, uneducated and a monolingual Creole speaker, the woman reflexively used English phrases such as “y’know” and “I mean” in her vocabulary. If this woman, of all people, could have so little regard for her culture as to pepper her Creole with English terms, the meaning of which she actually did not know, what hope could there be for Haitians? So reasons the cultural impresario. I suggest a different reading of the situation to him: could it be that the woman’s use of the English terms was an attempt to negotiate the power relations in this encounter? If, I suggest to the cultural impresario, social prestige and power accrue with knowing French and other foreign modes of culture, perhaps in deploying her very limited repertoire of English, the woman might just be staking a claim – albeit a hopeless claim - to

some of the cultural capital that comes with knowing white. We mull over the question without anyone venturing an answer, and I do not think to ask the corollary question: if the impresario equates authenticity with distance from foreign ways, why would *he* want authenticity for *her*? Significantly, no one in the car thinks to pose the question of authenticity about *us*.

I believe the moment begins to reveal an interest by Haiti's privileged classes to regulate access to competence in the cultural ways of whiteness, an interest that articulates with the nationalist mythology of the peasantry. In various iterations of Haitian nationalism, the peasant is bearer of an irreducible Haitian essence, which she retains after economic violence displaces her into the ranks of the urban poor. This essentialized Haitian does not, *should* not countenance foreign intrusion, particularly French, and in practice her authenticity entails illiteracy. Urban – or urbanized – French-literate nationalists become her self-appointed spokespersons in pop as well as learned literatures. These texts paying ideological heed to authenticity are not necessarily in Haitian Creole, because nationalist elites may deploy them externally to invoke the peasant's social condition in their own engagement in cultural and political economies on the global stage. In the schema of authenticity, privileged Haitians skilled in ways of whiteness are ultimately not inauthentic provided they validate the African heritage – the index of authenticity - embodied by the monolingual Creole speaker.

A dialectical tension was to be expected in postcolonial nationalist elites between the necessity to use colonial languages to represent national interests on global circuits dominated by former colonial powers and the necessity to engage with national realities in local vernaculars. Postcolonial national realities – including native official languages - are fundamentally marked by various forms of violence which undergird the persistent global power of the former colonial masters. The tension inheres in postcolonial nationalist politics of language. A telling paralysis

transpires in Daff's (1998) history of the project to reconcile this tension with nationalist aspirations in Senegal. Beginning in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the colonial administration imposed French as the official language of State transactions, and French developed as the language of instruction for the cadre of indigenous functionaries that is necessary in the colonial enterprise. This linguistic project was predicated on a rigorous insistence on the norms of Continental French and a rigid intolerance for native tongues in the linguistic repertory of the educational space and of learned productions. Among the socio-economically privileged formations yielded by this educational programme was a corps of self-assured French-speaking anti-colonial activists. They made a mark in global cultural exchanges before establishing themselves as a national elite after independence from France in 1960. The most illustrious product of the colonial linguistic system, Leopold Sedar Senghor, was to become a formal arbiter of normative practice of French as a so-called Immortal, a member of the *Académie française*, the institutional guardian of the language established by royal decree in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

From 1965 to 1980 Senghor, as President of Senegal, pursued a dual agenda of valorizing national languages and democratizing French usage. National languages were officially recognized by the state and schoolchildren studied them formally, while instruction of French favored the spoken over the written form. An initiative to make national languages mediums of instruction was abandoned in 1977 for lack of structural support. French was taught effectively as a foreign language, with the emphasis on oral communication, under the *Pour Parler Français* (PPF) protocol<sup>117</sup>. However, it was treated programmatically (in schedules and curricula) as a first language and taught through modalities imported from France without regard to the social realities of Senegalese pupils. In the early 1980s the PPF was abandoned as well for lack of appreciable results.

Following Senghor's retirement from politics in 1981, Daff (1998) quotes O. Ka (1993) to explain that official strategy aimed for an ideal triglossia of "language of social environment, which transmits cultural values and supports the child's cognitive development, language of national unity, destined to promote national consciousness, and foreign language, for inter-African and international communication needs"<sup>118</sup> (see Daff 1998). Wolof, the lingua franca of numerous national linguistic communities, would be the language of unity, and French the language of external engagement. By 1984, goals were elaborated but no formal policies ensued. As Daff notes, in 1991 Senegalese schools were still "waiting for proposals of teaching methodologies." The void is understandable. The teaching of *français langue étrangère*, French as *foreign* language, entails a focus on the spoken idiom at the expense of literary and historical-cultural knowledge. Senegalese elites historically need the organic fluency denoting *français langue seconde*, French as *second* language, to engage with the world of *francophonie*. *Français langue seconde* entails *knowing* French, and that is a function of literary and historical-cultural knowledge. The initiatives elaborated through the mid-1980s to teach fluency in French as a foreign language without socio-cultural context did not cohere with the elite necessity of organic competence in French *cultures*. The period of paralysis ended in 1991, when the state renewed its pedagogic action. In 1998, the Ministry of Education initiated curriculum reforms aimed at teaching national languages as first languages and French as a second language. Today, to grasp the undiminished socio-political significance of French one need only visit the Internet site of the Ministry of Education – it is a space of exclusively French expression<sup>119</sup>.

The Haitian Parliament is another postcolonial national space of exclusively French expression in the conduct of official business. It is also the pivotal institution to which Esdras Fabien, the Deputy from the district of Carrefour, would have had to make his arguments for

mandating Creole as the medium for educating schoolchildren in Haiti. Fabien would have made his arguments in French, and if Parliament were to make Creole the language of instruction in the current context, it is in French that it would announce its decision and record it in the archive.

The Senegalese state and the Haitian state cling to French over a local tongue as the language of statecraft, because, through France, *francophonie* is a vector of global political-economic value.

The importance of knowing French in Haitian social life expresses the global political-economic instrumentality of French writ small. A project to negate the operational effects of French competence in Haiti's – or Senegal's – economies would be a chimerical pursuit, because its elites could not purport to represent national interests on global circuits of exchange without due command of French. Haiti's elites will cease to be effective on the global stage, if they cease to know white. They will continue to know French or such other dominant linguistic form of whiteness, because that is an essential condition of their reproduction. Thus to preempt knowing French in Haiti is to preempt contestation of determinate elite domains.

Michel Degraff's argument to make Haitian Creole the language of schooling in Haiti is similar to the argument uniting the different Senegalese projects: children learn best in the language that permeates their quotidian social life, and the overwhelming majority of Haitian children across class lines growing up in Haiti are by far most linguistically at home in Creole<sup>120</sup>. However, teaching French to all Haitian children as an egalitarian project is at the moment far from being notionally conceivable. Degraff in fact invokes the enormous lack of French-competent instructors in his argument against French as medium of instruction. Yet this practical obstacle arguably would not be the greatest amongst myriad difficulties. In the periphery as much as in the center of bourgeois power, linguistic competence as a function of knowing white is not reducible to knowledge of syntax, grammar and orthography of a given linguistic form.

Linguistic competence is also intrinsically entwined with management of the bodily self. It entails verbal as well as non-verbal symbolic projection of personhood. This point reveals itself to me in a fleeting instant at the tastefully-decorated villa of a writer on entertainment etiquette. During our conversation, she is wearing shorts and a sleeveless top. The top shifts slightly and for a few moments reveals an edge of undergarment. When she notices the thin strip of exposed bra in her reflection in a wall mirror, in an instantaneous action that is as seamless as it is precise and inconspicuous, she pinches the edge of her top between thumb and index finger and matter-of-factly pulls it over the bra, still with full engagement in the conversation at hand. Elegant is the word that comes to mind as I absorb the artful precision of the woman's managerial intervention on her garment. We may be in the periphery, but this is not "elegant" as the National Geographic magazine might find an indigenous matriarch in native fineries in this or that hinterland. This is elegance as might be found in a self-assured professional woman in a cosmopolitan upper-middle-class parlor in London, Paris or New York. The point is that the privileged postcolonial subject of color does not pick up bourgeois ways of being retail and opportunistically, learning one here, one there as the need arises, but rather arrives at them wholesale through organic experiential apprenticeship.

The PFF model, which focused on teaching local populations to *speak* French but not to *know* French, had a relatively short shelf life in Senegal. It would not go far either in Haiti, if the point were to negate the instrumentality of French competence in regulating class inequalities. Merely teaching idiomatic French to a disadvantaged Haitian whose habitus continues to indicate marginal social origins will not take him through boundaries of class guarded by bourgeois norms of being social. Not that competence in "proper" manners could not be taught along with the French language. Cultural transmissibility of bourgeois ways of being did after all render

somatic heterogeneity to certain domains of “white” privilege. The country bumpkin who makes it deep into the Port-au-Prince petite-bourgeoisie, usually via a liberal profession, is a trope of the Haitian imaginary. However, this trajectory is always mediated by an educative stay – in terms of both schooling and socialization – in the capital, with kin or in a boardinghouse firmly exposed to prevailing petit-bourgeois currents. A project to democratize *knowing* French would entail not simply a vast corps of language instructors, but also the no less daunting task of deploying an apparatus – from cultural centers to various forms of media - for universally disseminating the symbolic signals that make the power of France legible to a global audience. Leaving aside the enormous costs in human and non-human capital such a project would require, there would yet be another political challenge to overcome. Elite segments of decisive political authority who deploy French instrumentally across lines of color have authored orgiastic political violence against poor Haitians. It is hard not to believe that they would find laughable the notion of teaching French to Haiti’s peasantry and urban poor. The position of Haitian liberals would not necessarily be less problematic, and resistance, I suggest, would again revolve around the theme of authenticity.

For all the mystifying populist rhetoric around authenticity deployed politically in various postcolonial histories, the concern to guard against the intrusion of French in cultural values mythically preserved in the Haitian peasantry would have deep historical roots in the Haitian imaginary. I believe it expresses historical memory of the slave masters’ constant threat to return after Independence. The concern also indicates in the imagination of Haiti’s intellectual elite the specter of the colonized subject turning mindlessly toward Europe, a condition which Fanon (1952) describes metaphorically as “black skin, white masks.” This epitome of inauthenticity maniacally reaches wholesale for the cultural specificities of *white qua white* in an inexorably



black skin, The figure is understandably anathema to a national sovereignty predicated upon a cohesive identity radically defined through the thrashing of whiteness in the War of Independence. In Fanon's survey of cultural alienation, the specter of inauthenticity gets yet worse when the colonized, far from commanding fluency in the ways of the Western bourgeois, mangles grammar, syntax and diction in his heedless leap toward whiteness. This pathetic figure is a perennial object of biting humor among French-literate Haitians across the political spectrum. I believe the figure persists in the elite Haitian imaginary because it causes anguish, and from two distinct directions. Firstly, there is neither ironic nor ritualistic design to the figure's fractured competence in whiteness. It certainly is not the "mimicry" of the Hauka movement of western Africa, which, as famously documented in Jean Rouch's 1955 film *Les maîtres fous*, re-enacted colonial officers' behavior in rituals of possession (cf. Ferguson 2002). Nor is Fanon's linguistically-challenged subject engaged in a merely performative pursuit like members of the SAPE movement of the Congo, who cohesively dress in cutting-edge fashion from the design capitals of Europe without any definite agenda to move out of what are often conditions of abject poverty (cf. Ferguson 2002). As he appears in Fanon, I posit, the figure makes privileged Haitians uncomfortable, because behind his failed bid for competence in French is a strategic will toward the elites' socio-political terrain.

Secondly, a colonized subject's failed effort to acquire competence in whiteness implicitly re-poses the question of perfectibility. The privileged Haitian would not wish to revisit the question of perfectibility, because doing so would expose the naturalization of his own competence in French. The presumed *imperfectibility* of the monolingual Creole speaker effectively unites the elite Haitian actively hostile to the interests of the poor and the liberal elite Haitian mindful of authenticity: one sees futility in aiming to inculcate French to the Creole

speaker, the other sees the Creole speaker's cerebral inability to know French and still *be* Haitian. The disadvantaged Haitian who tries but fails to learn French raises a host of related questions. What hurdles got in his way? Does competence in knowing French simply *happen* to elite Haitians? Or is it the object of rational systems of reproduction? Exactly how do privileged Haitians reproduce their competence in French? Speaking to the mysteries of class reproduction in Haiti, these are ultimately questions of political economy.

In his critical assessment of culturalist interpretations of African mimesis of European ways, Ferguson (2002) argues that "the most vital political question raised by practices of colonial emulation did not concern the incorporation of Western symbolic materials into African local cultural systems. Rather, it concerned the place Africans were to occupy in a *global* sociocultural order - their status in a new 'world society'." I believe Ferguson's argument correctly approaches the question of competence in Western symbolic vocabularies as a question of political engagement with historical processes of Western modernity. Whiteness is quite simply a political technology of the modern. Fanon realizes the full political force of his anti-colonial activism through his exquisite agility in appropriating and redeploying the linguistic instrument of French colonial violence – the global power of Fanon's politics is inseparable from his competence in the cultural ways of whiteness. There is nothing natural about Fanon's competence in these ways, and there is nothing natural about privileged Haitians' competence either. Such competence is the outcome of political processes articulated with global and local economies, and it will remain crucial to class reproduction whenever and wherever modernity remains a legacy of European colonialism. Thus in a Haiti that remains resolutely of the modernity of the West, for all the validity of the argument for teaching the children of the non-privileged in Haitian Creole, there remain the questions of who will teach them white, and how,

which ultimately become fundamental questions of social justice in the nation.

## Conclusion

### **Liberal Politics in a Problematic of Hermeneutics - *Yon Travay Jigantès***

An afternoon of October 2012, on my final research trip to Port-au-Prince, I was once again talking color, class, nation and politics in Haiti with the poet-engineer. I was now telling him yet again that I could not see how a politically liberal position on the national condition was a notional impossibility in the mulatto elite. He had been conceding the point for months, albeit ambiguously. Inching further in agreement, in his response he told me of his friendship with the Europe-based fair-complexioned intellectual with whose husband he once collaborated on a community-development project. He told me with emphatic respect how the woman's work sought to bring vernaculars of the black majority into the cultures of the Haitian privileged, and he told me of her "practically white" daughter's art raising awareness of the desperately poor Haitian. We did not discuss *noirisme* that afternoon, but he steadfastly rejects it – particularly its color determinism – and its demagogic uses by Duvalier and others. Yet the conversation that October afternoon nonetheless arrived at the point where, first, he read a "category" of Haitians in the intellectual's color before finding the limit of her political agency in her class situation within that category. Thus in the same conversation the poet-engineer conceded the possibility of a politically liberal subject in the mulatto elite and found the categorical impossibility of an alliance of liberal politics across boundaries of color in Haiti.

Speaking of the mulatto intellectual's class limitation, the poet-engineer pointed out that he and I were no less politically limited in our class. He was also nonetheless effectively cognizant of the possibilities of subjective agency, when he noted that our views and ideological positions on social justice in Haiti would not be the consensus position among peers we grew up with in our class. I suggested that privileged Haitian nationalists might yet create a transcendent space (intellectual, cultural, practical) where notionally he, the fair-complexioned intellectual,

the erudite *clair* businessman and I might negotiate our distinctions of class and color within a liberal vision of the human condition in Haiti. “Se yon travay jigantès” [It’s a gigantic task], the poet-engineer said of such a potential project.

The poet-engineer does not consider himself a Marxist. He neither posits an inevitable collapse of “the class” nor enacts his political life in expectation of such. By all indications, he has developed what in Gramscian terms might be called an organic capacity to apprehend and negotiate the structural constraints on his ability to act politically. Indeed, by his representations and by my observations, the limit of his socio-political engagement in the interest of Haiti’s poor is the limit of liberal bourgeois politics. He shares this limit relatively with the engineering contractor and his wife, with the wealthy fair-complexioned executive and her husband, with the erudite *clair* businessman, with the wealthy *clair* executive and her husband, and with the cultural impresario. The mulatto entrepreneur’s choice to pay his black engineer collaborator to the limit of his resources and not his manual laborers may be a particularly egregious instantiation of class solidarity, a solidarity that is distinctly not inscribed in color, but it can also tell us more. If we recall the remarks of the moneyed black intellectual – the husband of the wealthy *clair* executive – about “mulat pòv...plen pwoblèm” [poor mulattoes...full of problems], “who struggle, too, to keep up a social standing,” the mulatto entrepreneur’s choice might yet leave him within the limits of bourgeois liberalism with all these other subjects of this ethnography. Finding it impossible to envision such a formation of liberal politics reveals a problematic of hermeneutics in Haiti. Subjects enacting dominant norms of global bourgeois modernity in a common field of social practice fail to realize their fundamentally common experience of the historical moment, talking past each other, as it were, in vocabularies of color.

Haiti was born of a radical rejection of whiteness as foundation of privilege, and Haitian

nationalists bear this memory as existential leitmotiv. It is not surprising that dark-skinned liberal Haitian nationalists in particular, imagining the *modern* development of the vast black majority of the nation's population, could not imagine common cause with national subjects who generally measure their persons in some approximation of the somatic appearance of white people. Haitian black nationalism resonates across the global Western postcolony for a reason. It draws its symbolic and affective power expressly from a Revolution that remains unique in the history of Western modernity in reminding white and non-white people that whiteness as such can be defeated by non-whiteness as such. However, there is the fact of the unity in colorist thought and practice among privileged Haitians across boundaries of color, and the fact of their unity in the materialities of class reproduction, and yet the third fact that Haiti's privileged formations were birthed by the Revolution along with the nation. This multi-dimensional fact makes salient that *la question de couleur* ought to be confronted not in the mulatto experience but in the experience of the privileged in general. A liberal politics across boundaries of color might then be imagined capable to talk back to colorist manifestations that it contains. The object of this capability would comprise not only combating mulatto prejudice but also combating practical and discursive maneuvers across identitarian boundaries that degrade the poor and the peasantry in their *black* persons, while yet holding them to be avatars of the nation. Yet again the magnitude of the task would need to be measured in the fact that, if colorism in Haiti is initially a phenomenon endemic to the nation, it ultimately becomes the local projection of global behemoths of symbolic power that realize in various media the pan-European cultural dominance which Robotham 2000 speaks of. In those global vectors of symbolic power articulating with global prestige and wealth, Haitians of any color reproducing privilege and Haitians of any color aspiring to privilege would remain all too aware of privileged "blacks" and privileged "people of

color” airbrushed – or powdered in “live” appearances – to a condition of not-quite-blackness.

The political scientist François Pierre-Louis (2014) argues that one reason for the fragility of popular democracy in Haiti and for the impossibility of transformative change in the operative capabilities of the Haitian state is a lack of the political party as institution in Haiti’s political life. The political party in Haiti is at bottom a personal project activated on the occasion of a candidacy. In Pierre-Louis’s analysis, transforming the agency of the state requires the institutionalized programmatic logic of a party. In the field, a pivotal figure of national politics with enormous popular legitimacy, invoking the US system of primaries, similarly spoke of the need for an institutionalized process to identify candidates that best represent a party’s programmatic mission. The framework of the party in either vision is an exemplary object of the modern civil society, and it is a site where the coherence of the liberal moment that I found ruptured on the ground on either side of the color line can be imagined.

The color question will not cease to percolate among privileged people in Haiti, when the question of race does not cease to be central to operations of privilege and inequality in the global West. In Haiti, I want to argue from my findings in the field, colorism ought to be confronted within and not prior to the political engagement on the condition of the nation. Within thought and action of bourgeois liberalism, the Haitian black nationalist might confront colorism not only in the liberal prejudiced mulatto but also, in the last instance, in the socio-cultural degradation of the blackness of the poor monolingual majority of Haitians by privileged people across the ideological spectrum. Ultimately, behind a Haitian liberalism across boundaries of color in the privileged classes, there are the further stakes in the possibilities of a transformative politics on popular interests across lines of color *and* class. The Lavalas movement that brought Aristide to power in December 1990 looked beyond bourgeois liberalism. It was a movement of

popular power at the service of popular interest. It was nonetheless a coalition containing privileged Haitians across the colorist map that harnessed this power into an operational politics. The Lavalas promise eventually faded – from the compromising of core values like democratic deliberation and popular transparency to factional splintering – around the reduction of Lavalas as program and mission to the Aristide persona. The various figures from the elites and the middle classes who were pivotal to the legitimacy of the movement in the privileged imagination had not come out of any persistent civil society structure of political agency; post-Lavalas they could not remain a formation. The construction of spaces of liberal politics, I suggest, would provide a space in which transformative visions of the nation might begin to percolate coherently across soio-political boundaries.



## Notes

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- 1 - The band also had a Creole name, Wanga Nègès (Hummingbird). It played *twoubadou*, a pop genre itself evocative of popular experience, and its frontman and lead singer generally performed with a red kerchief evocative of vodou rituals wrapped around his neck, when he wasn't twirling it about. The space also included an art gallery, which I never visited.
- 2 - I would dine at La Plantation myself the next evening as the guest of a thriving black entrepreneur and his family. Earlier in the week we had talked of going out to eat that weekend. Saturday morning, he suggested the restaurant, when I asked him and his wife about it to contextualize my conversation with the gynecologist the evening before.
- 3 - To obtain a mortgage on an existing property, in addition to committing the property as collateral, the borrower is generally required to maintain a life insurance policy for the original value of the mortgage with the lender as beneficiary in addition to a separate property damage policy also for the original value of the mortgage.
- 4 - The other strategy Nugent suggests "is to disregard the conventional anthropological definition of elites and look instead at effective elites, those who shape the terms of debate including those terms regarding the definition of elites" (2002:72).
- 5 - This was particularly noticeable in the case of the sole academic – a Marxist engaged intellectual – among scions of the mulatto elite who declined or effectively ignored my request for cooperation.
- 6 - On the centrality of race in Caribbean social life, see Denton and Massey 1989; MG Smith 1965a; de la Fuente 1998, 20b; Candelario 2007; Chevannes 2000. On the thesis of distinct identitarian formations in politics and economy, see Robotham 1981; MG Smith 1965b; Leyburn [1941] 1980; Lewis 1990; de Albuquerque and McElroy 1999; Thomas 2004.
- 7 - The other four countries studied were Brazil, South Africa, Bangladesh, Philippines. Elisa Reiss and Mick Moore, a sociologist and a political scientist, respectively, and editors of the volume of analyses, note that they and their contributors were "the first researchers ever to collect consistent, comparative information on how national elites perceive the character, causes of and remedies to poverty" (2005:1). Ribeiro Thomaz, a social anthropologist, contributed the research on Haiti.
- 8 - The study was based primarily on interviews. Ribeiro Thomaz conducted sixty-four interviews in April and May 2000, in Cap Haitien, Haiti's second largest city (population "approximately half a million"), where "in some cases, contact went well beyond the first interview," and in Port-au-Prince (population 2.5 million), "appointments with well-known intellectuals, ex-presidents, ex-ministers, bankers and businessmen... could not extend beyond an hour or so" (Ribeiro Thomaz 2005:128). The social positions of the representative subjects from the Port-au-Prince elites described here closely parallel those of my collaborators in my fieldwork.
- 9 - The annual Art Basel festival has additional iterations in Hong Kong and its Basel, Switzerland, its founding site.
- 10 - It would be hardly surprising, if the gynecologist voted for Mirlande Manigat. It is not that Martelly was not also a right-wing candidate; he was. The eventual winner, he would also prove adept at revitalizing what I would call the decolorized Duvalierism that emerged under Jean-Claude Duvalier in the years leading and subsequent to his marriage to a light-skinned woman from the mulatto petite-bourgeoisie. Through the time of this writing in the summer of 2014, he would have consistently attempted to bring back a Duvalierist authoritarianism to the executive branch. Manigat had deep roots in the political elite. Her husband – himself a former President – lived in exile from the early 1960s on for his critique of François Duvalier's regime, but he nonetheless remained a strident *noiriste* ideologue.
- 11 - During the period of my fieldwork through the final third of 2012 and beyond, critics of Martelly's administration would routinely point out that he surrounded himself with friends and acquaintances from his days as

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a pop music star, individuals who might not hail from the political elite but who nonetheless would not wish to disrupt that elite's relationship to the state in Haiti's political tradition.

12 - In quoting the privileged in Haitian Creole here and throughout, as applicable, I do not use academically correct orthography, which generally reflects diction of the poor Haitian. Rather, I reflect the Frenchification of certain Haitian words in the privileged's speech by reflecting the French inflection in the orthography. Here, for example, "neuf" rather than "nèf" (nine) and "suicidè" rather than "swisidè" are markers of class. I will note further instances only when the distinctive speech is of import in the significance of the moment.

13 - She stopped the donations, she also told me, when one of her drivers was indeed grievously wounded in accident and his care at the hospital was no different from the usual far from adequate level.

14 - Aristide was forcefully removed from his private residence in a surprise raid by US military forces and flown out of the country

15 - The *anciens libres* were "long-standing free" people at the time of the general emancipation (declared in the colony in August 1793 and affirmed in Paris the following February), which made *nouveaux libres*, "new freedpeople," of the hitherto enslaved. The *anciens libres* included blacks, who, like Toussaint Louverture, could also be slaveholding planters. Dessalines's master at the time of the insurrection of 1791 is said to have been a black, who gave him his name after buying him from his first owner (Madiou 1989a:172).

16 - Through the 1760s, particularly in the Southern peninsula, wealthy mulattoes had been undifferentiated racially in their integration of the planter elite (see Garrigus 2006:1-2).

17 - Deborah Jenson reminds us that the texts are Dessalinian through and through, because "Dessalines, not Boisrond, was the crucial conceptual voice in the main sections of the [Act of Independence] as he was in his other proclamations from late 1803 through the final months of 1804" (2009:76). She also casts doubt on Boisrond-Tonnerre's having actually written the Act.

18 - My translation.

19 - My translation of Péan's original title "Haiti, économie politique de la corruption."

20 - The mulattoes were widely represented in the elite class of wealthy planters, although some freed blacks were also slave holders.

21 - The distinction between *anciens libres* and *nouveaux libres* entered the political schema of the Revolutionary process with the formal emancipation of 1794 decreed by the French Republic in Paris. The latter group was also differentiated between slaves born in the colony (Creole slaves) and those born in Africa.

22 - The city was known as Cap-Français in the colonial period and Cap-Henri during Christophe's reign.

23 - Christophe was eventually to declare the territory he controlled the Kingdom of North.

24 - The basis of Pétion's rejection of the offer does not transpire in the historiography, that I know.

25 - A national scission succeeds Dessalines, with the black general Henri Christophe – the officer immediately after Dessalines in the army hierarchy – establishing the Kingdom of North and the mulatto general Alexandre Pétion creating the republic in the rest of national territory. Neither of their respective constitutions specifies a color of the nation.

26 - Pétion was the third-ranking military officer after Dessalines and Christophe at Independence.

27 - See, for example, Louis Joseph Janvier's assessments of Louverture, Dessalines, Christophe and Pétion through their respective visions and actions on the nation in *Les Constitutions d'Haïti* (1886).

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28 - Auguste Magloire published his critique between November 8, 1928, and January 8, 1929, in 19 issues of *Le Matin*, perhaps the most widely read newspaper of the day, according to Gaillard (see Gaillard 1998:xvi-xx)

29 - Through this period, although the phrase “République noire” [black Republic] has been used since at least last quarter of the 19th century, the usage seems to be at this time a banally metaphorical reference without the quasi-formal solemnity that seems attached to it in later official and academic discourses. In 181 substantive pages (pp 7-187, including indices) of a history textbook approved by the Department of Public Instruction in 1906, only once, on the 144th page, does one read “République noire” (Bellegarde et Lhérisson 1906:152). Yet Justin Lhérisson, a co-author of the schoolbook, was also the author of a poem (also called “La Dessalinienne”), an homage to Dessalines, that won the competition for words to the national anthem. See Janvier’s *La République d’Haïti et ses visiteurs* (1883:xxi), Anténor Firmin’s *De l’égalité des races humaines* (1885:111) and Hannibal Price’s *De la rehabilitation de la race noire par la République d’Haïti* (1900:1, 145) for examples of the usage in the late 19th century.

30 - My translation of the original French. Duvalier elaborated his position most comprehensively with Lorimer Denis in *Le problème des classes à travers l’histoire d’Haïti* (Denis and Duvalier 1965).

31 - The indigenous Taino population was exterminated by the Spaniards before the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. However, there is little solid quantitative scholarship on the history of the extinction. The 19<sup>th</sup> century Haitian historian Thomas Madiou (calling the extinct indigenous inhabitants “Haitians”) puts the population at 2,000,000 at the time of Columbus’s landing in December 1492, “by what Spanish historians say” (Madiou 1989b:6) and at 60,000 in 1507 (16). Noble David Cook quotes estimates published between 1971 and 1993 ranging from a low 60,000 to a high of nearly 8 million people on the island in 1492 (1998:23), who “by 1542...were virtually extinct” (1998:16). Nikolaus Federmann, a contemporaneous German settler, counted fewer than 40,000 around 1532 against 500,000 forty years before (Cook 1998:22). Whatever the numbers would have been, among the slave population of Saint-Domingue there was historical memory of the genocide as they reclaimed the island’s Taino name in calling the new nation “Haiti.”

32 - Janvier, who lived most of his adult life in Europe, married a British woman and Firmin married the daughter of a former mulatto president.

33 - Both the son and grandson of Salomon’s daughter, the poet Ida Faubert, were born and reared in France.

34 - Jean-Claude Duvalier inherited the Presidency-for-Life from his father François in 1971; he flew to exile in France as the regime collapsed in 1986.

35 - The recitation of this text did not generally happen at private institutions. The ritual continued after Jean-Claude Duvalier came to power following his father’s death in 1971 before gradually fading. It stopped completely after the collapse of the regime in 1986.

36 - The poor scrambling for money might be joined by privileged regime loyalists demonstrating their zeal. As an adolescent in the late 1970s, I observed a neighbor, a mulatto woman known for the particular vulgarity of her haughtiness, run for several steps alongside the presidential limousine to ensure that she was noticed from the back seat then scramble for money on the ground. She was stylist to the two successive First Ladies of the regime and to society personalities aligned with it.

37 - My emphasis.

38 - The publication of Aimé Césaire’s poem *Cahiers d’un retour au pays natal* in 1938 is generally considered the starting point of the Négritude movement. Speaking of his experience as a student in Paris around that time, he says: “I felt very quickly that I was not a European, that I was not a Frenchman, either, but that I was a Negro. That’s all. It’s not more complicated than that” (in Louis 2004; my translation). The Negro is asserting his cultural humanity, but is not yet insisting on the more complicated matter of retribution for his degradation hitherto.

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39 - The epigram survived the “dechoukaj” (uprooting) phenomenon, the spontaneous popular programme after the fall of Jean-Claude Duvalier to eradicate traces of the regime through lynching of macoutes and destruction of public and private edifices associated with the regime. It also survived the rise and stagnation if not fall of the popular Lavalas movement in the 1990s as well as a camp of squatters lasting nearly two and a half years around it after the earthquake of 2010.

40 - While a laudable nationalist project might be seen in Duvalier imposing to the Vatican a Haitian leadership of the local Catholic Church, this new leadership by and large countenanced if not actively advanced the regime’s political violence and corruption.

41 - There is no accompanying Creole translation of the French text at the base of the statue: « Le monument érigé à la mémoire du Marron inconnu de St-Domingue est un rêve caressé par moi longtemps avant d'accéder à la présidence de la République parce qu'aucun chef d'Etat ne pensa à faire sortir de l'ombre le sublime inconnu dont la lutte pendant trois siècles demeure la plus vivante préfiguration qui devait nous créer dans la vaillance et la gloire cette patrie éternelle qui ne sera remise à personne. » (The monument erected to the memory of the Unknown Maroon of St-Domingue is a dream cherished by me long before acceding to the presidency of the Republic, because no Chief of State thought of bringing out from obscurity the sublime unknown whose struggle over three centuries remains the most vivid prefiguration that would create for us in valiance and glory this eternal fatherland that will be returned to no one.)

42 - By the end of Jean-Claude Duvalier’s stretch of the dictatorship, noiriste ideological vigor had already long given way to what might be called an ideology of entitlement. Even relative to that period, ideological swagger in the aftermath of Duvalier’s return was muted.

43 - The wife lived in Haiti for nearly two decades before leaving after the second coup d’état against Aristide, having had enough of chronic political instability and insecurity.

44 - To express the notion of “a taken-for-granted” during our conversation (otherwise in Creole) I used the French phrase “un ça va de soi,” which translates literally as “an it-goes-of-itself.”

45 - The man nevertheless found that “things were better now than under Duvalier, because if I bad-mouth [President] Martelly, no “makout” would come to take me away.”

46 - I specifically used the Creole phrase to remain in the linguistic schema of the man’s quotidian life. In general, even while otherwise speaking Creole, Haitians inevitably use the French “République noire,” which marks a modicum of educational – thus, in Haiti, privilege – attainment.

47 - When I asked the man whether he ever discussed Haiti being a black country with people in his native village on his visits there, he dismissed my question with irony. “What people?” he asked. “When someone dies in the countryside, there’s no one to carry the body,” he added, alluding to rural migration.

48 - In official documents and in learned discourse in Haiti, the two towns are usually referred to by their French names, Casale and Fond-des-Nègres. I used the Creole spelling in quoting the minibas driver’s words as our conversation was in Creole.

49 - The fifth and fourth grades in the Haitian school system at the time (based on the French model) would correspond to the eighth and ninth, respectively, in the United States. The second and first grades would be the American eleventh and twelfth, while “philosophie” (“philo” in its short form), the final year following first grade, would more or less represent the curriculum in the first year of an American college.

50 - In addition to Dessalines, customarily included among the Heroes are Toussaint Louverture, Henri Christophe, Capois La Mort, Alexandre Pétion.

51 - Trouillot represents a broad consensus in Haitian historiography, when he finds the slogan of the Parti National to be “significantly” part of its “noiriste arguments” (1990: 126).

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52 - The recipe is taken from a report in the New York Times issue of May 5, 2004 accessed at <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/05/05/world/deepening-poverty-breeds-anger-and-desperation-in-haiti.html?action=click&module=Search&region=searchResults%230&version=&url=http%3A%2F%2Fquery.nytimes.com%2Fsearch%2Fsite%2F%3Faction%3Dclick%26region%3DMasthead%26pgtype%3DHomepage%26module%3DSearchSubmit%26contentCollection%3DHomepage%26t%3Dqry96%23%2Fhaitians%2Beating%2Bcay%2F> on March 6, 2014.

53 - Péan (2003: 73, 73n) finds traces of this tradition in Trouillot 1986 and Trouillot 1990.

54 - See, for example, Louis Joseph Janvier's (1886) study of Haiti's Constitutions.

55 - I think they would be *clair*, their respective complexion being in a range between that of the American actress Halle Berry and President Barak Obama, but I hasten to add that color categorization in Haiti is as imprecise an exercise as it is pervasive (cf. Trouillot 1990: 112-113).

56 - I hold this information from an unrelated conversation from a close member of the family.

57 - Although I briefly chatted with the senator about my project at his table that evening and followed up on that with a brief courtesy telephone call, I never got to speak with him substantively in the context of my project.

58 - This night, our two dinners, four or five bottles of beer and three glasses of wine will add up to US \$87, excluding tip. At breakfast, omelets are about \$9,

59 - Both the poet-engineer and the impresario welcomed the effort to oust Aristide, part of a faction that opposed Aristide not simply because it viewed Aristide as an incipient despot but also because it found that Aristide had betrayed the original values of the popular movement of Lavalas. However, the cultivation of a triumphant memory of the coup on the wall of the restaurant seems to me distinctly evocative of the active rejection of those values that animated other anti-Aristide segments from the political and economic elites.

60 - According to the presentation on its Website Fokal is funded primarily by the US-based financier George Soros's Open Society project with additional financing from France and the European Union.

61 - Fokal stands for "Fondasyon konesans ak libète" [Fondation for Knowledge and Freedom].

62 - Born in 1934, Bissainthe left Haiti in 1950 to study and lived in France until 1980. She returned to Haiti in 1986. She had her start in the theater in France in the early days of the "négritude" movement. In the 1970s, she began to incorporate visual and aural vodou motifs in her songs.

63 - See Trouillot on the fluidity of what he calls "color-cum-social categories" (1990: 109-113). The fluidity transpires in various analysts' divergent categorizations. Thus where Trouillot makes "clair" (light) (112) the broad category that holds various colorist sub-classifications, Price Mars (n.d.) makes mulatto the broader classification. Both are correct as in quotidian practice a speaker might alternatively use "clair" or "mulâtre" as the broader category. In Price Mars's classification of Haitian Presidents, he speaks of placing "Boisrond Canal among the mulattoes, however, [my] only meeting with him...gave me the impression that he was rather a griffe" (37). The instability of color classification is particularly remarkable here as "griffe" is arguably applicable to someone somewhat darker than the international human rights activist and actor Harry Belafonte.

64 - The series originated in 2006 as a history college assignment for their author, Joseph Bernard, Jr, the son of a Minister of National Education under Jean-Claude Duvalier. It was published in 2010 (*Histoire des colonies arabe et juive d'Haïti*) and 2011 (*Histoire de la colonie allemande d'Haïti* and *Histoire de la colonie italienne d'Haïti*).

65 - See chapter 4 in *Haiti: State Against Nation – The Origins and Legacy of Duvalierism*

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66 - The one substantive result was an online French publication's review of the book *Restavec: From Haitian Slave Child to Middle Class American* in translation. The review cites the translated description of a Haitian character in the tale as "blanc," white. The original was written in English for an American audience by a Haitian author long established in the United States.

67 - The video was on YouTube in six segments at, respectively, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F6HU8MMPXpY>, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sOxbYyk7tGM>, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rtH9o7I7zI0>, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z7hTFHawOHA>, [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7jFPAA5f4\\_0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7jFPAA5f4_0) and [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i\\_AiIJsXUSM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i_AiIJsXUSM), accessed on February 16, 2012.

68 - He also narrates the documentary. Although that is not mentioned in the video, both his current and former wives at the time of the interview were black Haitians.

69 - The documentary as a complete work and the interviews – apparently filmed in 2009 - tread very different discourses. The Haitian subjects interviewed speak of their unexceptional integration in national life. The documentary, through the syntax of audio-visual narrative, situates the interviews in the trope of rational whites civilizing sensuous, primitive blacks. It is twinned with *Forgotten Faces of Jamaica* as a unitary project, which presents itself on its official website as "a video documentary project [that] celebrates the minority ethnic groups of the West Indies... These ethnic groups... have experienced racism and discrimination [and] have a story to tell about their hardships and about their accomplishments." The project on the whole, in a North Atlantic vocabulary of white reaction, is reminiscent of resistance in North America and in Europe to public initiatives that grapple with historic social injustice to peoples of color. The author of the project is a white American from Methuen, Massachusetts, with family ties in Jamaica, who "has spent much of his life between time in the West Indies and here in the Merrimack [Valley] due to his mixed family background," according to the *Haverhill Gazette* of August 6, 20. The project's website, the sites of its constituent videos and of the page of the *Gazette* are, respectively, <http://forgottenfaces.info/>, <http://forgottenfaces.info/jamaica.html>, <http://forgottenfaces.info/haiti.html>, and <http://www.hgazette.com/arts/x2064742154/Haverhill-filmmaker-documents-Forgotten-Faces-of-Haiti>, all accessed February 16, 2012.

70 - I did not arrive to the mulatto entrepreneur as a subject of the fieldwork through snowball sampling. I knew of him, although he could not recall who I was when I first contacted him about the project. In my adolescence I knew his younger brother, who left Haiti around the time that I did and with whom I had had no contact in three decades until he put us back in touch. I reached out to the older of the brothers through social media and he agreed to participate in the study before I left for the field over a few telephone conversations.

71 - The poet Emile Roumer, the novelist Jacques Roumain and the historian Roger Gaillard are intellectual contemporaries of Jean Fouchard generally taken to be mulatto in popular discourse. Roumain's complexion is the lightest of the four. While the other three are of somewhat similar skin tones, Gaillard's hair is not straight like that of Roumer and Fouchard

72 - The film, written and directed by Woody Allen, was released commercially in the United States on April 25, 1979 by United Artists.

73 - I borrow Trouillot's (1995) geographic concept of Europe and its diaspora as the North Atlantic.

74 - Blacks and mulattoes who practice color prejudice as well as those who disavow it made the remark.

75 - PAIN's president Hébert Docteur served as agriculture minister under Duvalier for a little more than a year before the collapse of the regime in February 1986 and again for six months under Martelly. The party endorsed Martelly in the 2<sup>nd</sup> round of the elections after failing to negotiate an endorsement of Mirlande Manigat, who had won the 1<sup>st</sup> round, according to a report by Radio Kiskeya ("Le Parti Agricole Industriel National (PAIN) soutient la candidature à la présidence de Michel Joseph Martelly") accessed at <http://radiokiskeya.com/spip.php?article7541> on April 30, 2014.

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76 - There is similarly no need to speak of freepeople as a privileged formation vis-à-vis “black slaves” as “in that phrase the word ‘black’ is one too many” (Casimir 2000:9).

77 - “Lè w nan peyi blan ou wè tout figi yon sèl koulè/Nanpwen bèl milatrès, bèl marabou, bèl grifonn kreyòl/Ki renmen bèl wòb, bon poud e bon odè/Ni jenn bèl negrès ki konn di bon ti pawòl” - my transcription and translation from a recording (of uncertain date in or before 2008) by Les artistes de Port-au-Prince, using academically correct Haitian orthography. Significantly, in the recording “figi,” for example is pronounced “figu” and “koulè” is “kouleu,” reflecting the background of the singer presumably in the middle classes. Different renditions of the song use (and also edit) different stanzas from the original poem. It is perhaps also socio-politically significant that Emeline Michel, a black singer who is probably the most internationally acclaimed female vocalist from Haiti in the past quarter century, records this stanza but omit the final verse referring to young black negresses.

78 - In the machann’s Haitian, the “e” of the first syllable in “debyen” is invariably accented (the “é” sound in French), whereas Duperval’s is the ideal rounded “e” sound of the privileged classes.

79 - A quite telling example is the Proclamation by black President Nord Alexis on January 1, 1904, the centennial of the Independence, which assertively invokes “the FOUNDER” of the nation and speaks of “this double task that Dessalines assigned to us: to be a people and to represent a race,” while calling “Haitians, my compatriots, to Unity, in order to safeguard our Fatherland, our Race and our Independence.” Color is distinctly kept out of both “race,” the global phenomenon Haiti is held to represent, and “Race,” the national collectivity Haitians specifically constitute. The Proclamation is reproduced in full on the front page of the January 2, 1904 issue of *Le Nouvelliste*.

80 - In *Le Nouvelliste*, December 22, 1959.

81 - The poems appear on page 2 of the *Le Nouvelliste*, January 11, 1960

82 - “Haiti bien représentée en Russie” in *Le Nouvelliste*, October 30, 2013

83 - By her photographs, I assign the characteristics of “peau intermédiaire” (intermediate complexion) and “cheveu intermédiaire” (intermediate hair) used as indices by Labelle in her quantitative survey of color categories assigned to given types.

84 - *Le Nouvelliste*, January 11, 1960

85 - *Le Nouvelliste*, January 8, 1960.

86 - The author was Michel Lamartinière Honorat. The genealogical information transpired in a June 21 letter to Parliament by his nephew Pierre Gousse presenting his credentials as President Michel Martelly’s Prime Minister-designate (his nomination was rejected); copy accessed at <http://www.haitipolicy.org/Gousse.pdf?PHPSESSID=ac7fc5e2a5ea9e24c9cdcbd93ea0aca8> on November 9, 2013. “Mobilisation des duvalieristes pour le centenaire de l’ancien tyran” (The Duvalierists’s Mobilization for the Centenary of the Former Tyrant) was published in written form online by Radio Kiskeya; accessed at <http://radiokiskeya.com/spip.php?article3544> on November 9, 2013.

87 - The self-description could be viewed at [www.cioff.org](http://www.cioff.org), accessed on November 11, 2013

88 - The social situations of the gynecologist’s patients range far up the socio-economic ladder (and across the colorist spectrum), although he did not speak of noticing signs of skin lightening in his middle-class and upper-middle-class patients.

89 - Another tell-tale sign of skin-lightening, which I learned from the divorced middle-class mother, is a contrast in color between a woman’s cleavage and her upper torso or her face. In the expatriate community of south Florida, I was introduced to a black woman married into a prominent mulatto family. Her facial complexion had a matte faded hue that was in distinct contrast to the seemingly natural tone of her neck and arms. We met only briefly and had no significant conversation.

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90 - Although the beautician reaffirmed the number of inputs in the mixture, she did not provide me with any convincing specifics.

91 - The only other individual to use the term in conversation with me during my fieldwork was the mulatto entrepreneur who could not countenance the thought of a white Haitian. He lived in France for several years, and he used the term on no more than a few occasions in casual conversation with me.

92 - I was to find, during the third consecutive CSA conference that we attended together, that his and my paternal families have been close since at least the second generation before mine.

93 - I find these genealogical histories particularly significant, because they entered my research incidentally. My attention began on the family history and lineages on that genealogy constantly led to individuals who materially informed my research in one manner or another, or whom I otherwise encountered peripherally in the field. I only address or allude to these linkages and these individuals.

94 - Or, specifically in the USA, the man might perhaps be presumed to be a “Latino” or a “Hispanic,” as whites with roots in Latin America can be marked in that corner of the European diaspora.

95 - In Haitian practice of the everyday, identification of the black subject can indeed entail the meaningful marking of a determinate distance from what I would call baseline blackness, the darkest complexion presumptively associated with the African origin in the Haitian imaginary. Descriptive references to the person which I had heard in the quotidian vocabulary of Haitians include such Creole phrases as “yon ti gason klè” [a light guy], which might apply to someone the color of the French soccer star Thierry Henry; “yon ti fi brune” [a brown girl], where “brune” denotes not a tanned skin, as it does in French, but skin tone akin to that of US stateswoman Condoleezza Rice; and “eleman nwa a” [the black fellow] for someone of more or less the same skin color as the retired basketball star Michael Jordan. The contractor’s complexion is more or less comparable to that of the US Supreme Court Associate Justice Clarence Thomas or the cinema icon Sidney Poitier; the civil engineer is distinctly darker than Michael Jordan and as dark – perhaps slightly darker yet – than Djimon Hounsou, the African-born actor who starred in the Steven Spielberg-directed film *Amistad*. There might nonetheless be contexts of routine experience in which the difference in the extent of their respective blackness became significant. I have occasionally heard urban black Haitians across class lines, speaking disparagingly of some perceived character flaw or lack of merit, further qualify the subject in question as someone “nwa pase chabon” [blacker than charcoal], or “nwè pase chabon dife” in a more distinctively lower-class idiom, to emphasize the extent of the personal deficiency.

96 - The Tribunal de Paix is the lowest civil court in the Haitian judicial system

97 - As it happens, the wife is from the same coastal city as the intercity bus driver – my occasional driver in the field - who left home to finish secondary school with not much further inroads on the socio-economic ladder and today could not quite understand what is meant by the notion of Haiti as a black Republic.

98 - The fundraiser’s host’s paternal grandparents do not seem to have had any objection to his parents’ union.

99 - MINUSTAH is the Mission des Nations Unies pour la stabilité en Haïti, the United Nations Mission for Stability in Haiti. In giving me a brief overview of some acronyms from the alphabet soup that represents public security forces operating in Haiti, the contractor also mentioned the PNH, the Police nationale d’Haïti, and the GIPNH, the PNH’s “Groupe d’intervention” (Intervention Group), which he called Haiti’s SWAT.

100 - At the time of my fieldwork the cousin was deceased.

101 - Piquion and François Duvalier were close friends and collaborators from their days as classmates in medical school.

102 - Piquion was a champion of negritude in Haiti and was a contributor to thematic encounters in Europe, Africa and the Americas.



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103 - I had recently finished my undergraduate studies in film at New York University. I was at his house to pay my respect after over four years away at school. As a friend of the family, he had shown interest in my intellectual development since my boyhood. The visit took place a week or so after my father's funeral, at which, he would tell me with satisfaction, he was the first to arrive.

104 - Haitian intellectual tradition attributes the saying to Boisrond-Tonnerre, the mulatto *ancien libre* intellectual to whom authorship of the Act is also generally attributed and who was a fiercely loyal aide to Dessalines. He was also assassinated in the days after Dessalines's assassination. This my translation of the original text reproduced by the geographer Jean-Marie Théodat (2003:31).

105 - Benedict Anderson (1983) claims that a hallmark of postcolonial modernity is the universal lack of hatred of Europe in anti-colonial independence. Haiti's modernity, rather than being disproved by Anderson's argument, supports Partha Chatterjee's (1993) critique of Anderson's fundamentally Eurocentric genealogy of nationalism.

106 - Sartre speaks of the abolition of racial rather than color differences.

107 - Unless otherwise noted, I use "European" to denote origins in Europe as well as its diaspora.

108 - It is this situation that is ultimately made formal a century later in the so-called "three-fifths solution," suggests Edward Sammons (private communication), a fellow doctoral candidate in cultural anthropology at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York at the time of my fieldwork. If degradation of the person a priori entails the degradation of the labor power that it bears, Sammons further suggests that the site of racism in the North American working class should be sought in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century legislation of the human worth of the black slave as three-fifths that of the standard. In effect, the racism of the white worker is a reading of devalued labor in the black laborer.

109 - A Pan American Health Organization report on the period of 2007-2009 supports the broad lines of his representation of the agency's progress. Viewed in French online on PAHO's website.

110 - *Avan n vote* means "Before we vote."

111 - The novel is by Franketienne, known as much for his literary output as his painting.

112 - See Daff 1998 on the Senegal situation

113 - The International Organization of Francophony, established in the 1980s as a multilateral agency of states and collectivities with practice of the French language and appreciation of French culture in common. Its seat of decisive power is in Paris. Its budget in 2009 was over 80 million euros.

114 - November 1

115 - I was in Haiti in connection with a film project.

116 - The illiterate and the semi-literate may and do attain positions of political-economic privilege in Haiti, particularly through political patronage, and even the Presidency. However, the literate petite-bourgeoisie finds in their lack of French literacy a mark of unwarranted exception.

117 - To Speak French

118 - My translation of Daff's French citation.

119 - [www.education.gouv.sn](http://www.education.gouv.sn)

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120 - Degraff makes a popular elaboration of his position (in Creole) in the article *Baryè lang an Ayiti: Kreyòl se lang peyi a; se pou sa fòk lekòl fèt an kreyòl* published in the August 30, 20 edition of the primarily French-language Port-au-Prince daily *Le Nouvelliste*.

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