UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO

Fronteras Rebeldes/ Fwontyè Rebèl: Haitian Blackness in the Borderlands

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in

Ethnic Studies

by

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2023

The Dissertation of Katherine Wallis Steelman is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically.

University of California San Diego

2023

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family in recognition of their unending care and support that made the work possible. To my three grandparents who are no longer in this plane of existence, my nana Betty Jane McGowan, everything I do is a reflection of the things you taught me, most important of which was the radical possibilities of love, something at the root of this project. To my grandpa Joseph Emmanuel Harry Rollin, it brings me great sadness that you are not physically here to read this dissertation that centers on my connection to you and to your mother's family, but our conversations were and are my source of inspiration. To my pop-pop Richard Stephenson, I didn't have that big party you wanted; it just wouldn't have been the same without you. To my living grandmother Esther Russ, thank you for your honesty and creativity. You taught me how to be strong in the face of unimaginable hardship. To Kathleen Walsh Penn, your brilliance and love for life have impacted my own journey immeasurably. To my mother and my step-father, you have supported me every step of the way. Every time I fell down, you were there to pick me up. To my father, thank you for teaching me to be critical of the world around me. To my siblings, and to my children Julius and Odette, thank you for your love and your humor – they got me through many hard times. To my partner Patricia Zambrano this work is yours as well.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Fronteras Rebeldes/ Fwontyè Rebèl: Haitian Blackness in the Borderlands

by

Katherine Wallis Steelman

Doctor of Philosophy in Ethnic Studies

University of California San Diego, 2023

Professor Shelley Streeby, Chair
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In the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, 3,000 Haitian migrants rebuilt their lives in Tijuana. Black Haitians in Tijuana are living with the legacies of slavery and colonialism, one of which is racialized sexuality. Their arrival in Tijuana makes visible the intersection of the construction of racialized sexualities in response to long histories of U.S.

imperialism. My dissertation, "Fronteras Rebeldes/ Fwontyè Rebèl: Haitian Blackness in the Borderlands," brings together the fields of Critical Refugee Studies, Media Studies, and Black Diaspora Studies through a queer of color lens. I consider how race and sexuality intersect in Tijuana, a place which has long been imagined both as a liberatory space and as a city of vice. Taking up this body of work, I analyze how race and non-normative sexuality interact in early 20th-century U.S. cultural production about Tijuana. I suggest that an analysis of cultural texts about Haiti and Tijuana reveals how imperialism and racialized sexuality shape the ways Haitian migrants in Tijuana are being perceived, written about, and treated in the contemporary moment. More specifically, my dissertation focuses on early 20th-century U.S. interventions in Haiti and Mexico as well as the borderlands in these regions to examine the relationships among imperialism, cultural production, and racialized sexuality. My genealogy of these relationships provides a foundation on which to understand the experiences of Haitian migrants in present day Tijuana.

My first chapter, ""Dance Around the Border Like I'm Cassius Clay": Haiti, Mexico, and U.S. News Media," juxtaposes "The Latest Revolution in Haiti," an article published in the *New York Times* in 1915 the day after U.S. marines invaded Haiti, to editorials by prominent Black writers W.E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington that pushed back on this account. I examine the ways in which the Mexico/U.S. border has historically been and continues to be militarized, sexualized, and racialized. My second chapter, ""Love, and man's unconquerable mind": Representations of Haitian Spirituality, Race, and Sexuality in Comic Books," investigates racialization, sexuality, and resistance in comics of Mexico, Haiti, and the U.S. from the early 20th century to the present to illuminate how comics have historically been used to shape imperial racial formations but in the contemporary moment are being

adapted to imagine new worlds outside of white supremacist, imperialist territory. I focus on Mexican comic character Memín Pinguin, created in 1943 by Yolanda Vargas Dulché, who invented the comics after observing black children on a trip to Cuba. The comics, in which Memín and his mother are the only Afro-descended people, take cues from U.S. minstrel cartoons of the early 20th century and are a staple in Mexican culture. While weekly issues continue to be reprinted and sold widely, they were at the height of their popularity in the 1970s and 1980s and helped to inform an entire generation's racial beliefs. I also analyze the Marvel comic book character Brother Voodoo, which draws on racist Haitian stereotypes and has been featured in comics as recently as the early 2000s. As well, I consider the worldmaking possibilities of Haiti's own superhero, Tamana, and what she represents to her fans in Haiti and the diaspora. My third chapter, "You are less alive than the trees": Bodies and Borders in North American Zombie Cinema", explores the zombie films of Haiti, the U.S. and Mexico. The section on Mexico specifically examines cinema of Mexico's Golden Age of Cinema, which was part of a national project instituted by the PRI (Partido Revolucionario Institucional), Mexico's ruling party at the time. One race-making tactic of the PRI was to use cinema to erase or marginalize blackness in Mexico to give lip service to the ideals of the Mexican Revolution, which partly involved defining what it meant to be a citizen of the Mexican nation by valorizing mestizaje – an identity category describing people of mixed indigenous and European decent that evolved into a nationalistic political and social category. Here I analyze *Santo Contra Los Zombis* (1962) and *Santo Contra la Magia Negra* (1972), which is set in Haiti and builds upon earlier racializations and sexualizations. Finally, my epilogue, "Performa as Resistance: Byenveni nan Ayitiwana/Bienvenidos a Haitíjuana/Welcome to Haiti-juana" turns to performance in Haiti and Tijuana, including

dance performances put on by Haitian migrants. I draw on queer-of-color critique and performance studies to reveal the world-making possibilities of these acts. I hope my focus on resistance to racist representations contributes to conversations about the radical power of Haitian and Haitian diasporic cultural production.

Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION

"Tijuana is one of these backdoor cities, cities that challenge intelligibility, that exceed the interpretive frames…Thus the city is directly related with the agencies of the queer masses and the necessity to begin to establish a movement of radical, transfeminist critique…"
- Sayak Valencia

"In order to understand the enduring fear and hatred that shapes the U.S. government's contemporary conduct toward Haiti, one must grapple with a much older story—a tale that stretches back to a time when nothing seemed more terrifying to white people around the world than the rise of a sovereign Black nation."
- Leslie M. Alexander

"Los atravesados live here: the squint eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulato, the half-breed, the half dead; in short, those who cross over, pass over, or go through the confines of the "normal."
- Gloria Anzaldúa

As I sit and write this, I am looking at a photo of my great-grandmother Marguerite Brisson, who was born in 1894 in Port au Prince, Haiti and died in 1963 in Coyoacan, Distrito Federal, Mexico. She stares back at me from the photo with an expression that I can't read. She died twenty years before I was born, but she is really where this project begins. Almost everything I know about her and her family are things I have learned from traditional archival sources: ship's logs, census records, my aunt's wedding certificate, and her own death certificate. On various documents her race shifts, from "African" to "Haytian," "West Indian" to "White." Her Mexican death certificate lists her place of birth as "Puerto Principe, Hayti" but her nationality as "Francesa." She was not French.

Figure 1 Photo from a travel document featuring Marguerite Brisson de Rollin and her daughters Jeannette and Odette 1927, Santiago de Cuba.

I have learned a lot about my family's history in Haiti since I started this project. This is in large part due to help from family members doing genealogical work, including my mother's cousin Marc Vieux. My great grandmother Marguerite Brisson was not "half-Haitian and half-Italian" as my grandfather had told me. The bloodlines of both her parents, Henri Brission and Clothilde Longinotti, can be traced back to before the revolution in Haiti on both sides. My great grandmother's family was an important part of the mulatto elite, the ruling class of Haiti after the revolution. Her father Henri founded the Port-au-Prince chamber of commerce. Her mother's ancestor was Samuel Dupree, a Black man born in 1800 in South Carolina who made a new life in Haiti. Her aunt married the uncle of Catts Pressoir, the historian who, along with Haitian historian Michel Trouillot's father and uncle, started a society on Haitian history and published

the first history of Haiti written by Haitians (this book was published in Mexico in 1952). Her nephew, my grandfather's first cousin, was Richard Brisson, a queer poet and radio host who was killed by the military forces of Jean Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier regime in a failed invasion attempt in 1982. My grandfather told me almost nothing about this history as I was growing up because of his own internalized racism. He knew who his family in Haiti was, because he had visited them, but he only told me about it when I finally asked him in 2016.

In 1955 my grandfather Joseph Emmanuel Rollin, along with my grandmother Esther, who was pregnant with my mother's older brother Pierre, traveled to the Dominican Republic, to what was then called Ciudad Trujillo, now Santo Domingo, to work in hospitality at the 1955 World's Fair. While there, Joseph left my grandmother for a week so that he could travel to Haiti to meet his grandfather Henri Brisson. As I suggest above, his grandfather founded the chamber of commerce in PAP and was a wealthy merchant and landowner. My grandfather told me that he went to the Brisson villa, where his grandfather had Black servants who waited on them.

My grandfather did not want to view his mother or his grandfather as Black. They were a part of the Haitian mulatto elite, and in my grandfather's eyes they were white, or white enough. This is because, according to the caste system in place in Haiti, members of the mulatto upper class (5 percent of Haiti's population today) have historically had access to the power and privilege afforded to those with a proximity to whiteness. For example, in the case of my own family, my grandfather's parents had the means and opportunity to leave Haiti for Cuba shortly after they were married, and eventually settled in Mexico City. Their journey was one of choice and relative ease, unlike those leaving Haiti for Mexico now. My great-grandmother's skin color made it possible for her to move through the world with her identity obscured and made it possible for her Mexican death certificate from 1962 to list her place of birth as Haiti, but her

nationality as “Francesa.”

This is where my project begins, thinking about how Haitian Blackness is read and represented in Mexico. Why think about this? Because as I write, sitting 7 miles from the Tijuana/San Diego, border, over 4,000 Haitian migrants are rebuilding their lives in Tijuana. This migration was fueled by the 2010 earthquake and disastrous foreign intervention in its aftermath. In a 2004 article titled "Haití: la maldición blanca," Eduardo Galeano argues that, since its independence, Haiti has been cursed by white imperial powers for being the site of the first successful slave rebellion. Much scholarship has been produced, including that of Sarah Juliet Lauro (2015), Manoucheka Celeste (2013), and Robert Lawless (1992), about the ways in which dominant media has been complicit in narrating this "curse”. *New York Times* articles dating back to 1915 helped lay the foundation for the vilification of Haiti. Similarly, Tijuana itself is also a place that has been vilified in mainstream U.S. media. During the Mexican Revolution and then again during prohibition, *New York Times* coverage of the Mexico/U.S. border, and Tijuana in particular, resonates with much of the racialized and sexualized stereotyping we see in contemporary U.S. cultural production about Tijuana.

Today in Mexico and the U.S., there is increasing news coverage of Haitian migration to Tijuana that builds upon long histories of representations of both Haiti and Tijuana. While Tijuana has been racialized and sexualized as a city of unregulated vice and sexual excess in the dominant culture of both Mexico and the U.S., Haiti has been represented as a space of racialized and sexualized savagery. Mexico is also sometimes represented as a state of savagery, but this anti-Haitianism is a very particular racialization that developed in response to the Haitian Revolution and Haitian spiritual knowledge rooted in African and indigenous Taino traditions. In Latin America, anti-Haitian Blackness emerges as a trope for bolstering mestizaje, a foundational

Mexican racial project that promotes racial mixing while idealizing whiteness. Representations that situate Afro-Haitian spirituality as savage and evil may serve to distance Mexican audiences from their own Black ancestry.

In what follows, I argue that a relational analysis of cultural production about Haiti and Tijuana can provide an understanding of how imperialism and racialized sexuality shape the ways that Haitian migrants in Tijuana are being perceived, written about, and treated in the contemporary moment, and about the ways some Haitians are representing themselves. I analyze anti-Haitianism in Mexican and U.S. popular culture, beginning with an examination of the *New York Times* at the turn of the twentieth century, moving to an analysis of comic books from the U.S., Mexico, and Haiti, then to a discussion of films that represent the Haitian zombie myth, and closing with a brief analysis of performance as resistance in Tijuana, Haiti, and the diaspora as another site of possibility and world-making. These particular cultural archives emerged for me through my own consumption of and interaction with media. I grew up reading comic books and watching horror movies, and as I got older and began thinking critically about representation, I started seeing a pattern in discourse about Haiti that was showing up everywhere I looked, from the pages of *Spider-Man* to the seemingly disparate Zora Neal Hurston's *Tell My Horse.* When I began engaging with queer spaces in Tijuana in the early 2000s, I saw connections between how Tijuana was represented and the portrayals of Haiti I had been thinking about. These connections stood out to me because of my own family's history of migrating to Mexico from Haiti, and later, because of the thousands of Haitian migrants that finally began making their way to Tijuana in 2014, four years after the earthquake. I understood the deeper connections between Haiti and Tijuana when I thought about the common saying among migrants, "we're here because you were there." Discourses about Haiti and Tijuana have

been shaped by U.S. imperialism in both countries from at least the early 20th century to the present.

I explore the ways cultural production about Haitian Blackness has been a component of Western imperialism and white supremacy, and the ways in which Black Haitian artists have pushed back against these representations or offered entirely different visons. In Anne McClintock's 1995 analysis of race, class, gender, and European imperialism, *Imperial Leather*, she asserts that "From the outset, people's experiences of desire and rage, memory and power, community and revolt are inflected and mediated by the institutions through which they find their meaning—and which they, in turn, transform" (15). The case studies I examine reveal significant connections among Haitian, Mexican, and U.S. history and culture from the early 20th U.S. interventions in Mexico and Haiti to the contemporary moment. My dissertation considers how cultural texts about Haitian Blackness are rooted in and responding to white supremacist anxiety around Black freedom and in particular how Haiti, as potent symbol not only of Black freedom but also of Black vengeance, serves as a locus of an array of cultural discourses around notions of race, gender, sexuality, monstrosity, and humanity.

Drawing from the formulations of Gregory Pierrot, my analysis assumes that cultural production centered on Haitian Blackness is responding to and undergirding a very particular anti-Haitian Blackness in response to the Haitian Revolution. Pierrot discusses this in terms of what he calls the Black avenger trope, a cultural formation centered around Black revenge against white masters and intricately linked to sexuality and rape. He calls the Haitian Revolution, "arguably the most formidable achievement of Black collective agency in the Americas: the Black avenger trope was designed in preparation for such an event, and ever since it occurred has played a central role in what Michel-Rolph Trouillot has called the "silencing" of

the revolution's history." Trouillot (1995) argues that the Haitian revolution, enslaved Black people rebelling to overthrow slavery and form their own society, was unthinkable in 1791, and in some ways, is still unthinkable in the present moment. Jasbir Puar (2002) famously makes the connection between the racial and sexual monsters of eighteenth and nineteenth century literature and the modern figure of the terrorist. This connection is drawn out and extended to Haitian migrants at the Mexico/U.S. Border by Chloe Diamond-Lenow, who argues in her analysis of weaponized and militarized masculinity that the AP photographs of Haitian migrants being whipped by white border patrol agents on horseback harken back to images of U.S. chattel slavery and to what she calls "cowboy masculinity." She states, "Analysis of such cases could further ask how animals are instrumentalized towards masculinist violence and the affects of such maneuvers" (150).

This very scene, the most visible example of anti-Haitian Blackness in contemporary U.S. discourse, is also taken up by Leslie Alexander in the introduction to her 2022 book on Black internationalism and Haiti, *Fear of a Black Republic*. She writes, "In order to understand the enduring fear and hatred that shapes the U.S. government's contemporary conduct toward Haiti, one must grapple with a much older story—a tale that stretches back to a time when nothing seemed more terrifying to white people around the world than the rise of a sovereign Black nation" (Alexander Introduction). This terror that both Alexander and Pierrot describe as being anticipatory before the Haitian Revolution was made real when Black rebels in Haiti succeeded in overthrowing France and establishing the first Black republic.

Citing Jean Casmir's recent bottom-up look at post-revolutionary Haitian history, Alexander cautions readers to remember that Haiti, as Casmir asserts, may not have been a free Black republic in practice, but it was just that in the eyes of the West. Casmir's book rests on the

claim that Haitian exceptionalism and the naming of Haiti as the first free Black state are inaccurate and in fact, erase the experiences of the majority of post-revolutionary Haitians. Casmir writes, "The racial consciousness and pride of the Haitian oligarchs of the nineteenth century were built on a disdain for Africa. In order to protect the social order offered by the Christian, racist West, they took on the project of rendering local culture invisible" (20). As I show, the embrace and uplift of Africanness and of Haitian popular culture rooted in African traditions by the ruling class of Haiti happened in the late nineteenth and early 20th century thanks to figures such as Antenor Fermin, Jean Price-Mars, Jacques Roumain and Antonio Vieux, the latter two of whom spearheaded the Haitian Indigénisme movement of the 1920s in resistance to the U.S occupation. (Dayan 1977)

In this dissertation, I gather texts that fall into the category of popular culture in order to consider their political power. In addition to newspapers, I include cultural texts with less prestige among historians, such as films, comics, social media, and performance. My interest in these specific cultural forms is precisely due to their appeal and availability. To analyze these texts, I am building on Stuart Hall's formulation that cultural studies is not fundamentally an intellectual pursuit but rather a project rooted in politics. While Hall makes this claim to explain the foundation of the field as a response to questions about postwar culture and race in British society, the question of how popular culture, imperialism, and race interact is central to this study. As Hall states, "The media play a part in the formation, in the constitution of the things they reflect… The reality of race in any society is, so to speak, to coin a phrase, media mediated" (1989). For this reason, in "Fronteras Rebeldes" I examine how specific ideas about Haitian Blackness are created, transformed, and destroyed through cultural production.

As Elizabeth Anna Steeby puts it, "A cultural studies approach affords a more complex

view of how texts make meaning in relation to the social forces at work in a given moment" (11). I am inspired by the ongoing cultural studies work of scholars such as Vanessa Agard-Jones, José Esteban Muñoz, Anne McClintock, and Ann Stoler. I implicitly and explicitly look to the work of scholars such as Angela Davis, Hazel Carby, Paul Gilroy, Christina Sharpe, Hortense Spillers, and Saidiya Hartman for models of inquiry and approaches to Black Diasporic cultural history. While I did most of my reading and research for this project in English and am writing from a U.S. perspective, I want to note that this study aims to contribute to a methodological shift in queer theory that names a lack of attention to scholars writing in languages other than English and from positions other than the U.S. and Europe.

In "Queer African Studies and Directions in Methodology," Julie Moreau and T.J. Tallie contend that while much of the scholarship they discuss is written by scholars working out of the U.S., "the productive potential of queer African studies lies within its ability to find theorizing and models within the continent." I am also interested in Moreau's and Tallie's discussion of the word queer being used in scholarship by Western authors about the global South. They recognize that the word had both liberatory potential and limitations in its ability to describe African sexual practices that are considered non-normative.

Tijuana scholar Sayak Valencia enters this discussion by tracing the etymology of the word queer, questioning the word's utility in a Latin American context and proposing an alternative, Tijuana Cuir. The latter term locates the geographic specificity of the population she is discussing and also makes a statement about the city itself being a cuir space specifically because it lies on the border of a rich nation and a poor nation, in what she terms a sacrifice zone. She writes, "within these boundary zones, double dynamics are established that make these territories a space where anything goes, that is to say, they are considered the garage of the two

countries" (5). This idea of the border as a space where anything goes is perpetuated in both U.S. and Mexican popular culture in ways that are both sexualized and racialized.

Erin Durban discusses the notion of queer space in a specifically Haitian context, tracing the roots of words used to describe sexually non-normative individuals in Haitian Kreyol. I also draw on Durban's argument that in Haiti, homophobia itself is linked to two colonial legacies, Catholicism and Evangelical missionary activity, and that contemporary homophobia is wrapped up in neocolonial efforts to fight this homophobia. Durban explains that the processes enact a postcolonial homophobia, defined "as compounded effects of historical and contemporary Western imperialist biopolitical interventions to regulate/manage/control/govern/liberate gender and sexuality." The effect of these imperial processes, according to Durban, is that Western countries have historically seen Haiti as "too queer" and at the same time have come to see Haiti as "too homophobic" (2023 9). While Durban goes on to explore the relationship between colonial legacies and contemporary conflicts between Haitian evangelicals and Western LGBTQ rights organizations, I build on her argument in an analysis of how cultural production about Haitian Blackness and sexuality in the U.S., Mexico and from within Haiti itself interact in ways that are both harmful and liberatory.

This dissertation examines the relations between among Haiti, Mexico, and the U.S. to show how cultural production became a tool of U.S. imperialism and white supremacy in the Western Hemisphere in the early 20th century, and the ways that cultural production can be used as a powerful tool for liberation. Omi and Winant state that the United States, once a racial despotism (evidenced by Jim Crow laws, for example) has, in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, transitioned into a racial hegemony in which the racial hierarchy that has formed the foundation of the U.S. since its founding is no longer policed primarily through force but rather

through ideas, which requires some level of consent. A primary avenue of achieving this racial hegemony is the proliferation of ideas about race through media.

Why then do I consider the specific triangulation of these ideas among Haiti, the U.S., and Mexico? Stuart Hall's documentary video about Haiti, *Redemption Song: Out of Africa* asks a question that I would like to consider: "Why is it that most people have come to think of Haiti simply as a place of political instability which erupts onto their screens in bouts of violence?". We can answer Hall's question by turning to his own theories of representation. The representations themselves, the news stories about violence in Haiti, are making meaning, or as Hall states, the representation is constitutive of the event (Hall 1984). The way "most people" think of Haiti today is in a large part made up of representations about Haiti, but who are these "most people" that Hall is referring to? It seems that this group does not include Haitians, and neither does it include the majority of people in the global South, who were not likely viewing Haitian political instability on their TV sets. Hall is referencing the way Haiti is represented by the U.S. and British media specifically. This points to Western cultural imperialism, in which the West is hegemonic, becoming unmarked, and the global South is marginalized and becomes the Other. In this video documentary, where Hall is meaning to center Africa as being present and important everywhere in the world, particularly in Haiti, he is excluding most Africans from the group he names "most people" because in 1990, when the film was made, Africa had the least number of households with televisions on the planet.

What if we rewind the clock 3 quarters of a century to 1915? Most people in the West were forming ideas about the world and global events through popular culture, primarily newspapers, radio, popular music, dime novels, and early cinema. Hall explains the relationship of popular culture to hegemony, stating, "Popular culture is one of the sites where this struggle

for and against a culture of the powerful is engaged: it is also the stake to be won or lost in that struggle. It is the arena of consent and resistance. It is partly where hegemony arises, and where it is secured" (Hall 1981 p.361). I am interested in teasing out how popular culture interacted with U.S. imperialism in Mexico and Haiti in the early 20th century, the later part of that century, and continues to do so in the contemporary moment, as ideas being imagined and circulated about these spaces and the bodies that inhabit them are having material effects on those people, many of them Haitian, who inhabit the Mexico/U.S. borderlands.

My genealogy of these relationships provides a foundation on which to understand the experiences of Haitian migrants in present day Tijuana. Chapter One, ""Dance Around the Border Like I'm Cassius Clay": Haiti, Mexico, and U.S. News Media," begins with the *New York Times* coverage of Frederick Douglass's tenure as U.S. Minister to Haiti. The chapter also juxtaposes "The Latest Revolution in Haiti," an article published in the *New York Times* in 1915, the day after U.S. Marines invaded Haiti, with editorials by W.E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington that pushed back on this account. I then examine *New York Time*s representations of the Mexico/U.S. border and coverage of the U.S. intervention in the Mexican Revolution. Last, I analyze how discourses about Tijuana as a city of vice were constructed in the *New York Times* during prohibition. My discussion of these representations focuses on how Haiti and Mexico were being racialized and sexualized in tandem with struggles over imperialism.

In the second chapter, ""Love, and man's unconquerable mind": Representations of Haitian Spirituality, Sexuality, and Humanity in Comic Books," I investigate racialization, sexuality, and resistance in comics produced in Mexico, Haiti, and the U.S. from the early 20th century to the present to illuminate how comics have historically been used to shape imperial racial formations but in the contemporary moment are being adapted to imagine new worlds

outside of white supremacist, imperialist territory. I focus on Mexican comic character Memín Pinguin, created in 1943 by Yolanda Vargas Dulché, who invented the comics after observing Black children on a trip to Cuba. The comics, in which Memín and his mother are the only Afro-descendant people, take cues from U.S. minstrel cartoons of the early 20th century and are a staple in Mexican culture. While weekly issues continue to be reprinted and sold widely, they were at the height of their popularity in the 1970s and 1980s and helped to inform an entire generation's racial beliefs. I also analyze the Marvel comic book character Brother Voodoo, who draws on racist Haitian stereotypes and has been featured in comics as recently as the early 2000s. As well, I consider the worldmaking possibilities of Haiti's own superhero, Tanama, and what she represents to her fans in Haiti and the diaspora.

In my third chapter, ""Listen to my zombi voice": The Haitian Zombi in North American Cinema," I explore film representations of the Haitian zombie, first in U.S. horror movies about migrants, which often take place on the border between Mexico and the U.S. and showcase social anxieties about immigration while employing a trope that casts Black bodies and spiritual ways of knowing as monstrous. I then discuss the cinema of Mexico's Golden Age, which was part of a national project instituted by the PRI, Mexico's ruling party at the time. One race-making tactic of the PRI was to use cinema to erase or marginalize Blackness in Mexico to give lip service to the ideals of the Mexican Revolution, which partly involved defining what it meant to be a citizen of the Mexican nation by valorizing mestizaje – an identity category devised to classify people of mixed indigenous and European decent that became a nationalistic political and social category[1]. Here I analyze *Santo Contra Los Zombis* (1962) as well as *Santo Contra la*

[1] The PRI was giving lip service to the ideals of the Mexican Revolution while recruiting capitalist investors to undermine the ideals.

Magia Negra (1972), which is set in Haiti and builds upon the earlier film's racialization and sexualization. Finally, I discuss Haitian director Arnold Antonin's film, *L'amour d'un Zombi,* which explores love as an antidote for dehumanization. This film exemplifies Haitian cultural resistance to tropes circulated by the U.S. and Mexico by showing the zombie not as a monster but as a victim who overcomes his oppression.

In my epilogue, "Performance as Resistance: Byenveni nan Ayitiwana/Bienvenidos a Haitíjuana/Welcome to Haiti-juana," I think through the complexities of freedom as an ideal through a discussion of my uncle, Haitian poet, performer and martyr Richard Brisson. I relate this conversation to contemporary performance in Tijuana, including dance performances put on by Haitian migrants at a migrant aid center called Casa Migrante. Considering the centuries-long history of Haitian art and performance as militant resistance, I draw on queer-of-color critique and performance studies to reveal the world-making possibilities of these performances. Overall, I hope my focus on resistance to racist representations will contribute to conversations about the radical power of Haitian and Haitian diasporic cultural production.

Chapter 2 "Dance Around the Border Like I'm Cassius Clay": Haiti, Mexico, and U.S. News Media

In mid-September 2021, Haitian migrants in Mexico made U.S. national news as 14,000 people attempted to seek asylum at the border between Del Rio, Texas and Ciudad Acuna, Mexico, and were met with what can only be described as anti-Black racism, defined by Lewis Gordon as "the attitude and practice that involve the construction of Black people as fundamentally inferior and subhuman." (1995) We see this practice clear as day in the press photos and video footage of white Border Patrol agents whipping Haitian people with the reins of their horses, depictions which circulated on the Internet, causing outrage and moving the White House to condemn the actions of the agents, call them "outrageous," and state that people would be punished. Ultimately no one was punished.

In the aftermath of this event, music scholar and cultural critic Josh Kun published a blog post featuring a Spotify playlist he made entitled "I Refugee from Guantánamo Bay: A Playlist for Haiti." In the blog post he gave some context for the famous line from the 1996 Fugees song, "Ready or Not," in which rapper Pras Michel states, "I refugee from Guantánamo Bay/ dance around the border like I'm Cassius Clay." This line and the music video for the song refer to the detention of Haitian migrants at Guantánamo Bay that began in 1991, as people fled Haiti in the tens of thousands on boats after the ouster of democratically elected Jean-Bertrand Aristide by Lieutenant General Raoul Cedras. The detention of Haitian migrants at Guantánamo Bay continued until 1994 and marked the first use of the naval base as a prison.

This event, however, is not the first connection that Guantánamo Bay has to Haiti/U.S. relations. To understand how deep these linkages go, we must turn to the year 1891, and the first major story about Haiti covered in the *New York Times*, the potential acquisition of a Haitian port, Môle-Saint-Nicolas, as a U.S. Navy coaling station.

In fact, this story begins long before 1891, going back at least to December 6, 1492, the feast day

of St. Nicholas, and the day Cristoforo Colombo first landed on the Taino island of Quisqueya, in the eastern region known as Hayti. Because of the date, the bay was named San Nicolas and renamed Môle-Saint-Nicolas by the French colonizers. In 1764 the bay was once again the center of international drama when the French tried to establish a colony of Acadians (whose descendants are known as Cajuns) at the site.[2] These colonists had been expelled from their colony in what is now Nova Scotia. The colony in Mole St. Nicholas failed because the man appointed to govern the project, Bertand de Saltoris, was both corrupt and cruel. By the time the governor of Saint-Domingue visited the colony in July 1764, four months after the Acadian's arrival, 104 of the 556 colonists had died, and the survivors were near death themselves. The majority left for New Orleans shortly after and the colony was abandoned.

In 1981, the United States identified the bay as a prime location for a coaling station for its navy. This wasn't the first time the idea had been considered. Scholars have also argued that it was the U.S. acquisition of California that created interest in the U.S. occupation of Mole St. Nicholas. According to Montague, "the acquisition of California turned the U.S. toward Haiti. California required an isthmus, and U.S. would need to protect it. There were only three options in 1849 when U.S. was looking--Danish St. Thomas; Dominican Samana Bay and Mole St. Nicolas" (Montague 94). Here we have our first triangulation of the U.S., Mexico, and Haiti: as the U.S. took over half of Mexico's territory, it set its sights on Haiti.

Increasing U.S. imperialism at the start of the 20th century is paramount in understating the historical relationship between Haiti, Mexico, and the United States. The U.S.-Mexico War ended on February 2, 1848 with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo and the cession of California, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas to the United States. In the treaty, the two countries recognized the Rio Grande as their shared border. It is of particular interest that as this

[2] See Hodson Chapter 3 for a history of the Acadians in Haiti.

boundary was being created, the U.S. began exploring Haiti as a potential site of occupation in the interest of protecting this new expansion. Discussing U.S. imperial interests in Haiti, Montague writes, "The historical accident of Haiti's location on the Windward Passage has given that country a significance to the United States out of proportion to its size and resources. The republic's unique character as an independent negro state has made the association a peculiar one" (Montague ix). Here, Montague is acknowledging that Black freedom made the relationship between the two countries "peculiar."

As the U.S. was ending its conflict in Mexico and gaining a large swath of that country, it was also setting its imperialistic sights on Haiti. In 1848 in Haiti, a new government was just getting underway. Known as the Second Empire of Haiti, the nation was ruled by president Faustin Soloque, who would declare himself Emperor within 10 years. As Haiti was establishing its second empire, Mole St. Nicholas became an attractive bargaining chip, but the U.S. thought it could get a better deal for Dominican Samana Bay, since the Dominican Republic was politically unstable and needed protection from a feared invasion by Haiti. Ultimately the U.S. did not secure Samana Bay as a coaling station and the DR was re-annexed by Spain in 1861. The other option the U.S. was exploring was Danish-controlled St. Thomas. This effort was squashed by the Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs, which tabled the bill in 1870. One reason that the United States was not eager to secure the Mole as a coaling station at this time is that Haiti was embroiled in civil war from 1867-1869 and the desperate Haitian president Sylvain Salnave as well as the rebel leader Fabre Geffrard offered Môle-Saint-Nicolas to the United States on more than one occasion during this period. These offers were rejected for various reasons, including a demand by Salnave that the U.S. pay Haiti's French debt in return for rights to the Mole, but ultimately because the U.S. was not going to make a deal with a faltering government that could be out of power at any moment. Also, a development had occurred that made the necessity of a

sea-route to California less pressing — the completion of the Transcontinental Railway in 1869. This did not completely end the need for a naval base in the Caribbean, however.

When Benjamin Harrison gave his inaugural address in March 1889, he emphasized the U.S. Navy's need for convenient coaling stations and soon set his sights on Môle-Saint-Nicolas. The renewed interest in naval operations in the Caribbean was due to the fact that the French were constructing a canal in Panama. In the same year, Harrison appointed Frederick Douglass as U.S. ambassador to Haiti, with the goal in mind of securing the Môle. In the mere 26 years that had passed since the emancipation proclamation, the U.S. political system was already keenly aware of the power of the Black vote. Douglass stumped for Harrison and Harrison paid him for this service with the diplomatic post in Haiti. Although Douglass was considered the most prominent Black person in the U.S. political arena, his appointment as minister to Haiti was criticized by Black republicans as being too minor a position for so great a man, and by white republicans who thought that Douglass would be biased toward Haitians because of their shared race, and paradoxically, that Haitians would be more likely to respect, and thus offer concessions to, a white ambassador. In fact, Douglass was not against broader U.S. influence in Haiti and did make a good faith effort to advance U.S. imperialism in the Caribbean by securing a U.S. lease on the Môle but ultimately this failed due to a lack of trust on the part of his superiors and to interference by the Unites States press, most significantly the *New York Times*.

Douglass was appointed ambassador to Haiti against the express wishes of those already plotting over Haitian shipping concerns and the possibility of U.S. control over the Môle. This cast of characters included Secretary of State James G. Blaine, Admiral Bancroft Gherardi, and William P. Clyde, president of the West India Steamship Company. These men all had a part in what would become known as the Môle Affair. When Harrison was entering the White House, a new government was taking power in Port Au Prince as well. President Florvil Hippolyte had just won a civil war against French-backed

François Légitime, with help from the U.S. As soon as Douglass was dispatched to Haiti, Blaine set in motion a plan to secure the Môle, while Douglass reacted in a letter to Blaine, mentioning the coverage of the issue in the Unites States press:

> "In view of the numerous articles which have appeared… in American journals, relative to an alleged purpose of the United States to gain some sort of foothold at the Mole, and in view also of what appears to me to be an extreme sensitiveness of the Haytian people generally on the subject of any possible alienation of their territory, it is but natural that those opposed to the existing administration should avail themselves of the circumstance to try to create the impression, particularly among the less favored classes, that already the preliminary steps have been taken to "sell the country to the Americans." (Douglass to Blaine No.17)

Douglass is referring here to coverage like the article that ran in the *New York Times* on October 24, 1889, covering Douglass's arrival in Haiti. The headline read: "THE ONLY HOPE FOR HAYTI: WHITE MEN MUST DEVELOP THE COUNTRY." The article comments on the pattern of violent overthrow of governments in Haiti (failing, of course, to acknowledge that this pattern, then as now, was caused in no small part by the U.S. selling weapons to Haiti). The article goes on to state that this pattern can only be stopped through white intervention in the Black republic. As the article suggests, "And still the one thing Haiti needs is an infusion of white blood. Here is a country incomparably rich, with a Black population of about a million, torn piecemeal every few years by internal revolutions; poor, helpless, degraded, despised by the world." This article is a racial and imperial project as it draws on tropes about Haitian Blackness to construct its argument that white imperialism is superior to Black freedom. The article goes on to give examples of alleged Haitian mismanagement of resources, saying the country's coffee is of high quality, but no one bothers to cultivate or clean it properly, that the forests abound with fine lumber but there is no organization to capitalize on it, and that mining precious metals has been outlawed "for fear the hated white will come in seeking them." The solution to these ills, the article argues, is white intervention in Haiti, which will happen inevitably, according to the author: "Just as soon as it is permitted, white capital and white energy will flow in here. Plantations will be bought,

and the right to cut the precious wood will be purchased by whites." The article continues painting this white-supremacist-utopia that Haiti could, and according to the article, would become: "Every such settlement will become a centre of law and order. Labor will be better paid. Intelligent methods of agriculture will be diffused, and so hostages will be given for the preservation of peace. There is no hope for Hayti save this, and no alternative — which will come some day if she continues insulting civilization — but an armed occupation" ("THE ONLY HOPE FOR HAITI").

The incendiary rhetoric being spouted in the article was not taken lightly by Hippolyte's government and contributed to a climate in which any cession of Haitian territory would be an act from which the government could not recover and would lead to Hippolyte's ouster. This is even acknowledged in the article when the author turns to direct discussion of the Môle, stating that both Hippolyte and Légitime "dangled it temptingly, but that there is likely no recorded proof of an offer." The article goes on to state that it is widely known in Washington that Blaine's first move will be to attempt to gain control of the Môle but that "Légitime was right when he said that no Government that conceded St. Nicolas Mole to the foreigner could last in Hayti." All of this was undoubtedly very alarming to Douglass, newly arrived in Hayti and tasked with maintaining diplomatic relations with a new government which, if the *New York Times* was correct (and in this case they were) was about to be pressured by the U.S. to give them something that their people would not allow to be ceded.

The article not only focused on Haiti's supposed shortcomings, supposed racial inferiority, and U.S. imperialist designs but also offered its readers a passage about Douglass's positionality as a formerly enslaved Black person. The author notes that the date Douglass sailed for Haiti, September 30th, 1889, coincided with the exact date in 1838 that he arrived in New York after escaping the antebellum south, "a fugitive slave without friends, money, or food, and spent the night on the cotton bales. The same day, just fifty-one years later, that slave embarks on the most famous warship in active

service today in the world, the Minister of the United States to a foreign country. It seems almost incredible that such great changes can have been viewed in the short space of one human life." In this short paragraph the author seems to strip Douglass of all agency, making him almost a passive ship on the tide of history, "viewing" the changes that brought him from the position of enslaved person to foreign minister. Finally, the article comments on the "advisability" of sending a Black person to fill a diplomatic role (although a number of previous U.S. Ministers to Haiti were Black Republicans). The author writes that "while there can be little doubt that it is not generally sound policy, the present nomination is probably an exception. Mr. Douglass will undoubtedly be highly acceptable to these people." Days after landing in Haiti Douglass likely read this article and the statement that it is not "generally sound," to appoint a Black ambassador but that he is "probably" an exception amid all the other information in the article that foreshadowed the calamity that his time as Minister eventually became. This was only the first of a series of skewed articles in the *New York Times* that painted the U.S. in a favorable light, and Haiti and eventually Douglass as incompetent and morally questionable. Ultimately the U.S. failed to secure the site and in 1897 when the country did finally secure a coaling station on the Windward Passage, it was not in Haiti but in Cuba, at Guantanamo Bay.

I begin this chapter discussing the *New York Times* coverage of the Môle affair, Douglass' eventual response to this coverage, which marked the beginning of a long history of negative representations of Haitian Blackness in the *New York Times,* and responses to those representations by New York City's Black Press. I will then discuss the paper's coverage of the Mexican Revolution and the U.S. intervention in Mexico at the time, as well as the U.S. occupation of Haiti that began in 1915. During this period both countries were represented in political cartoons, which I will analyze at length. Finally, I will discuss the first *New York Times* article about Tijuana, written in 1920, which paints the city as racialized and sexualized city of vice. One figure who features prominently in the article is the

boxing champion Jack Johnson, who was living in Tijuana after fleeing racial apartheid in the Unites States.

Decades later Muhammad Ali, widely agreed to be the greatest boxer of all time, remarked to a reporter that he regarded Jack Johnson as the greatest of all time for what he did outside of the ring — standing up to white supremacy. Ali mentions that, at a time when Black men were lynched for looking at a white woman, Jackson married one. "And they run him out of the country because of white women, he left the whole country and fought out of Cuba. He was bad! Back in 1909 man! Jack Johnson was the greatest. He had to be the greatest… I know I'm bad but he was crazy" (Ali 1978 in Burns 2004). Ali, born Cassius Clay, took this opportunity to educate reporters and the television audience on the horrors of the Jim Crow era that Johnson faced and the transnational circuits he navigated to fight against them. In this chapter I show how Black resistance to white supremacy and imperialism played out in the press of the early 20th-century, specifically through the triangulation of the United States, Mexico, and Haiti, and in doing so, find my way back to where I started, with the verse of Black freedom penned by Haitian American rapper Pras Michel, "I refugee from Guantánamo Bay/ dance around the border like I'm Cassius Clay."

"Absurd Talk About Haiti": Imperialist Propaganda in the New York Times

The *New York Times* coverage of the Môle Affair offers a case study through which to examine the propaganda model put forth in Chomsky's and Herman's 1988 book, *Manufacturing Consent*. Chomsky and Herman argue that what is considered favorable media by the ruling class is circulated through 5 filters: (1) ownership; (2) advertising; (3) official sources; (4) flak; and (5) marginalizing dissent. When laying out their model, Chomsky and Herman explain that it takes a large amount of capital to run a first-tier media organization and that the owners of these organizations usually have ties to other business interests such as banking: "Thus the first filter—the limitation on ownership of media

with any substantial outreach by the requisite large size of investment—was applicable a century or more ago, and it has become increasingly effective over time" (4). In 1891 the paper was owned by its founder George Jones, who would die that year, leading to the formation of a Wall-Street-backed investment group led by the paper's editor, Charles Ransom Miller. The important things to bear in mind in relation to the *New York Times* ownership in 1891 and the paper's coverage of the Môle Affair is that the paper was owned by Jones, an ex-banker, and the heirs of his co-founder Henry Raymond, who also co-founded the Republican party, and served both as a Republican congressman and as chair of the Republican party while running the newspaper. In fact, the NYT had an openly Republican bias in its early decades, and it was not until James G. Blaine (yes, the same Blaine who was Secretary of State during the Môle affair) won the Republican nomination for president in 1884 that the editorial staff voted to endorse the democratic candidate Grover Cleveland, a move which alienated much of the paper's readership and its advertisers.

This brings us to the second component of the propaganda model, advertising. One of the ad campaigns that was running in the *New York Times* during the late 1880s and the early 1890s was for Pearl Soap (See fig. 2). This is significant because one of the owners of Pearl Soap (by marriage) was Thomas Barrat, known as the father of modern advertising. The ad pictures below ran on page three of the *New York Times* on Thursday, October 24, 1889, the same issue in which, on page nine, ran the article titled: "THE ONLY HOPE FOR HAYTI - WHITE MEN MUST DEVELOP THE COUNTRY. WAITING FOR THE FORMAL ORGANIZATION OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT—MR. DOUGLASS CORDIALLY RECEIVED." This article, mentioned previously in this chapter as it detailed Douglass arrival in Haiti and help set the stage for the failure of the U.S. to secure the Mole St. Nicolas, was printed alongside this ad, and was in part funded by money from Pear Soap.

Chomsky and Herman explain that advertising is an effective way for the market to control what

is published and read, because if the paper is writing something that the advertisers don't like, they will pull their ads and their money. The cost of printing machines, buildings, salaries, and everything that went into newspaper publishing in the 19th century necessitated advertising dollars. This is made evident by the example of the paper refusing to endorse Blaine and losing Republican advertisers. As Gay Talese writes in his history of the paper, *The Kingdom and the Power*, in 1881, "when Jones deserted the Republican party, unwilling to support James G. Blaine for President, there was angry retaliation from many Republican advertisers and subscribers. *The Times's* annual profit dropped from the $188,000 it had earned prior to the paper's endorsement of Grover Cleveland to $56,000; and by 1890 it was down to $1500" (Talese 195).

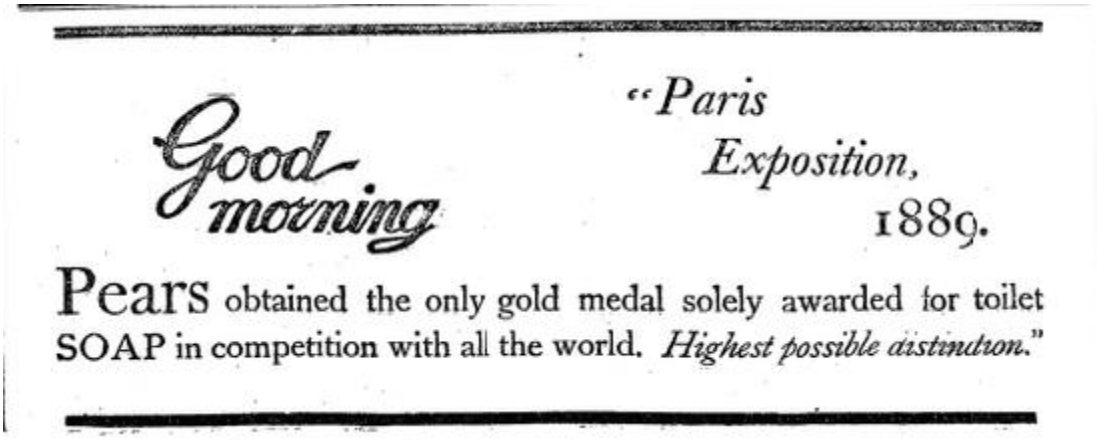

Figure 2 An advertisement for Pear's Soap printed in the *New York Times*, October 24, 1889

At the time that this ad and the stories about Douglass's diplomacy in Haiti were being published, the paper was in dire financial straits. After Jones' death in 1891, the paper was sold to a group of *Times* editors, backed by Wall Street, for $70,000, the same amount Jones and Raymond spent to start the *New York Times* in 1851. In 1889, the paper had needed every advertising dollar it could get and had a vested interest in producing content that followed the particular ideological investments of its advertisers and subscribers. Could there possibly be a connection between Pears Soap and the anti-Blackness and white-supremacist imperialism being spouted in the "Hayti's Only Hope" article? The

answer is yes. In her 1995 book *Imperial Leather*, Ann McClintock writes about Barrat and Pears' Soap at length in her chapter, "Soft-Soaping Empire: Commodity Racism and Imperial Advertising." While 19th-century soap manufacturers depended on newly expanding importation of vegetable oil from Africa, the marketing of this commodity was tied to race at the outset. McClintock describes the history of Pears' soap, founded by a barber who was selling soap to wealthy customers in Victorian London. When his granddaughter married Barrat, Barrat thought he could drum up a middle-class market for soap and created what is considered to be the first advertising campaign. Most of the ads centered on whiteness, purity, and the link between cleanliness and civilization. Many of the ads used Blackness as a foil for this. Barrat is also credited with coming up with the first advertising slogan, "Good Morning, Have You Tried Pears' Soap?", the first half of which is printed in the 1889 *Times* ad. An illustrated magazine ad that was part of Pears' campaign in the 1890s also used this slogan, along with the image of a white woman emerging from a seashell, speaking the slogan to the caricature of a Black boy on a beach, who is leaning towards her and looking surprised (See fig. 3).

Figure 3 circa 1890: An advertisement for Pears' soap shows a Black boy staring at a white Venu rising from a cockle shell. The copy reads, 'Good Morning! Have you used Pears' Soap?' (Hulton Archive/Getty Images)

The woman pictured in the ad is reminiscent of the most famous white woman in a seashell, Venus Anadyomene, or Venus rising from the sea, who was depicted in ancient Greek art as naked and raising her arms. In later Italian art like Botticelli's *Birth of Venus*, she is depicted with her hair and hands covering her pubic area and breasts. Pears' soap, in step with Victorian ideas of modesty, depicts the shell covering the entire body of the Venus-like woman, to the point that she effectively becomes a snail with cleavage. Her hair is elaborately curled and styled, ironically achieving the same shape and height of the hair as the Black person she is facing. This person, who appears to be a young boy, is wearing nothing but white shorts and leaning on a rock, facing the woman in the shell with his mouth and eyes wide open.

McClintock analyzes four fetishes that appear in early soap advertising: soap, white clothing, a

mirror, and a monkey. This ad does not feature soap itself, or a monkey. The boy is wearing white clothing, and the soap, and its ability to cleanse are implied by the ad's copy. As McClintock writes about another Pears' ad from this era, "The magical fetish of soap promises that the commodity can regenerate the Family of Man by washing from the skin the very stigma of racial and class degeneration" (McClintock 310). The ad pictured above is offering a similar promise - that Pears' soap, presumably brought to this young Black person by imperial whiteness, can bring cleanliness, and with it, bring civilization to whatever tropical shore he inhabits. This is indeed the very same idea being put forth even more explicitly in the article, "THE ONLY HOPE FOR HAYTI."

Turning to the next component in the propaganda model— official sources — Chomsky and Herman write that, "The mass media are drawn into a symbiotic relationship with powerful sources of information by economic necessity and reciprocity of interest" (18). The argument made here is that news outlets with money and power rely on the government for access to official sources, and that the government in turn relies on these news outlets to publish narratives in line with, or at least not too far out of line with, the interests of the state.

To be clear, when this model was developed by Herman and Chomsky in the 1980s, corporate mass media was a much more developed machine than it was in the late 19th century, but we can still see the importance of official sources and the relationship between the newspaper and the government at play in the coverage of the Môle affair. Much of the reporting around the U.S. acquisition of the Môle St. Nicolas for the construction of a coaling station revolved around access to a document that the U.S. government alleged was proof that Haiti, specifically the newly established Hippolyte government, had promised to cede the Môle to the U.S. This document, and the news coverage surrounding it, rather than bolster the United States' position, was one of the primary causes of the failure of U.S. efforts to secure the site. On March 25, 1891, the *Times* publishes an article titled "HAITI'S BROKEN PROMISE:

UNWILLING NOW TO CEDE THE MOLE ST. NICOLAS. MINISTER FIRMIN PLAYING ADMIRAL GHERARDI AGAINST MINISTER DOUGLASS — THE LATTER A LAGGARD - ADVANTAGES OF THE CESSION." The article claims that in 1889, during the war between Hippolyte and Legitime, Hippolyte sent an agent to Washington with a letter signed by him asking for U.S. military aid and offering the Môle in return. The article states that this agent called upon Secretary Blaine, who refused to meet with him, and the document was then destroyed. The article goes on to state that in the present negotiations between Hippolyte and Admiral Gherardi, Gherardi produced a copy of this letter, using it as a basis to demand cession of the Môle. As the article states, "The United States gave such aid and comfort to the rebels that they succeeded, and now, *mirabile dictu*, this copy turns up here in the hands of Admiral Gherardi and is presented to Hippolyte, who is asked to redeem his promise. The *on dit* is that Firmin showed some temper when he saw it. *Quien sabe* — who knows?"

This article begins with a paragraph introducing the reader to Haitian finance minister Antenor Fermin, focusing on his unpopularity while condescendingly conceding that he is "that rarest of beings in this benighted land, an honest man." In reality, Fermin was well-respected in Haiti and in history as one of the founders of the Pan-African movement and is widely considered the first Black anthropologist, having published *De l'égalité des races humaines* (*Of the Equality of Human Races*) in 1885. This is not the image of Fermin that is being depicted in the pages of *The New York Times*. He is instead cited as a detriment to Hippolyte's government, hot-headed, and playing Douglass and Gherardi against each other. The article states that Hippolyte's government would gain immediate popularity among Haitians if Fermin were fired and ends with discussion of various small rebellions taking place around the country that have been suppressed, stating, "There is a good deal of dissatisfaction, but it does not seem to amount to much, though heads wag wisely and prophets foretell the fall of Hippolyte's government" (*HAITI'S BROKEN PROMISE*). The disrespect shown here both by Gherardi and by the

New York Times reporter in their coverage of the events directly led to a breakdown in negotiations over the leasing of the harbor. In June, when Hippolyte refused to negotiate further with Admiral Gherardi and Douglass on the cessation of the Môle, the paper again mentioned this letter, this time going so far as to publish the document under the headline, "HAITI HAS HAD ENOUGH SHE DECLINES TO NEGOTIATE FURTHER. CORRESPONDENCE REGARDING THE CESSION OF ST. NICHOLAS MOLE TO THE UNITED STATES AS A NAVAL STATION — OVERTURE IGNORED."

The article contains the transcripts of several documents. The first, a letter sent during the civil war between Hippolyte and Legitime, signed by both Hippolyte and Fermin, designated the agent as their representative and asked for U.S. military intervention in the conflict on his behalf, and offered the U.S. a naval station in Haiti as one of the conditions of this proposed agreement. In the text published here, contrary to what was claimed in the article on March 25, no mention is made of the Môle St. Nicolas as the location of the navy base, and it is again reiterated that the U.S. never agreed to the offer when it was brought to the table. The article says that the document was destroyed, and that Fermin was said to have made the agent swear on the altar of a Catholic church that the document had been destroyed. The reporter writes, "They may have been as Elie swore, but copies were taken, and are now to be produced, to worry the unhappy Hippolyte (*HAITI HAS HAD ENOUGH*).

The article continues citing official documents, first making sure to mention the names of the U.S. warships that were dispatched to aid Hippolyte in overthrowing Legitime's government, and then reverting to a contract giving the owner of a steamship company, William P. Clyde, who orchestrated both the U.S. intervention in the conflict and the shipping of ammunition to Haiti, the rights to a steamship line between Haiti and the U.S. money to subsidize this venture, as well as a 99 year lease of the Môle St. Nicolas. The article then explains that this contract was introduced to the Haitian legislature but was never approved and ultimately failed. Then, going back to its reliance on official sources, the

article provides the transcript of a letter from the Haitian consul general to James G. Blaine, praising William P. Clyde and listing his deed that contributed to Hippolyte's victory. The article uses these documents to craft a narrative in which Hippolyte is person who owes the United States (and specifically one wealthy citizen, William Clyde) a great debt, promised in writing to pay that debt, and then failed to make good on that promise.

In fact, as reported in the very same article, there was never any promise made. The U.S. refused to accept the offer, which was to lease an unspecified location as a naval station. The U.S. did aid Hippolyte, at the urging of William P. Clyde, not as the result of a formal agreement with Hippolyte. Although these facts are all in the story, the documents are presented as proof of a debt owed. The article ends, again, with mentions of rumored uprisings against Hippolyte, this time going as far as to give a glowing biography of one of his potential usurpers, Manigat, stating finally, "The abortive eruptions of last week in Port-Au-Prince are credited to him, but he says he has not yet a single step in any of the conspiracies that surround the unfortunate Hippolyte" (*HAITI HAS HAD ENOUGH*),

The *New York Times* was using official sources to craft and promote a narrative that made the U.S. government, specifically Admiral Gherardi and Secretary Blaine the heroes, and the Haitian government, specifically Hippolyte and Fermin, the villains. Though acting as an official of the U.S. government, Friedrick Douglass was also cast into the role of villain because of his Blackness. During this period, an inflammatory *New York Times* article referred to him with the headline, "OUR COLORED DIPLOMAT." While most large papers around the country produced the same narrative about these events, other publications countered the official story. Some claimed that the entire affair, from the U.S. intervention to the push to gain the coaling station, was a money-making scheme set in motion by William P. Clyde and that Admiral Gherardi was working in league with Clyde. Douglass was forced to defend himself against his mistreatment in the press, giving his own account of

Gherhardi's diplomatic missteps, including most notably his insistence on the 1889 letter published in the *Times* being acknowledged as a promise to be fulfilled. These publications that pushed back against the official narrative did not go unnoticed by the *Times*, who responded by attempting to discredit them.

The fourth component of the propaganda model is what Chomsky and Herman call flak— or negative responses to published media that stray too far from what is considered acceptable to those in power (16). In the case of the Môle St. Nicholas Affair, the *New York Times* coverage was not the only press coverage of the events. After the matter was settled and Haiti was clearly not going to cede the Môle to the United States, several accounts criticized the *Times'* version of events. Notable among these was Frederick Douglass's own account, "Haïti and the United States. Inside History of the Negotiations for the Môle St. Nicolas," in *The North American Review,* published in two parts in September and October of 1891 in direct response to the U.S. media's coverage of the affair, which largely blamed him for failing to make the deal happen. Examples of the *Times'* treatment of Douglass include references to his Blackness, age, ability, and possible lack of loyalty.[3]

On the occasion of Douglass' resignation as minister to Haiti on August 11, 1891, the *Times* published an article on the front page with the headline: "FRED DOUGLASS RESIGNS. THE HAITIANS DO NOT WANT BLACK MEN FOR MINISTERS." The article begins,

> "After more or less prevaricating, Fred Douglass had resigned his place as Minister to Haiti, and the intimation comes from the State Department that he will be succeeded by a white representative. This will be gratifying intelligence for some of the Americans who have visited Haiti with prejudices in favor of the experiment in that republic of negro government, and have returned with the conviction that it has been a failure." (*FRED DOUGLASS RESIGNS*)

The article goes on to insult both Douglass and Haitians, stating that if more Haitians were literate, they would have had even less respect for Douglass because they would know that he lost esteem among

[3] See the *New York Times* coverage of Douglass's tenure as Minister to Haiti - December 1890 - August 1891

Black people in the U.S. after his marriage to a white woman. After listing the reasons a white minister should be appointed next, the article ends by saying that President Harrison should make sure to appoint "someone with a dusky skin" as minister to some other country so that the Republican party does not lose Black voters.

This article proved a tad too extreme even for the 1891 *New York Times* and there was a negative reaction to it from the Black community in New York. The next day the paper printed a new story on the subject, not on page one, but in a short paragraph at the bottom of page five, under the headline, "THE HAITIAN MINISTRY." The paragraph begins, "Prominent colored men will resent the appointment of any but a member of their own race as minister to Haiti to act as the successor to Frederick Douglass." The article goes to name several of these men, stating that they all agree that a Black minister would inspire more respect in Haiti than a white minister. No mention is made of the claims so vehemently espoused on the paper's front page a day earlier. All future coverage of the issue involved discussion of Black potential candidates for the position and eventually a Black journalist, John S. Durham (also married to a white woman) would be selected for the position. This is a clear example of what Chomsky and Herman refer to as flack. The article in question strayed too far from the Republican Party's official image as the party for Black voters and the "prominent" Black community in New York was not willing to give up one of the few positions of power that would customarily be reserved for a Black person. The paper was forced to adjust its position accordingly.

Weeks after Douglass resigned, *The New York Times* got its chance to dish out the flak, responding to a publication critical of the *Times* coverage of the Mole affair, a pamphlet titled "The American Question in Haiti" written by John D. Metzger. Metzger's position in the pamphlet is that the *New York Times* coverage of the events surrounding negotiations for the Mole were skewed to make Admiral Gherardi look good and were unfair to Douglass. More important, the pamphlet charges that the

whole affair was orchestrated by William P. Clyde and that in supporting Hippolyte at Clyde's behest, the U.S. was acting in the interests of a private citizen.

The *Times* apparently felt it had to respond to these claims, as they cast a shadow on its official narrative. They did so on August 24th, by publishing an article titled, "ABSURD TALK ABOUT HAITI: A VERY STUPID PAMPHLET BY MR. JOHN D. METZGER. HE UNDERTAKES TO HOLD ADMIRAL GHERARDI RESPONSIBLE FOR THE FAILURE TO GET THE MOLE ST. NICHOLAS — THE FACTS IN THE CASE." The article begins by quoting some passages from Metzger's pamphlet that denounce the "New York Papers'" coverage of the events and accuse Admiral Gherardi of being the orchestrator of the narrative that has been presented. The article then calls this assertion laughable and goes on to discredit Mr. Metzger and claim, point by point, that the information in the pamphlet is untrue. Here we see the *New York Times* making a point of undermining Metzger's assertions that do not fit in to the official narrative that they have been crafting through their coverage of Douglass' tenure as Minister to Haiti.

The final component of the propaganda model is marginalizing dissent through the creation of a common enemy. When Chomsky and Herman were writing in the 1980s, that enemy was communism, but in the 1890s, specifically in the case of coverage of Haiti, the common enemy is Blackness. Blackness in this context was represented both by Haiti and by Frederick Douglass. In her article, "The propaganda model in the early 21st century," media scholar Joan Pedro explains the 5th component more broadly than Herman and Chomsky do in their original work. She defines the fifth component as "convergence in the dominant ideology" (Pedro 1871). This can take the form of a common enemy that goes against the dominant ideology, a common hero that supports the dominant ideology, or ideology in the broad sense, which Pedro describes as including "values, stereotypes, morals, and identities" (Pedro 1871).

From the very start of the *New York Times'* coverage of the Mole affair, the journalist writing the articles is framing the events through these ideological lenses. The dominant ideology they are writing from is white supremacy. The common enemy is Blackness, represented by Douglass and by Haiti; the common hero is Admiral Gherardi, and the values, stereotypes, and morals these articles rely on support white supremacy. We can examine the coverage of Douglass's tenure as minister to Haiti to understand how this ideology operated. During the Civil War, the U.S. finally recognized Haiti as a country on July 12, 1861, when Abraham Lincoln appointed the first U.S. minister to Haiti. The first four ministers to Haiti were white men, but in 1969 Ulysses S. Grant appointed the country's first Black diplomat, Ebeneezer Basset, as minister to Haiti. After Basset, it became customary for the U.S. to appoint a Black diplomat to the position. In fact, before Douglass was appointed, Blaine's first choice for the post would have meant a move away from this tradition, as he nominated a white man, Beverly Tucker, to fill the post. As soon as the nomination was made public, the *New York Times* published a scathing article indicting Secretary Blaine and President Harrison by association for the glaring failure to recall that Tucker, a prominent confederate, was a known conspirator in the successful plot to assassinate President Lincoln. The nomination was quickly withdrawn and given instead to Douglass. News of his appointment ran in column one of page one of the *Times*, beginning with a paragraph-long biography of Douglass referring to him as, "perhaps the best-know negro in the United States" (*MAKING A HARRISON PARTY*).

Nothing negative is said in this article about Haiti or about Douglass but as the Mole Affair unfurled this would quickly change. The next article referencing Douglass and Haiti was published after Douglass' arrival in Haiti and the inauguration of Hippolyte as president. As quoted at length earlier in the chapter, the article, "WHITE MEN MUST DEVELOP THE COUNTRY. WAITING FOR THE FORMAL ORGANIZATION OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT—MR. DOUGLASS CORDIALLY

RECEIVED.", spends much of its 12 paragraphs explaining why Haiti could not be successfully ruled by Black leaders. It also states that while it was "not generally sound policy" to send a Black diplomat to represent the United States, Mr. Douglass was likely an exception to this rule because his autobiography had been very popular in Haiti. The article explains the myriad ways white business interests could and would inevitably capitalize on Haiti's resources, even if it took an armed occupation to make it happen. By relying on the anti-Black stereotypes of savagery, laziness, and sub-par-intelligence this article, like many of the articles written about Haiti, Douglass and the Mole, were laying the ideological groundwork for just that to happen. In fewer than 20 years the U.S. would invade and occupy Haiti.

As Douglass's tenure continued and as it became clear that Blaine, Clyde, and Gherardi would not secure the Mole or the shipping subsidies, the *Times'* anti-Black rhetoric increased. The editorial staff of the paper was clearly against Douglass continuing in the post, going so far as to publish an article stating he had to be recalled when that was not the case. When Douglass did in fact resign, in June of 1891, the *Times* published an article titled, "OUR COLORED DIPLOMAT. THE CAREER OF FREDERICK DOUGLASS APPARENTLY NEARING AN END.", in which the author states that Douglass' biggest failure in Haiti was putting his loyalty to Blackness over his loyalty to the United States and affirms the papers position that a white minister should replace him.

Douglass responded to this coverage in his own article published in the *North American Review*, writing, "They thought it monstrous to compel Black Haiti to receive a minister as Black as herself. They did not see that it would be shockingly inconsistent for Haiti to object to a Black minister while she herself is Black" (Douglass 338). The *New York Times*' repeated degrading statements about the Blackness of Douglass and Haiti over the course of the two years of the Mole affair were not missed by Douglass, as he clearly expresses in the above paragraph, arguing that the claim made by the *New York Times* that Haitian people would give more respect and deference to a white diplomat than they would to

Douglass defies all logic. He goes on to explain in detail how the failure of the U.S. to gain a lease on the Mole was due to the insistence of Admiral Gherardi that Hippolyte owed a debt first to William P. Clyde and then to the United States for the role of both parties in bringing him to power. Douglass charged that Gherardi's behavior was insulting to Hippolyte, and that with the combination of the presence of U.S. warships in Haitian waters and racist and imperialist media discourse coming out of New York created buzz in Haiti's media that the U.S. was attempting to occupy Haiti by force. Hippolyte had no choice then but to reject any deal that would compromise Haitian autonomy or risk his people revolting against him. In the near future, U.S. business interests, media propaganda, and the guise of the Monroe Doctrine would once again bring U.S. warships to Haiti's shores but this time it would be to stay. Media narratives like those published in the *New York Times* worked alongside U.S. foreign policy to further the country's imperialistic agenda.

On July 29, 1915, the day after the U.S. Marines invaded Haiti, the *New York Times* ran an article titled, "THE LATEST REVOLUTION IN HAITI." The headline already frames the slant of the article with the word "latest," implying that this is one of a string of revolutions in an unstable country. The article derides Haiti from the outset and uses racist stereotypes to make it seem that U.S. intervention is not only necessary but inevitable. The uncredited reporter begins with a long list of Haiti's failures. The article goes on to state, without citing a source, that a previous president's wife "was generally known" as a high priestess of voodoo, and that her husband chose whom to execute by smashing clay figures on the floor of his White house. The author writes: "This much of a preface, notice of the revolutions, civil wars, barbarities of soldiers and rival politicians, private vengeances that are the custom of the Black Republic, may help to an understanding of the characteristically Haitian performances which have called the American cruiser Washington to Port Au Prince, the capital" (*THE LATEST REVOLUTION IN HAITI*). Throughout, the *New York Times* relies on anti-Black stereotypes to

justify the imperialist actions of the United States.

The same sentence could be printed in a Haitian newspaper with the words "characteristically Haitian" replaced with "characteristically American" and be equally true. Both countries had revolutions, civil wars, military atrocities, and private vengeances, but the words "characteristically Haitian" imply something specific about the supposed barbarity and savagery of Haiti and Haitian Blackness that the *Times* is invested in representing. The article continues to explain and defend the U.S. invasion of Haiti, going on to explicitly invoke the Monroe Doctrine. The U.S. was worried that European countries would intervene in Haiti and felt compelled to act before that happened to protect its imperial hold on the hemisphere.

The Times, The Black Press, Haiti, and the Mexican Revolution

While the *Times* frames the intervention as an unavoidable consequence of the inherent flaws in the government of Haiti and the character of its people, several prominent Black writers, including W.E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington, published editorials in the following months that pushed back against this account. In the *New York Age*, an influential Black newspaper, Washington wrote an editorial that gave background on the revolutionary history of Haiti and implored the U.S. government to have patience with the small nation. He was specifically responding to an incident that had occurred weeks before, in which 40 Haitians were gunned down by U.S. Marines. He writes that every Black man who read the reports of these deaths did so with great sorrow and that he has hoped the U.S. would show patience in its dealings with Haiti, giving examples of other struggling nations that the U.S. had interacted with in ways that he thought of as more fair: "It has been exceedingly patient in dealing with Mexico. I hope this country will be equally patient and more than patient in dealing with Haiti - a weaker and more unfortunate country!" Although the U.S. was not, in practice, "patient" with Mexico, this may have been a common perception based on official U.S. discourse around intervention in

Mexico.

Washington was not the only person to compare U.S. treatment of Haiti with its actions in Mexico. Five years later the U.S. was still occupying Haiti and Harlem Renaissance poet James Weldon Johnson wrote an editorial in *The Nation* titled, "Self-Determining Haiti" in which he quotes the Wilson administration's official policy toward Mexico as stated at the Democratic National Convention. The policy stated that that Mexico could only thrive if it was left to be autonomous, and that the U.S. would never attempt to take advantage of or impose rule on the country, which had, "temporarily distracted councils."

It is important to note that this official policy on Mexico was not upheld in action and the U.S. did intervene militarily in the Mexican Revolution. Citing this Democratic Party statement, Johnson goes on to make a searing critique of its hypocrisy in light of the U.S. invasion of Haiti. As he writes,

> "Haiti has never been so distracted in its councils as Mexico. And even in its moments of greatest distraction it never slaughtered an American citizen, it never molested an American woman, it never injured a dollar's worth of American property. And yet, the Administration whose lofty purpose was proclaimed as above–with less justification than Austria's invasion of Serbia, or Germany's rape of Belgium, without warrant other than the doctrine that "might makes right," has conquered Haiti." (Johnson 1920)

In his defense of Haiti, Johnson seems to be ignoring U.S. military interventions in Mexico by President Wilson in 1913-14 and continued skirmishes between Mexican Revolutionary troops and U.S. military along the border up until 1919, months before Johnson write this article. (Katz) It is also notable that Johnson's language around Haiti, "it never slaughtered an American citizen, it never molested an American woman," is sexualized and gendered, and could be construed as conceding the mainstream U.S. news media's discourse on Mexico in order to protect Haiti. Poignantly, however, Johnson points out that in addition to the hypocrisy of claiming to respect a country's autonomy while invading another, there is an added irony in the fact that the U.S. had fought in WWI to protect the sovereignty of countries like Serbia and Belgium, all the while maintaining militarized rule over Haiti. The clear

difference between Serbia and Haiti was the perceived racial status of their inhabitants. Serbians were white, and seen as human, while Black Haitians were seen as less than human, as evidenced in the language used in the *New York Times.* Mexico, however, occupies a space between Serbia and Haiti in this discourse. It is not seen as a space worthy of protection in the way that Serbia is and yet is a place that the U.S. can "be patient" with, in a way that it cannot in Haiti.

Black activists such as Johnson and Washington offered an essential counter-narrative of events in Haiti to the one being propagated by the *New York Times*, and called out the racial motivation behind the disparity between how Mexico and Haiti were being folded into the machinations of U.S. imperialism. The scholarship of Brandon Byrd, Robin D.G. Kelley, and August Meier offers much insight into the history and impact of the writings of Black Americans on U.S. imperialism in Haiti. One common argument was that the U.S. official platform on Mexico was fairer than U.S. treatment of Haiti but this claim reproduces the pervasive mainstream media demonization of Mexico. U.S. intervention in the Mexican Revolution was not as simple as the democratic platform cited by Johnson. The U.S. repeatedly propped up various governments in Mexico during the period, only to withdraw support when the government stepped out of line with U.S. capitalist interests. The U.S. also sent troops to Mexico on more than one occasion. During this time, major newspapers portrayed Mexico as a place that could not become civilized without the help of the United States, revealing a similarity to portrayals of Haiti.[4]

Like the U.S intervention in Haiti, the U.S. intervention in the Mexican Revolution was rooted in protection of U.S. American capital and in white supremacy. The first time the U.S. sent troops to their border with Mexico involved a situation where U.S. capital interests were at stake due to Mexican labor

[4] See Britton (1995), Mraz (2009), and Fernández (2009) for writing on U.S. newspaper representations of Mexico.

organizing, and white supremacist ideology was employed to protect those interests. Kelly Lytle Hernández, John Mason Hart, Héctor Aguilar Camín and Lorenzo Meyer have written about the growth of U.S. economic interests in Mexico in the decades leading up to the Mexican revolution. Lytle Hernández writes at length about the first instance of U.S. involvement in suppressing revolutionary activity in Mexico, the repression of the Cananea Strike, which occurred in 1906. Similar to the case of W.P. Clyde in Haiti, the reason for the intervention was at the behest of a private citizen, W.C. Greene, one of the wealthiest men in the world at the time. On June 1, 1906, the *New York Times* ran the headline, "45 AMERICANS DEAD AT GREENE'S MINES: Slain in Battle with Mexican Strikers. DYNAMITE MINE MILLS. Col. Greene Pleads in Vain for Peace and Then Sends for Help -Town on Fire." The article states that the workers were striking for a pay raise, from $3.50 an hour to $5, and that they opened fire on unspecified U.S. citizens, killing 45 of them. What actually transpired was that Greene's men began shooting at the strikers, killing 6 of them, including a child, and then killing 3 dozen more as they fled. The company doctor then began hysterically wiring people in Washington, including the Secretary of War, with messages that U.S. Americans were being massacred by Mexicans in Cananea. As Lytle Hernández writes,

> "Galbraith's telegrams, all of them hysterical, factually incorrect, and soon to be reprinted in newspapers from Tucson to New York, told a tale of white U.S. citizens being slaughtered by Mexicans. Greene doubled down on this tale, with a series of telegrams to friends north of the border warning of a "race war" breaking in Cananea and begging for their help. In the border towns along the Arizona–Sonora divide—Bisbee, Naco, Douglas, and Tucson—people thronged the streets and collected their guns, debating how best to protect American lives and property in Mexico. In Bisbee, angry men looking to form a "minuteman" company armed themselves with "carbines, shotguns, small bore rifles and the more dangerous and effective models of the latest design. They would not stand by as Cananea burned."

Greene used the specter or a race war to bring aid to a situation where he was the clear aggressor, using fatal violence to suppress a worker's strike. It was these false claims that were printed in the *New York Times*, stating that 45 U.S. citizens had been killed, when those killed were all Mexican nationals. The

U.S. ended up sending the Arizona Rangers to protect Greene's property but when they reached Cananea on June 2nd, they found the workers mourning their dead and no sign of any uprising. In her account, Lytle Hernandez mentions that two Black Arizona Rangers, former Buffalo Soldiers, had volunteered to go to Cananea but were rejected because the commanding officer was hesitant to bring them into what was being framed as a race war. This points to the blurry boundaries around Blackness and Mexican identity that existed at the Mexico/U.S. border in 1906 and still exists today.

Another example that reveals the close linkages among Haiti, Mexico, and the border between Mexico and the U.S. is that the second instance of U.S. intervention in the Mexican Revolution and the first officially backed by orders from President Roosevelt consisted of Secretary of War and future president William Howard Taft sending troops to Del Rio Texas at the request of Mexican President Porfirio Díaz to stop rebels from breaking neutrality laws along the border. According to the *New York Times* coverage of the event, "The presence of the soldiers will do much to prevent any outbreaks within the United States territory, and they will be of material assistance in case the revolutionists cross the border. Del Rio is directly opposite Las Vacas, Mexico, where the principal disturbances have occurred" (*TAFT ORDERS TROOPS TO MEXICAN BORDER*). Although not engaging in direct involvement in fighting the revolution, the supposed purpose of these troops was to stop revolutionary forces from crossing the border into the United States to perform acts that would further their revolutionary cause, such as gathering volunteers, supplies, and ammunition. (Farrier 1996) The U.S. also had a vested interest in keeping Díaz in power, since one of the reasons that the Mexican people were rising up against him was his land reform policies, which took land away from rural poor and indigenous communities and allowed foreign investors to capitalize on the land's mineral resources. The majority of Mexico's indigenous people (estimated at 40% of the total population in 1875 when Díaz came to power) lived and worked on communal farmlands called ejidos. After Díaz broke up 20,000 acres of

ejidos, this land eventually fell into the hands of Mexican and foreign capitalists. (T.G. Powell 1968) Notable among these were the Guggenheim family and J.P. Morgan, the latter of whom visited Washington in November of 1910, ostensibly to urge U.S. intervention, when Francisco Madero began marching troops into Mexico and calling for revolution. Here we see a U.S. investment banker making a direct appeal to the U.S. government for military intervention in Mexico, and this relationship between economic and imperial interests was being depicted in the news media.

The pages of the *New York Times* paint a very clear picture of the ways U.S. intervention in Mexican revolution was tied to economic interests. Morgan's visit to Washington and Madero's military advancements were featured on the front page of the *New York Times* in two articles, side-by-side, the first with the headline, "J.P. MORGAN IN WASHINGTON. REPORT THAT VISIT MAY HAVE CONNECTION WITH MEXICAN SITUATION., and the second with the headline, "MEXICAN REBELS CAPTURE A TOWN Take Gomez Palacio, Where 300 Federal Troops Go Over to Their Side. MADERO LEADS THE REVOLT Enters Mexico at Head of 600 Men — Díaz Sends a Strong Force to Check Him. OUR TROOPS GO TO BORDER Fierce Fighting In Four Towns Reported — Capital Is Cut Off from the North." The reports of the revolution center around what it means for U.S. financial interests.

The article mentions both Cananea and Del Rio, the first two locations of U.S. intervention. The article reads:

> A report reached here from Cananea, Mexico, tonight that revolutionists are enlisting the hostile Yaqui Indians for service against the Mexican Government. It is said that Yaqui warriors will take the field if actual war begins. A dispatch from Del Rio, Texas, on the Mexican border. 250 miles east of here, states that rumors are current of a fight near there early last night between Americans and Mexicans. ("MEXICAN REBELS TAKE TOWN")

Although the article is not relying on the extreme racial stereotyping evident in coverage of military unrest and U.S. intervention in Haiti, these two events and the way they are reported here would arouse very specific anxieties in readers. The first anxiety is about a verified race war about to break out in

Cananea, where headlines just a few short years ago told readers that just such a conflict was taking place at real cost to U.S. lives and U.S. property, and the second speculated that the border was becoming an even more lawless and hard-to-define boundary, with rebellion creeping into the confines of the United States. It is important to note that the *Times* article specifically states that Yaqui Indians are joining the revolution on the side of the rebels. This was not the first time in recent history that the *New York Times* had covered the situation of the Yaqui people in Mexico. In 1906 the paper ran two half-page features about what it called the impending genocide of the Yaqui at the hands of Díaz. In a paper that at the time was almost solely text-based, these articles were notable for their heavy use of photographic illustrations. In the center of one article, "Mexico Will Use Indians to Fight Indians: Latest Plan for the Suppression and Extermination of the Fierce Yaquis —- Republic Hopes to Terminate a Long and Bloody War," is a photo of the lifeless bodies of several Yaqui soldiers who were executed by Díaz's forces. The photograph, alongside the article openly supporting genocide, is supporting the narrative that the *Times* is participating in—the narrative that indigenous people are not human.

Mexico Will Use Indians to Fight Indians

Latest Plan for the Suppression and Extermination of the Fierce Yaquis---Republic Hopes to Terminate a Long and Bloody War.

Figure 4 “Mexico Will Use Indians to Fight Indians” The *New York Times* 1906

While the *Times* in this period is depicting Haiti and Haitians as savage and in need of civilizing, they are depicting the Yaqui people as completely doomed for their sin of fighting for their land, thereby standing in the way of economic progress. The article is very matter of fact about the fate of the Yaqui people, stating that the only possible outcome is their genocide at the hands of the Mexican government, one way or another. As the article states,

> Of course, the outcome of the rebellion can be one thing-the Yaquis will be wiped out, as the Apaches were in the United States. But before they go there will be many men killed, and the Mexican Government will have lost many millions of dollars both from the actual cost of the conflict and more so because American capital ls holding aloof from the rich mines of Sonora until it can come in with safety. (“Mexico Will Use Indians to Fight Indians”)

It is clear from this paragraph that the ideology that the *New York Times* is embracing and espousing requires the complete dehumanization of indigenous people. The language of extermination

makes this clear, as does the desensitization accomplished through the photo of dead Yaqui bodies filling up the center of the page. The Yaqui were not rebelling against Díaz because of their savage nature, as the article contends, but because their land was being taken from them by Díaz's new land reform policies.

Like Díaz did in Mexico, U.S. occupying forces also made and enacted a plan to take land from the rural poor and allow foreign investors to capitalize on the land's mineral resources. When James Weldon Johnson went to Haiti in 1920 on behalf of the NAACP, he witnessed this plan in action and wrote about it in his piece in the *Nation*. He writes that the occupying forces attempted to force the Haitian legislature to rewrite their constitution to remove the stipulation barring foreign citizen from owning land. As the U.S. learned in the Mole affair, the Haitian people took very seriously any encroachment on their land that was the sanctified ground of the Haitian Revolution. According to Johnson, the legislature refused to remove this stipulation, and the occupying forces then disbanded the legislature and forced the law's repeal. The occupying forces were not there to keep the peace in Haiti, or to protect the Hemisphere from foreign influence, as they claimed they were charged with by the Monroe Doctrine. Instead, as Johnson insists at the outset of his account, the Marines in Haiti were working as the hired hands of the National City Bank (known today as Citibank) who took control of the Haitian National Bank and all the Haitian government finances during the occupation. (Johnson 1920) While the Black and Brown citizens of Mexico and Haiti were losing their lands and livelihoods, suffering and dying, in large part to fill the pockets of U.S. capitalists, newspapers in the U.S. continued to produce dehumanizing representations of them for readers.

Political Cartoons

In the early 20th century, political cartoons helped create and uphold a narrative of Mexico and Haiti as child-like, savage, and in need of rescue. The racialized imperialism of the United States was a

favorite topic of editorial cartoonists, but none of these cartoons were printed in the pages of the *New York Times*. Near the start of the chapter, I discussed the ownership of The *New York Times*, specifically that the editorial board bought the paper from the heirs of its founders, with backing from Wall Street investors. The paper almost failed under this ownership, and was effectively saved, and turned into the paper of record by a man named Adolph Ochs. Ochs is credited with coming up with the slogan for the paper, "*All The News That's Fit to Print"*, and also with many of the paper's policies that differed from other major newspapers in the early 20th century. (Talese) One of these was the use of the byline. In the late 19th century, some papers used bylines to create an air of celebrity around a particular writer or story. Adolph Ochs was against this practice, believing instead that everything in the paper should appear to be representative not of a particular reporter, but of the paper as an institution. (Shafer) Editorial cartoons were also gaining popularity in newspapers across the country in the late 19th and early 20th century but again, not in Ochs's paper. A 1975 *Time Magazine* article on the history of political cartoons quotes Ochs saying he didn't print cartoons "Because such a cartoon cannot say, 'On the other hand…'" The article continues, "On the other hand, a cartoon can do what prose cannot. It can sometimes elicit action by overstating—and overheating—an issue." (Kanfer 1975) While examples abound of prose that has elicited action, the author is correct that the representational power of the image is different, and often more sensational than the written word.

In the U.S. papers that did print editorial cartoons in the 1910s, the imperial activities of the Unites States were a favorite topic for the images, which depicted the U.S. as Uncle Sam, an elder white man in a suit, and the imperialized nations as children or animals. One common representation of both Haiti and Mexico in these cartoons is the depiction of both countries, often in the same cartoon, as an unruly child being civilized by Uncle Sam. Mexico was variously depicted as a woman being crushed by a snake, with a U.S. boot heel on the snake's neck, and a wild dog being tamed by Uncle Sam as Europe

looks on. This gendered image is reminiscent of Johnson's language around military invasion, using the word "rape" to describe the invasion of Serbia, a situation in which the U.S. is seen as the chivalrous. protector of Serbia's honor. In this cartoon, however, the snake that Uncle Sam is crushing is not an outside invader, but a symbol of Mexico's perceived inability to govern itself and to foster a stable democracy without U.S. assistance.

One cartoon published in the *Chicago Tribune* in 1916 (a year after the U.S. invaded Haiti) shows four nations that were part of the U.S. imperial project, including Haiti, depicted as studious schoolboys, with exception of Mexico, who is drinking from a large bottle and shooting a pistol. Uncle Sam is depicted as the teacher, smacking Mexico on the head with a stick.

Figure 5 Cartoon titled "Uncle Sam's Reform School" by John T. McCutcheon printed 3/21/1916 Pittsburgh Post Gazette - Newspapers.com archive.

The title of the image is "Uncle Sam's Reform School," and as Uncle Sam is rolling up his sleeves to hit Mexico on the head, he is asking, "EVENTUALLY — WHY NOT NOW?" This cartoon

was drawn by John T. McCutcheon, and while it was originally published in the *Chicago Tribune*, it was syndicated to papers across the country. The image reproduced here is from page 1 of the March 21, 1916, issue of the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, and run under the full-page headline "PANCHO VILLA IS DEFEATED." This statement was factually untrue. What really happened was that President Wilson had sent General Pershing and his troops to the Mexico/U.S. border with the ultimate goal of capturing Pancho Villa to arrest him for an attack on a New Mexico town. March 20th reports from the border stated that Villa and his men were trapped between the advancing Mexican and U.S. armies, but they managed to escape. Pershing and his men (virtually all the active members of the U.S. National guard) remained in Mexico with the sole objective of capturing Villa until the end of January 1917, when Wilson was preparing to send Pershing to France, as the U.S. was entering WWI. (Cyrulik 2012) Mexico in the image is not the foreign investment friendly Mexico of Porfirio Díaz but the rebellious, socialist Mexico symbolized by Pancho Villa.[5]

A cartoon also published in the *Chicago Tribune* in 1915 shows the same large Uncle Sam busily writing at his desk, holding a paper that says "Austria," a direct reference to the conflict emerging in Europe, while in the foreground two small boys, one with a sackcloth shirt labeled "Haiti," and the other with a sombrero that reads, "Mexico," playing with Uncle Sam's hat. Haiti is kicking the hat in the air, and Mexico is shooting a bullet through the hat, while Uncle Sam says, "Hush that rumpus you kids." The boy that represents Haiti is drawn as a caricature of Blackness, with large white lips and a goofy grin. He has tattered rags for clothes, and he is not wearing shoes. He is armed with the most primitive of weapons, a knife, but is using his body, his bare foot, to kick Uncle Sam's hat. The boy who represents Mexico is racialized in a different way; unlike Haiti, he is wearing shoes and a sombrero. He also has a rifle that he uses to shoot a hole in Uncle Sam's hat. The takeaway from the cartoon is that the

[5] See Heatherton for more on socialism and the Mexican Revolution 2022.

affairs of these countries are a mere nuisance to the U.S., which is charged by geographic proximity with caring for these nations yet preoccupied with more important affairs occurring in Europe. In the imaginary created by the cartoon, Mexico is positioned hierarchically above Haiti, but only just barely: the boy with "Mexico" on his hat is still drawn as a boy playing on the floor of Uncle Sam's office, his weapon of war making only a tiny hole in Sam's hat.

54. **Attending to His Correspondence**
King, *Chicago Tribune*, 1915. Reprinted, courtesy of the *Chicago Tribune*.

Figure 6 Cartoon titled "Attending to His Correspondence" by Frank King printed in the *Chicago Tribune* 1915, as reprinted in *Cartoons Magazine* 1915

In a cartoon from 1914 printed in the *Des Moines Register* on the occasion of the U.S. invasion of Veracruz, Mexico is depicted as a woman being crushed by a snake, with the U.S.'s boot heel on the snake's neck. This gendered image is reminiscent of Johnson's language around military invasion, using the word "rape" to describe the invasion of Serbia, a situation in which the U.S. is seen as the chivalrous

protector of Serbia's honor. In this cartoon, however, the snake that Uncle Sam is crushing is not an outside invader but a symbol of Mexico's perceived rebellious nature and its inability to govern itself or to foster a stable democracy without U.S. assistance.

Figure 7 Cartoon titled "A Big Step in the Right Direction" by Ding Darling, Des Moines Register, J.N. Darling Papers University of Iowa Library Website

The cartoon, drawn by James Norwood Darling, was titled "A Step in the Right Direction." That step included a coups d'état planned in part by the U.S. Ambassador to Mexico Henry Lane Wilson, who aided Porfirio Díaz's trusted general Victoriano Huerta (whose major military success was the brutal slaughter of Yaqui Indians) and his nephew Félix Díaz in a successful plan to assassinate and

replace revolutionary leader and President of Mexico Francisco Madero. (Lytle Hernandez 25) Huerta took power in February of 1913, and when Woodrow Wilson became President of the U.S. a month later, he withdrew recognition from Huerta and put his support behind Pancho Villa. (Katz 1981) In 1915, Wilson decided to switch sides and throw his support behind Villa's rival, Venustiano Carranza, who was seen as more open to U.S. investment in Mexico, leading to Villa's attack on Columbus, New Mexico and the U.S. manhunt for Villa mentioned previously. (Sandos 1981) But, rewinding back to 1914, the U.S, had withdrawn its support for President Huerta and was looking for ways to aid in his removal from office. Some historians, including Langley, conclude that Wilson believed that it was morally wrong to support Huerta after he had murdered Madero. Wilson was quoted as saying, "I am going to teach the South American republics to elect good men" (Langley 1981). The moment for this perceived lesson came in April 1914, when in Tampico, Mexico, the location of large oil fields housing oil owned by U.S. companies Standard Oil and National Oil, two U.S. sailors wandered onto a Mexican military base and were arrested and released after a few hours. This minor incident led to Wilson invading Veracruz and occupying the city for 7 months, until a peace treaty was signed in Niagara Falls in December. In the initial fighting 22 U.S. soldiers and 330 Mexican soldiers were killed. (Quesada 2012) Rather than protecting Mexico, or even protecting U.S. lives and property, Wilson's supposed moral superiority led to the needless deaths of hundreds of people, hundreds more in his fruitless search for Pancho Villa. In Haiti, 146 U.S. Marines died in the 19-year occupation of Haiti. 11,500 Haitians were killed. (Byrd 2019) There is a connection between these infantilizing and dehumanizing images of people from Mexico and Haiti needing to be saved or taught by a morally, physically, and intellectually superior Uncle Sam, and the premature deaths of the inhabitants of these countries.

"Tia Juana"

It was during this time, as Marines occupied Haiti and Pershing's men were searching the

borderlands for Pancho Villa, that Tijuana became a town. It was also during this period that the media began representing Tijuana as a racialized space of sexual and criminal excess and abandon. Over the decade from 1910-1920, Tijuana transformed from sprawling ranch land into a bustling border town. Tijuana didn't start out as a border town, however. In 1829, when Santiago Argüello was given the land grant for the land that he named Tia Juana (Hispanicization of the Kumeyaay name for the place, Tihuan), his cattle ranch was located, not at any border, but in the center of the west coast of Mexico, which extended to the southern border of Oregon. When his descendants began developing the ranch land into a town in 1889, the line dividing the U.S. and Mexico between San Diego and Tijuana had only existed for 41 years. In 1915, the town attracted one of its first waves of tourists from the U.S., as San Diego hosted the Panama-California Exposition (the event for which the buildings in San Diego's Balboa Park were constructed). (Padilla-Corona 2004) Tijuana held a concurrent Feria Típica Mexicana, or typical Mexican fair, designed to entice visitors to San Diego to spend a day, and some money, across the border. Tijuana really captured the imagination of the U.S. in 1920, when the prohibition of alcohol became the law of the land and entertainers from Los Angeles as well as adventurous tourists began crossing the border to gamble and drink alcohol legally.

It was at this time that the town entered the national discourse of the US. A *New York Times* article written in September of 1920 paints Tijuana as a lawless place where "There ain't no ten commandments" (Chalmers 1). Responding to and reinforcing already emerging stereotypes about Tijuana, the article "The Drought and Tia Juana: A Wide Open Boom-Town Sixteen Miles South of San Diego Over the Mexican Border" echoes the racialization and imperialistic tone of the article on Haiti published five years prior. Under the heading, "What Tia Juana is like," Chalmers writes, "And the people – ah the people - ! They that dwell in Tijuana! All nations! But the American, the Mexican, the Chinese and the colored gem'man from the Souf." When Chalmers simply mentions Black people, he

switches his mode of writing to a racialized caricature of Black vernacular similar of that to an entertainer engaging in Blackface minstrelsy. Even when trying to represent Tijuana as a racially open and diverse space, the reporter is writing from a place of deep-rooted racism and can only see Black men as caricatures.

Chalmers's discussion of Black masculinity includes mention of Jack Johnson, a former U.S. boxing champion who was exiled to Tijuana after his 1913 marriage to a white woman sparked nationwide calls for his lynching. Chalmers refers to Jack Johnson's bar, The Main Event, as "one of the joy palaces in joyous Tijuana" (Chalmers 1). Although he designates Johnson a major figure in the city, he quickly devolves into blatant racism when he describes how a visitor might observe Johnson's movement in the bar: "Presently Jack will rise from that little table where he sits, and strolling out with the air of a jungle king, go off to the ring where he will punch a bag or somebody for practice and the delectation of such as pay to see him "work"" (Chalmers 1). While Chalmers refers to Johnson as "king," he prefaces the title with the dehumanizing modifier "jungle," and his description more closely resembles that of someone held captive and forced to put on a show for his captors. Chalmers encourages his readers who visit San Diego to "do Tijuana," writing that "… there the weary and law oppressed may find an oasis in the desert, a place where he may rest his tired foot on a brass rail and drink to the health of Pancho Villa or whoever it was that invented Mexico." This is intended to be humorous, but the joke reveals the racial project of constructing Tijuana in the U.S. imaginary, a project with which Chalmers is actively engaged. Chalmers consciously thinks of Tijuana not as a real place, but as an invention.

Stephen Chalmers' impact on the U.S. racial imaginary was not limited to this single article. Chalmers was a prolific author of science fictions and westerns, several of which were made into films in the 1920s, including a version of Don Quixote set in the U.S Mexico borderlands titled *Don*

Quickshot of the Rio Grande. The story revolves around a white ranch hand who reads *Don Quixote* and decides to take up chivalry, resulting in his rescuing a white woman from a Mexican bandit name Chico Villegas. In a 2015 review of the book published by the blog, "THE SPECTRE LIBRARY PRESENTS: The Pulp and Paperback Fiction Reader," Morgan A. Wallace writes, "The story is briefly marred by Chalmers referencing the black railway staff as "colored staff" and as "N*****s," though he does not do so in a racial manner." (Spectre Library Presents 2015) This review is contradictory, as it notes something negative about Chalmers' references to Blackness, enough that they "briefly marred" the reading experience but is quick to smooth them over or disregard them.

It is important to note that Chalmers had a significant impact on maintaining and shaping racial ideology in the United States in the 1920s, not only though his books, films, and journalism but also due to his contribution to a tome that was placed in the hands of thousands of young boys in 1920, *The Boy Scout's Book of Stories*. Chalmers' contribution to the book was, unsurprisingly, about race. It is the only story in the book that deals with race. The story is about a Black boy named Smokey who sells newspapers at Grand Central Station, and who is exhibiting symptoms of tuberculosis. He is befriended by a white newspaper boy named Jimmy, who is also sick. They end up recovering in a sanatorium in the country, where the happen upon a Boy Scout troop. Jimmy joins the scouts, while Smokey becomes their mascot. As Chalmers writes, "As for Smokey, he's the Troop Mascot, but—he still thinks Jimmy is God's little brother; and I don't know that I blame him."

XV.—The Mascot of "Troop 1"[N]

By Stephen Chalmers

Figure 8 Illustration from *The Boy Scouts Book of Stories* 2009 E-Book, originally published 1920

The illustration that accompanies the story shows a smirking white boy scout with his arm around a smiling Black boy in a scout uniform, who wasn't a scout in that troop because the scouts were segregated in 1920 and did not fully desegregate until 1974. (MacLeod 213) In this story we repeatedly see the infantilization and dehumanization of a Black person, who is given the name "Smokey" and treated throughout the story like a talking (again, in a caricature of Black vernacular) dog. This is worth noting because the mission of the Boy Scouts of America was purportedly to "build character in the American boy." (MacLeod 213) The mission of the organization was ideological and the ideology that it was imparting included very specific ideas about masculinity and Blackness. Stephen Chalmers contributed to this ideology through his repeated dehumanization of Black bodies throughout his writing career.

In his article on Tijuana, Chalmers wrote of toasting those who "invented" Mexico, but he could well have toasted himself. For many readers of the *New York Times*, especially those not residing in California, this article was more than likely their first introduction to Tijuana. The portrayal of Jack Johnson in the article may have stood out to these readers. Johnson turned himself in to U.S. authorities

shortly after this article was published, amid rumors that he was inciting other Black people in Mexico to participate in revolutionary activities. We see the fear of Blackness and the fear of Mexico converge in his State Department file, which reads, "Jack Johnson, of pugilist fame, has been spreading social equality propaganda among the Negroes in Mexico, and has been endeavoring to incite the colored element in this country" (Horne 32).

This fear of the contagion of Black rebellion is what undergirds media representations of Haiti as well. The case studies examined in this chapter reveal a pattern in the *New York Times* and in nationally syndicated editorial cartoons of textual references to Black and brown savagery that often serve to cover over acts of white savagery. For two years the *New York Times* insulted Frederick Douglass in its pages, writing that he was lagging intentionally to spoil the chances of the United States gaining a coaling station in Haiti. They blamed him for being Black and possibly more loyal to the Haitians because of it, at the same time making the contradictory assertion that the Haitians did not respect him because he was Black. All of this was to sidestep the facts in the case that involved the failure of a business deal between Clyde Shipping Company and Hippolyte and the fact that Admiral Gherardi was a tactless diplomat.

When the U.S. finally occupied Haiti, the discourse in the *New York Times* again turned to savagery, bloodthirstiness, and mentions of the banks of the Congo. It did not mention, as James Weldon Johnson does, the schemes of National City Bank and Haitian land laws. If it had mentioned these events, they would have been framed as a benefit to the forward march of civilization, just at the *New York Times* referred to the extermination of the Yaqui people in Sonora as something that should happen quickly for the benefit of U.S. financial interests. The common thread among all these representations is the racialized valuing of property over human lives.

This study began with an examination into the history of how Haiti and the Mexico/U.S. border

were represented the *New York Times* at the turn of the last century in part to pose the question: where have these ideas taken us over the span of a century and more? Do we see these representations echoing in the present moment? How have we responded to and resisted them? What have been their outcomes and what new forms have they taken? The *New York Times* remains the paper of record in the United States, and it still does not print editorial cartoons. This chapter briefly discussed the visual power of cartoons, and the next chapter will expand on this, looking at the place comic books occupy in popular culture in Haiti, Mexico and the United States and at representations of Haitian Blackness in comic books from each country.

Stuart Hall wrote of popular culture, "It is where we discover and play with the identifications of ourselves, where we are imagined, where we are represented, not only to the audiences out there who do not get the message, but to ourselves for the first time." (Hall 1993) For many consumers of popular culture in the last century, including myself, one of the first sites where we began to consider how we were being imagined and to discover how we were imagining ourselves was in the pages of comic books.

Chapter 3 “Love, and man’s unconquerable mind”: Representations of Haitian Spirituality, Race, and Sexuality in Comic Books

“There's not a breathing of the common wind
That will forget thee! Thou hast great allies:
Thy friends are exultations, agonies,
And love, and man's unconquerable mind.”
William Wordsworth, To Toussaint L'Ouverture (1803)

“So, thanks brother, for your sonnet’s tribute.
May it resound when the Thames’ text stays mute.
And what better ground than a city’s bridge
for my unchained ghost to trumpet love’s decree.”
John Agard, Toussaint L’Ouverture acknowledges Wordsworth’s sonnet “To Toussaint L’Ouverture” (2002)

The epigraph of this chapter consists of the last four lines of two sonnets that were written two hundred years apart. The first is British poet William Wordsworth’s sonnet to Haitian revolutionary hero Toussaint L'Ouverture, who had been captured, taken to France, and locked in a prison, where he would die four months after the poem was penned. In the poem Wordsworth is anticipating L'Ouverture’s death and making the statement that L'Ouverture will be remembered with every breath of the wind because he died for the freedom of a people. In the second poem, written by Guyanese poet John Agard two years after the Haitian Republic celebrated its 200th year of freedom, the poet is imagining how L'Ouverture would have responded to the poem but also inserting his own experience in this imagining. The poem begins with references to some of Wordsworth’s most famous poems, “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud,” and “Composed Upon Westminster Bridge.” These were poems that Agard remembers being forced to read as a child in a British school in Guyana. He recalls resenting reading Wordsworth’s poem about a daffodil when he had never seen one or knew what one looked like. (Norris 2020) So, he begins his sonnet, writing as L'Ouverture, that while he has never walked

on Westminster Bridge, or seen a daffodil, he has smelt the sweet smell of liberty, “when human beings share a common garment,” another reference to Wordsworth’s bridge poem.

The importance of this poetic exchange that spans centuries is what it says about representations of Haitian blackness, and what they mean, and for whom. Wordsworth’s poem to L'Ouverture is beautiful and heartbreaking, as is Agard’s response. The first, because it poignantly captures the tragedy that was unfolding in France, where a revolutionary freedom-fighter was locked in prison and doomed to die, and the second, because it described the representational violence that happened in the ensuing 200 years since L'Ouverture died, after his revolution succeeded. In another of Agard’s poems, “Checking Out Me History,” Agard writes in Guyanese Creole, “Dem tell me bout 1066 and all dat/dem tell me bout Dick Whittington and he cat/But Toussaint L'Ouverture/no dem never tell me bout dat” (Agard 2004). The poem is filled with anger about the institutional silences and erasures that cause children to be cut off from their own history, specifically Black revolutionary history but it is also filled with pride of self-discovery and the reclamation of history.

Comic books, like poetry, stir peoples’ imaginations and arouse their feelings in ways that prose alone cannot. In the Oxford English Dictionary’s lengthy entry on poetry, one definition is that it is a patterned arrangement of figurative language. Another definition, specifically related to the function of poetry, states, “the expression or embodiment of beautiful or elevated thought, imagination or feeling, in language adapted to stir the imagination and emotions.” (OED 1120) While poetry uses figurative language to achieve this, comic books use text and images in sequence to produce a similar sensation in readers. Both Wordsworth and Agard were moved by L’Ouverture to write poetry about him that would produce an emotional effect on the reader.

Another person moved by the life of Toussaint L'Ouverture is historian Laurent Dubois, who wanted to make a comic book that would tell his story in a compelling way to ensure that young people learned about the history of the Haitian Revolution from the perspective of Haitian artists. He approached Haitian-born novelist Edwidge Danticat about a project to produce a graphic novel about L'Ouverture and she recommended Haitian-born illustrator, Rocky Cotard, who then went on to create the comic "The Revolution That Gave Birth to Haiti," released on Haitian Independence Day, January 1, 2021. In this chapter I analyze representations in comic books that create and contribute to an imaginary of Haitian Blackness that is racialized and sexualized in ways that dehumanize Haitian people, and I will also discuss representations that, like Agard's sonnet, address that past violence and attempt to build a bridge beyond it.

The chapter is divided into three sections on U.S. comics, Mexican comics, and Haitian and Haitian diasporic comics. I begin in the 1990s, with a discussion of Marvel Comics' creation of a character who is a Haitian migrant and is juxtaposed in the same comic with a Haitian priestess-villain named Calypso. I begin with this case study because it illuminates how comics are a site where creators and readers explore both social anxieties and fantasy and suggest that while these anxieties and fantasies are racialized, gendered and sexualized, they also respond to the U.S.'s role as an imperial power.[6] Next, I turn to another Marvel character, Brother Voodoo, to trace his character arc from his origins in 1970s blaxploitation era comics to his recent roles in *Black Panther* and *Strange Academy*, in order to consider what the transformation of this character can tell us about changing (and unchanging) notions of Haitian Blackness. My third U.S. comics example takes us even farther back in the history of comics, to the 1920s and 1930s pornographic comics called *Tijuana Bibles*. Although these comics were not made in Mexico,

[6] See Deborah Whaley's (2016) discussion of Vixen p.111, Scott 2021, Fawaz 2016.

their name and the lore that developed around them helped shape a particular imaginary of the Mexico/U.S. border as a space of sexual and racial deviance. In the next part, I examine Mexican comics, including arguably the most popular comic ever published in Mexico, "Memín Pinguin," a racist caricature of a Black child who looks like a monkey, and "Fuego, La Magistad Negra," a lengthy series about the Haitian Revolution, created by the husband and son of Memín Pinguin's creator. I analyze the links between these comics as well as what they say about how Mexico contends with its own racial history the history of the Haitian revolution, and Mexican anxieties about miscegenation. Finally, in the third part of the chapter, I analyze Haitian and Haitian diaspora comics of the 21st century to foreground how this new generation of artists is answering poet John Agard's call for non-Eurocentric representations, made by Caribbean artists for Caribbean young people, and why sequential art is the form some of these representations are taking.

Discourse about representation of Haiti and the U.S.'s role in Haiti's current political struggles often appears first in newspapers and magazines, and then is taken up in comics. Haitian novelist Edwidge Danticat has long been concerned with media representations of her home country. In interviews and articles, she has lamented the U.S. media's focus on Haiti in crisis and its failure to acknowledge the U.S.'s role in the problems faced by the Haitian people. In a 2004 interview for *The Morning News,* Robert Birnbaum, asked her, "Is it a burden, as part of your life's work, to talk about Haiti to people who have no idea where Haiti is?" (Birnbaum and Danticat). Danticat responded that one thing she found frustrating was being asked for sound bites about Haiti during crises that are caused by processes far more complex than a short response could convey. She replied, "I think Haiti is a place that suffers so much from neglect that people only want to hear about it when it's at its extreme. And that's what they end up

knowing about it. There is a frustration too, that at moments when there's not a coup, when there are not people in the streets, that the country disappears from people's consciousness" (Birnbaum and Danticat).

When photographs of migrants being abused by U.S. Border Patrol agents focused the media's attention on Haiti in 2021, Danticat entered the conversation with an article in *The New Yorker* titled, "The U.S.'s Long History of Mistreating Haitian Migrants: The current tragedy at the border is just the latest fallout from the U.S.'s failed policies toward Haiti." In the article, she testifies to the mistreatment her own family endured at the hands of U.S. migration officials. She explains the historical events, heavily influenced by actions of the U.S., that have directly caused the instability in Haiti's government, and she explains the reaction she had to the news that President Biden was making moves to re-open the immigrant detention center at Guantanamo Bay, with the requirement that it be staffed by Kreyol-speaking guards. (Danticat 1991) The article is not a list of grievances but a call for an end to U.S. meddling in Haiti and for the country to be given a chance at self-determination.

This representation of Haiti has been countered in the pages of the same magazine by an article published in July of 2023, which inserts itself into the long-standing narrative of Haiti as an un-savable hell where Black bodies suffer and die with no end in sight. This *New Yorker* article called "Haiti Held Hostage" was written by long-time war correspondent Jon Lee Anderson. Anderson is famous for his books *Che Guevara* (1997) and *The Fall of Baghdad* (2004). He has been criticized for inconsistencies and historical inaccuracy in both his book on Guevara and in his coverage of Venezuela and Hugo Chavez for the *New Yorker*.[7] The article can best be described as extreme and sensationalist, offering readers a detailed view into the

[7] Bhatt 2013 and Franklin 1997 for criticism of Anderson's work.

horrors of gang violence in Haiti, with only cursory explanations of the root causes of this violence. In one section of the article, he describes the historical legacy of violence perpetrated by the Haitian government, stating that even Jean Bertrand Aristide, considered the first democratically elected president of Haiti, resorted to extreme extrajudicial violence. He then relates this in graphic detail, writing that Aristide recruited his own enforcers, which were called Chimères after the famous slum Cité Soleil, whom he then encouraged, using coded speeches, to torture people. Anderson describes the most well-known and sensationalized form of torture associated with this period in Haiti, "known as necklacing: executions in which victims were yoked with tires doused in gasoline and set alight" (Anderson 2023). The accuracy of this statement is questionable, as Aristide has been accused of giving coded speeches to incite working-class Haitians to commit violence against the Haitian elite in the days leading up to the 1991 coup that ousted him from power. Others say his speech was not advocating violence but referencing the Haitian constitution. (Pease 2010) Despite questions of accuracy, this speech and Aristide's supposed calls for a class war and for this specific act of torture captivated the U.S. media in the 1990s, as Haitian migrants fled the country in the tens of thousands after Aristide's ouster. This was another bloody transfer of power that the United States may have had a hand in. (Ives 2018) The instance of the U.S. media repeatedly reminding audiences of horrific violence done to Black bodies, as we see in Anderson's recent article, is part of a long legacy of such instances. In the 1990s, this same practice of necklacing and its association with Haiti was penciled and inked in full color in the pages of a mainstream comic book, *Daredevil* Vol 1. #310, published by Marvel. This comic introduces the first and to my knowledge only mainstream comic book character who is identified as a Haitian migrant. Like in Anderson's depiction, the comic's creators use this depiction of torture to support a narrative of Haitians as only either

monsters or victims.

Figure 9 Daredevil Vol 1. #310 (1992) p.11

In the comic, the character, Yves Chapoteau, shows up in the law office of Matt Murdock, the alter-ego of the Daredevil, to seek legal help with his asylum case. Just then, INS agents storm the room and Chapoteau flees, only to be caught in the street by a paramilitary group that Chapoteau refers to as “Cagoulars.” This is the name of an actual militia that existed in Haiti, the precursor to the Toton Macoutes, who were Duvalier’s security forces, and did not exist in 1992. (Magloire 2016) The group attacking Chapoteau in this scene would more accurately be the paramilitary forces of Raoul Cedras, not that this would likely have mattered to most readers, who may not have known anything about Haiti beyond what was on the evening news in 1992: mentions of violence, refugees and AIDS. The panels depicting this scene show the soldiers in ski masks, an amalgamation of media representations of Haitian violence and barbarity. The group is shown passing judgment on Chapoteau and finding him guilty,

sentencing him to death by torture, and emphasizing the lack of a fair and just legal process such as was supposed to exist in the United States. Justice and the law are a primary theme of the Daredevil comics, whose title character is a lawyer, and they are subverted here in an extreme way that had come to symbolize Haitian justice in the U.S. imaginary.

As in this comic book, Jon Lee Anderson's 2023 assertion that necklacing (called Pè Lebren in Haiti) is becoming a widespread practice in the country once again is drawing on sensationalism to perpetuate the idea about Haiti that nothing ever changes. In the comic book we see this in the way the paramilitary groups are interchangeable and unchanging, keeping Haiti trapped in a cycle of violence and in need of U.S. intervention. Comic books have always been a place where social anxieties are explored and contested, and this issue of *Daredevil* is in some ways pushing back against social anxieties about Haitian migration, showing Yves Chapoteau as a human being with a name and not a faceless part of a "flood" of black bodies crashing onto U.S. shores. (Gamble 1993) The comic also criticizes U.S. immigration policy as unfair to Haitian migrants, with the title character twice mentioning the hypocrisy of the U.S. government in its legal practices and statements discouraging migration when lives are being lost.

Although the plot of this *Daredevil* issue centers on the story of a Haitian migrant, the main antagonist in the comic is an established Marvel character named Calypso, a character whose back-story, abilities, and physical appearance rely on tropes about Haitian blackness, femininity, and sexuality. Calypso Elizi was created in 1980 and first appears in the pages of *Amazing Spider-Man*, where she is introduced as the toxic girlfriend of Russian arch-villain Kraven, who taunts him for his weakness, implying that he will only be able to prove his masculinity by killing Spider-man. In this first appearance, Haiti is not mentioned. The comic opens at "a retreat somewhere in the Caribbean." (O'Neil 1980) In her second appearance,

Calypso's character is revealed a bit more, specifically she is labeled as having no sense of honor, because of her attempt to kill Spider-Man with a spear while he is fighting Kraven. Kraven saves Spider-Man, and yells to Calypso, "How can I love a woman who can't understand the meaning of honor — of dignity." (Mantlo 1982)

There is a long history of identifying Black women as lacking moral fiber, as Hazel Carby outlines. (1992) Speaking about the policing of Black women's bodies in northern cities during the Great Migration, Carby writes, "The moral panic about the urban presence of uncontrolled Black women was symptomatic of and referenced aspects of the more general crisis of social displacement and dislocation that were caused by migration" (741). While Carby is talking about the very specific moment of mass migration of African Americans to the cities of the northern Unites States as refugees from the racial violence of the Jim Crow South, there is a thread we can trace from that particular moment to this representation of a Black Haitian woman in New York City in the 1980s.[8]

"Spectacular Spider-Man" #65, the issue featuring the amoral Calypso, was released in April of 1982, the same month that 38 Haitian women incarcerated at the Fort Allen migrant detention center sent a moral appeal to the United States, which was printed in the *New York Times* on April 23. In this letter, the women declared:

"'We did not flee our country in search of food and drink, like they say. You know this as well as we do, and yet you treat us like animals, like old rags forgotten in some corner. Do you think that in acting that way you dissuade us from our purpose? Do you think that you are thus morally destroying us? You are wrong. This is a cry of despair, a final call to your nobleness, to

[8] For the connections between the Jim Crow South and contemporary instability in Haiti see Johnson (1920) and Byrd 2019)

your good judgment, to your title as a great power. We would be honored by a satisfactory answer from you, an answer to these luckless refugees who ask only for the charity of liberty." (Jaynes 1982) At the time of the article's publication the U.S. was holding 2,200 Haitian migrants at federal detention facilities at the behest of then President Ronald Reagan. As the pages of the *New York Times* were reporting on the rise in Haitian migrants to the U.S. and their mistreatment by the U.S. government, the pages of *Spider-Man* were depicting a Haitian woman who lacked the ability to understand the meaning of honor and dignity.

In her book *Black Women in Sequence*, Deborah Elizabeth Whaley argues that the way Black women are drawn, written, and read in the pages of comics signifies Black women's real and imagined roles in society. This becomes more apparent in the case of Calypso's character, as the increase in Haitian migration propelled by the coup in the 1990s coincided with the development of Calypso as a major character with plotlines in both Spider-Man and Daredevil comics. In 1990 Marvel launched a new Spider-Man series with a 5-part introduction story called "Torment," in which Calypso is the main antagonist. This story arc was an important milestone for Marvel and its *Amazing Spider-Man* illustrator Todd MacFarlane, who was given the title of writer/illustrator on this comic, which would go on to become the most successful comic in history. *Spider-Man* #1, the first issue in the Torment arc, sold 2.56 million copies, which at the time was the most ever sold of a single issue, and launched Todd MacFarlane to the top of the comic industry. (Voger 2006) In a 2006 interview about his transition from illustrator to writer/illustrator, MacFarlane speaks to his desire to not be limited to drawing other peoples' fantasies but to have the opportunity to bring his own to life. As he put it, "I don't wanna do your tricks and your characters and your favorite heroes and villains. I wanna do the guys that I get off on." (Voger 2006) Apparently, one of the things MacFarlane got off on was Calypso, because he

chose her as the villain for his first storyline, one that was criticized by the editorial staff as too dark and adult for the pages of Spider-Man, and led to limitations on which villains he could use and which story-lines he could pursue. (Wallace 2007)

In the "Torment" arc, Calypso uses her powers of mind-control to hypnotize a monster called The Lizard into attacking Spider-Man, while dulling his famed Spidey-sense with her rhythmic drumming. The first three issues explain very little of the plot, but slowly reveal images of the monster and the droning of the drum. The reader only sees Calypso depicted as a shadow with red eyes, amid mentions of primal drums, magic rituals, and "allegiances to things most unholy." (McFarlane 1990 p.11) The issue is done in MacFarlane's signature dark and choppy style, with tranquil scenes of Peter Parker and his new bride Mary Jane's domestic life, as they tease and tickle each other in their New York apartment, juxtaposed to graphic images of the Lizard ripping people apart at Calypso's bidding. While the villain's identity still hasn't been revealed to the reader, MacFarlane slowly gives textual and visual clues. After the monster makes his first kill, it is shot by a would-be victim, and the ceaseless drumming, represented in the comic by red block letters spelling, DOOM - DOOM -DOOM, across the panels, stops and the reader is given a full-page clue into Calypso's identity.

In the foreground of the page there is a dark building with arched windows that resembles a church lit from behind by a sea of skyscrapers. On the page next to this are four panels in the form of five narrow page-long vertical strips, the first showing cheetah print velvet drapes with red eyes staring out from behind them. In front of the hidden figure is an ornate stone cauldron with smoke rising from it. The second panel gives more detail, showing the shadow of a feminine figure with bare legs standing in front of the cheetah drapes. The third panel is an extreme close-up of a woman's face, with beaded braids hanging over her heavily eye-shadowed

eye and penciled eyebrow, purple skin, and the beaded braids framing her face at the bottom. The fourth panel shows a purple finger with a long, claw-like fingernail being pierced with the tip of a dagger above the cauldron, which now is revealed to contain blood. The last panel shows long drips of blood streaming down the page and into the cauldron. At the top of the page there is one word on the page itself and on each of the five panels that combine to form a sentence, “IN THE BLACKNESS IT BEGINS AGAIN.” At the bottom of the blood-filled cauldron, the signal that the drumming has resumed, are the red block letters, “DOOM.”

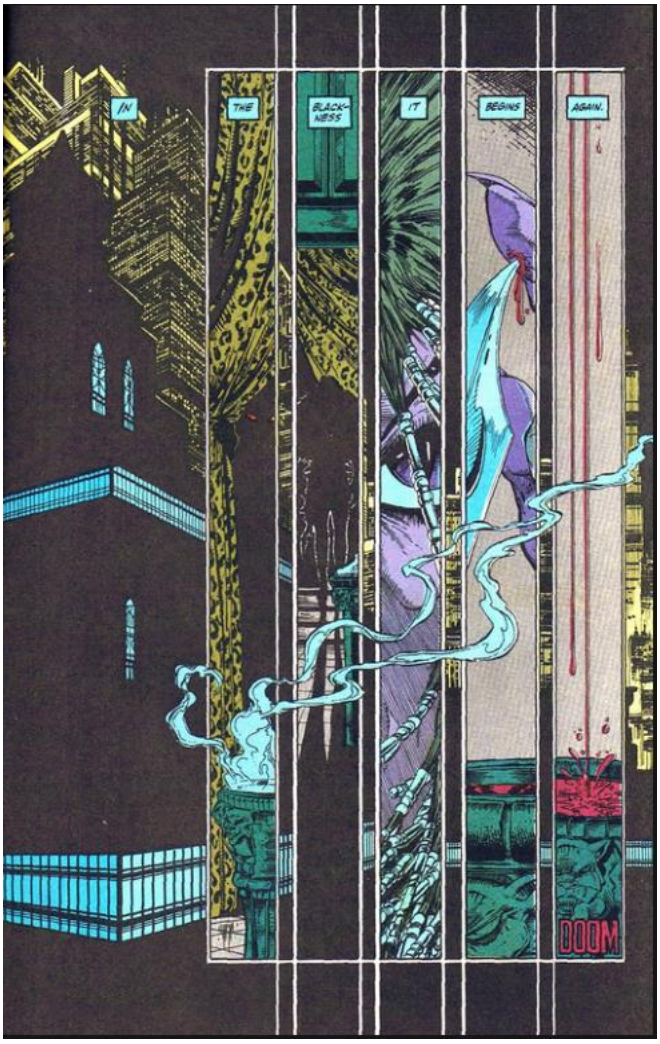

Figure 10 Spider-Man #1 “Torment” (1990) page introducing the super-villain Calypso. On this page, Calypso is bringing the Lizard back to life through a Voudu ritual. None of

this is overtly stated but is rather shown through the smoking, blood-filled cauldron, the finger-prick, and the starting of the DOOM that signifies the drumbeat. As Calypso's character is being revealed, she is associated with markers of Black femininity reminiscent of Eartha Kitt's Catwoman--feline print, the 60s femme-fetal eye makeup, and long nails--but she is also being associated with markers of Haitian Blackness such as drumming, magic rituals, and the use of blood to bring the dead monster back to life, all of which signal to the reader that Calypso is a practitioner of Haitian Vodou.

This is shown to be the case in the fourth installment of "Torment," when Calypso is finally revealed as the villain and her back-story is given. Over a two-page span, MacFarlane illustrates Calypso's journey to super-villain, which began in Haiti. Again, the country is not mentioned by name but is this time referred to as "a small Caribbean island, where magic is the ruler of the land. Where dreams were not made, but destroyed." The first and last panel in the sequence are full-color close-ups of Calypso's face but the flashback to Haiti is depicted in red, black, and white, with Calypso shown as a shadow with red eyes. The sequence explains that, before she met Kraven, she was envious of the power held by "tribal heads" in Haiti, so she dedicated herself to evil and had to sacrifice someone in a ceremony to gain the powers she possessed. The next page tells of her relationship with Kraven and its aftermath. Of the 9 panels on the page, the three at the top are worth looking at in detail, as they show exactly how Calypso is being racialized and sexualized.

Figure 11 Spider-Man #1 "Torment" (1990) panel giving Calypso's backstory.

The first panel shows her profile along with the words, "Years later, she met him. The Hunter." (This is a reference to Kraven the Hunter, whose death Calypso blames on Spider-Man.) The next panel shows three black spears adorned with red feathers and pointing upward. At the bottom of this image are the words, "He pleased her. He loved her." The phallic imagery of the spears combines with the text to offer the pleasures of primitive sexuality. The next panel is a close-up of the right half of Calypso's torso, including part of her arm, her right breast and hip, and the detail of her loincloth made of animal fur and teeth. The text here says, "When the hunter left her lust needed direction." The page continues, explaining that her lust found direction when she "seduced the gods" and killed her sister to become, "not a witch, but THE witch." This depiction of Calypso is a tired repetition of the worn-out Jezebel trope, defined by Cedric Robinson as "the Black, amoral seductress," words that are used verbatim to describe Calypso. (Robinson 54)

While Calypso is overtly sexualized in McFarlane's story, she is never depicted as an object of desire for Spider-Man. In the comic, she manipulates The Lizard into attacking Spider-Man and hypnotizes him with her rhythmic drumming. Her actions are incessantly referred to as "black" and "evil," and she is both visually and textually juxtaposed with Spider-Man's wife Mary-Jane, whose actions in the comic depict her as sweet, innocent, and domestic. In the first such juxtaposition, we see Peter Parker and Mary-Jane play-fighting on the couch in their

apartment, and she is depicted as listening to him talk about himself and his prowess for an extended amount of time until she gets him to stop talking, "attacking" him, by tickling him. Peter exclaims, "No fair," and we turn the page to see the Lizard, entranced by Calypso's drumming, brutally attacking and killing civilians, while the text reads "sometimes…life can be unfair."

McFarlane uses the repetition of the words "attacking" and "fair" to contrast Peter and Mary-Jane's wedded bliss with Calypso's senseless violence. This happens again and again throughout the four-part series, as we see Mary-Jane attempt to get Spider-Man to stay in their apartment and participate in domesticity, asking him to eat breakfast with her, and even reminding him to make time to pick out wallpaper for the bathroom. Each time, he is compelled by his deep need to be a hero, to leave Mary-Jane and pursue Calypso, eventually falling under the spell of her drums himself. Although Spider-Man isn't depicted as desiring Calypso, he is depicted as compulsively needing to seek her out until he is finally captured by her, with the ultimate objective being his death at Calypso's hands.

Spider-man's attraction to Calypso is being depicted as a compulsive draw to primitivism. It is the "doom" beating of Calypso's drum, depicted as the source of her power, that hypnotizes Spider-man and brings him under her control. In her essay, "Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance," bell hooks argues that a shift took place in western culture in the latter half of the 20th century regarding desire and bodies of color. In the past, white men desiring Black women often took the form of overt domination and rape but in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, white men desiring Black women is often more about absorbing or consuming something primitive and coming away from the encounter fundamentally changed. (2014) In making this argument, hooks cites Michel Foucault's statement that real, complete pleasure

would be un-survivable and would lead to death. As hooks writes,

> "Though speaking from the standpoint of his individual experience, Foucault voices a dilemma felt by many in the west. It is precisely that longing for the pleasure that has led the white west to sustain a romantic fantasy of the "primitive" and the concrete search for a real primitive paradise, whether that location be a country or a body, a dark continent or dark flesh, perceived as the perfect embodiment of that possibility. (hooks 370)

Todd McFarlane's Torment storyline is in some ways an exploration of Foucault's point that some forms of pleasure exist in close proximity to death. When Spider-Man is in Calypso's grasp, he is repeatedly described as dying or near death and her sexuality (lust and insatiable need) is repeatedly invoked as the reason for her desire to "torment" him to death.[9] When he finally escapes her lair, it is she who dies, pulling the abandoned church down upon herself with the insinuation that she will use her magic to bring herself back to life.

Deborah Whaley also references hook's theory of eating the other in her analysis of the depiction of African women in mainstream comics. Whaley argues that these characters, largely created by white men and with no factual ties to a specific nation or real African cultural practices, are acting as what she terms, "comic book blood diamonds," defined as "embellished African gems extracted from imagined cultural contexts and artfully reshaped for commodification in the global marketplace, allowing readers the opportunity to gaze and graze upon Africa" (97). We see this happing to some extent with Calypso, as Haiti is never overtly mentioned in the pages of Spider-Man, just referred to as "somewhere in the Caribbean," or "a small Caribbean island." The context clues that mark Calypso as Haitian are her connection to magic and to Vodou, specifically her ability to re-animate dead bodies. This is seen more clearly in her appearances in *Daredevil* #310 and #311, the storyline involving Haitian migrants, where she ends up making Daredevil himself into a zombie. He doesn't realize what has happened to

[9] The title of the 5-issue story arc.

him until he is watching television and happens to see a segment about zombies.

Figure 12 Daredevil #311 Matt Murdock learns about the Haitian zombie myth while watching T.V.

On the page, Matt Murdock (The Daredevil's alter ego) turns on the television making sure to comment that this is a form of mind-numbing entertainment for the masses: "America's Favorite Pastime, my father always called it the "Idiot-Box"." One thing to note is that Matt Murdock and The Daredevil are blind and obviously cannot watch television. Murdock is depicted on the right half of the page, standing in the shadows in his suit and dark sunglasses and facing the reader as he points the remote control to turn on the TV. Next to this the artist and

writer (Scott McDaniel and Glenn Herdling) offer four panels showing the reader not only what Murdock was hearing but what he couldn't see on the screen. The first panel shows a Black man in MC Hammer pants on the stage of a talk show, where the host Jay (a reference to Tonight Show host Jay Leno) tells the guest that he does not want to be turned into a zombie. He is saying that because the guest is Jericho Drumm, the alter ego of another Haitian Marvel character, Brother Voodoo. The next panel shows Drumm holding a book titled, "Do You Voodoo? I do!", which he is on the show to plug. He quickly goes into an explanation of how the soul and the process of zombification are understood by practitioners of Voodoo. The next panel shows the close-up face of a woman with white skin, arguably African features, and a bandanna around her head. Drumm explains that the image is a photograph from 1936 of a woman named Felicia Felix Mentor, an example of the first type of zombie, one who has lost their free will and is enslaved to a master. The final panel shows a monster with blank eyes and the face of a rotting corpse. Drumm explains that this image is the example of a person who has not lost their will, but their conscience. This is the second type of zombie, the walking dead.

This page explains to the reader the connection between Haiti and zombies and gives the reader actual historical information. Felicia Felix Mentor was a real person, a woman who reportedly died in Haiti, and then resurfaced decades later, alive but cognitively disabled. This woman was written about and photographed in the 1930s by Zora Neale Hurston and the image was published in *LIFE Magazine* in 1936 with the caption, "THIS IS THE ONLY ZOMBIE EVER PHOTOGRAPHED." This reference to Felix Mentor in the pages of *Daredevil* is significant as her image is important to the history of the representation of zombies, which I will discuss at length in the next chapter, but also because her photograph was taken and circulated without her consent, and then very deliberately inked onto the pages of a comic book decades

after her death.

In the comic, Calypso is killing Haitian migrants, turning them into zombies, and having their bodies repatriated to Haiti to be slaves to a Voudu priest who has promised to help Calypso raise her lover, Kraven the Hunter, from the dead. In the end Daredevil defeats Calypso, his humanity is restored, and he attempts to restore the humanity of the Haitian migrant zombies, but they refuse, saying, "No Redman it is better to die than to return to the fate awaiting us in Haiti." As they say this, the building where Calypso had her hideout (the Museum of Natural History in Central Park) collapses on Calypso and the migrants, potentially killing them all, though it is implied that Calypso will again reanimate herself. The issue ends with Yves Chapoteau being arrested by immigration officials while Daredevil pledges to work with amnesty international to help Haiti.

There are many layers to unpack here but central to my argument is the return of a very specific narrative about Haiti and Haitians throughout this two-part series. The story starts with a Haitian migrant who is attempting to organize a coup being tortured by a Haitian paramilitary group. He then ends up being rescued by a white superhero who happens to be a lawyer. Haiti is mentioned several times as un-savable. To return there is a fate worse than death. This is the same narrative being propped up in 2023 in media representations such as Jon Lee Anderson's article in *The New Yorker,* which also included depictions of Black bodies being tortured and an un-savable Haiti.

Much of the depiction of Haitian Blackness in comics centers around tropes about Haitian and African religious practices. While Calypso, a Voudu priestess, is Marvel's first Haitian super-villain, Marvel also featured a Haitian superhero who was created in the early 1970s Blaxploitation era, when Marvel giant Stan Lee wanted writers to come up with a hero

who practiced Voodoo. Brother Voodoo (Lee rejected the idea to name him Doctor Voodoo), depicted above speaking about zombies on TV in *Daredevil* #311, premiered in the Marvel series *Strange Tales* in 1973. His real name is Jericho Drumm and he is a Haitian-born psychologist who lives in New Orleans but returns to Haiti upon the death of his brother, a Vodou priest, whose spirit he absorbs, becoming Brother Voodoo.

Scholars writing about Afro-Caribbean representations in U.S. comics have come to varying conclusions about Brother Voodoo's legacy. In his article, "Finding Haiti in Comic Book Literature," Edwin Magloire offers a reference list of all U.S. comics that mention Haiti or feature Haitian characters. He declines to include Brother/Doctor Voodoo in this list, however, stating that these comics are mere caricatures of Haitians. Paul Humphrey has a different take on Brother Voodoo, arguing that the depictions of Vodou religious practices with no explanation or context given to non-Afro-Caribbean readers allow readers who might identify with these characters to understand them differently and more deeply than other readers, while at the same time centering marginalized narratives. (Humphrey 2019) More recently, Yvonne Chireau has written extensively about representations of African and Haitian spirituality in comics as an organized narrative structure of propaganda, or mytheme, that she calls Graphic Voodoo. Chireau traces the history of this mytheme from the years following the Haitian Revolution, when white authors published fictionalized accounts of the events of the revolution in the form of gothic literature. She states that these accounts focus on sensationalizing sacred religious practices under the word Vodeaux, which became Voodoo by the 20th century. As she writes, "The true essence of Haitian Vodou, a religious tradition of reverent interactions with sacred forces of nature, ancient deities, and ancestral spirits, would be adulterated by writers and artists in the sensational fictions of Graphic Voodoo." (Chireau 28)

Graphic Voodoo is clearly present in depictions of Calypso practicing necromancy and using a Yoruba drum as a mind-control device, but Brother Voodoo is in some ways a more complicated character because he is a Black Voodoo practitioner who is not a villain but a hero. In his work on Blaxploitation comics, Rob Lendrum writes that in these comics just as in the films of the genre, Black heroes were represented as uniquely suited to solve what were seen as stereotypically Black social problems such as drug-dealing and gang violence. (2005) This idea of crimes to fit the hero gets even more specific in the case of Brother Voodoo. For example, in *Marvel Team Up* #24, published in 1974, Brother Voodoo helps Spider-Man take down an evil loa (spirit deity) who has started a sex/death cult and is sacrificing young black women, whom he ensnares by pretending to be a director casting a play about Voodoo. The entire episode is an exercise in Graphic Voodoo. Brother Voodoo tells Spider-Man that the evil loa, Moondog, started a hedonistic cult "dedicated to the pleasures of life… and death," in New Orleans, and while Brother Voodoo defeated the cult there, Moondog escaped to New York. (Wein 1974) The geographic and religious amalgamation of Haiti and New Orleans is something that Chireau argues is a key part of Graphic Voodoo, "bastardizing Africana religiosity." (46) Writing about Brother Voodoo specifically, Chireau states that while his character was posited as a racially progressive character depicting Haitian Blackness as heroic, the comic was still operating under the tropes of Graphic Voodoo seen in horror comics of the 1950s, which included representations of Africana religion as primitive, sexually excessive, violent, and evil. (46)

Figure 13 Marvel Team Up #24 (1974) Brother Voodoo and Spider-Man discover Moondog's human sacrifice ritual.

In the climax of the Spider-Man and Brother Voodoo Team-Up issue, the panels at the top of the page show Brother Voodoo telling Spider-Man his plan to take down Moondog, while in the theater a very muscular Moondog is drawn standing on the stage, wearing white briefs and a necklace of skulls. He is holding a knife above the body of a woman who is lying before him on a table in a white nightie. The stage is washed in golden light. Behind Moondog are several demonic-looking masculine figures dancing masked in the light, while two women in golden

bikinis dance on the stage in front of him. The text reads,

> "The theatre is small, dark, intimate -- and the players upon the stage are obviously quite well versed in their roles. The audience sits entranced, transfixed by the wildly abandoned gyrations performed before them- - as the powerfully-built star of the drama laughingly intones the proper incantations -- raises the sharp ceremonial dagger above his head --"(p. 10)

In these panels the masculine, dignified, and heroic Brother Voodoo is outshined by the masculine, hedonistic, and murderous Moondog, who is performing his racialized and sexualized masculinity on stage before an audience but also performing for the reader. The language in the text that accompanies his image naturalizes the actions of the bodies on the stage, stating they are "obviously well-versed" and their primitive sensual "gyrations" hypnotize the audience, who look on from the shadows, just as Calypso's drum hypnotizes Spider-Man. The writer makes a note of Moondog's physique as well as his religious knowledge as he prepares to kill the woman in front of him in service of his religion. The next row of panels features no text, just the Black faces of the audience, well-dressed and wide-eyed in anticipation, a close-up of the woman on the table, paralyzed with fear as the knife glimmers inches from her body, a close up of Moondog's face, a murderous gleam in his eyes and toothy, maniacal grin, and last, his fists gripping the knife and pushing it downward. The bottom of the page features two panels, the first a zoomed-out view of Moondog bringing the knife down to the woman's body, punctuated by bold red lettering, "STOP!!" The last panel shows Brother Voodoo with his signature cape, no shirt, and an animal-claw necklace, wagging his finger at Moondog and threatening to destroy him if he touches the "child." While Brother Voodoo is depicted as strong, masculine, and intelligent, the foundation of his character is a caricature of Haitian spirituality, and this leads him to be viewed as a caricature not only by readers but by Marvel and the writers and artists that created him.

This is exemplified by the depiction of Brother Voodoo and his "family members" in issues of *Marvel Age,* a comic magazine that served as a promotional tool and year-in-review for Marvel Comics in the 1980s and 1990s. The March 1989 issue of the magazine includes a series of comic strips that spoof a late-night TV show, with Brother Voodoo writer and illustrator Fred Hembeck depicted as the host, interviewing superheroes from various comics. In this series, Brother Voodoo's presence is depicted as a big joke. When he walks on stage, the host states that he is confused, as he thought the show was only featuring "heavy hitters" who had their own comic book. Brother Voodoo reveals that he bribed the producer, not with money, but, in his words, "Let's just say that for the coming year, with every blood sacrifice of a chicken, the Salicrup family won't feel any need to order out to the Colonel's" (Hembeck 6). Brother Voodoo then reveals that he had to come on the show because he recently realized he has not achieved commercial success due to "lack of sex appeal" (Hembeck 6). He introduces the solution, his sister, who is depicted in a costume that basically renders her naked. Her introduction is followed by a page-long installment of her origin story, where it is revealed that she was kidnapped as a child and raised under the name "Vanna Black." It is repeatedly and explicitly stated that her only purpose is to fill a sexual void. At the end of the issue, Brother Voodoo makes another surprise entrance on the late-night show to announce that he has just learned that his sister is also "Mother Voodoo" and introduces her baby, Voodoo Chile. The baby is supposed to be the love child of Sister Voodoo and the deceased impersonator of an unnamed musician, but the implication is that he was a Jimi Hendrix impersonator, because the baby is named after one of Hendrix's songs and only speaks in Jimi Hendrix lyrics. The issue features multiple comic strips dedicated to Sister Voodoo and Voodoo Chile, with a white neighbor coming to their apartment to complain because Voodoo Chile is practicing Voodoo on her. This racialized

mockery of Haitian sexuality and spirituality is part of a long legacy of expressions of white anxiety around Black masculinity and spirituality in general but more specifically the idea of Haitian masculinity and spirituality as particularly powerful and threatening to white masculinity in the aftermath of the Haitian Revolution. Chireau makes a similar and compelling argument in her essay, stating,

> "it was the historic fall of Saint-Domingue that brought deeply repressed fears of African-inspired spirituality and black empowerment into white mythic self-consciousness. In the aftermath of the Haitian Revolution – a calamitous event of epic proportions – Western powers would register the image of the new republic as a "monstrous anomaly" upon which nightmares of race and religion would thereafter be imprinted" (Chireau 34)

This anxiety is manifest in the constantly repeated trope of Voodoo and Voudu as evil, monstrous, and deadly, and in the particular hypersexualization of Haitian characters, both male and female. I say particular here because comics have hypersexualized a wide variety of characters, but the Marvel comics discussed represent Black Haitian sexuality as very specifically tied to primitive spirituality and death. To understand the connection between these 20th century representations of Haitian Blackness and representation of the city of Tijuana as a place that is racialized and sexualized in different but also very specific ways in the popular culture of both the U.S. and Mexico, it is important to examine an early 20th-century archive of racialized sexuality, the cheap pornography comics known as Tijuana Bibles.

The Tijuana Bibles are pornography comics published in the U.S. from the 1920s to the early 1960s but named for Tijuana because they included graphic and hypersexual depictions of queerness and Blackness that were imagined as being more available or more possible in Tijuana. In his introduction to the book, *Tijuana Bibles, Art and Wit in America's Forbidden Funnies* (1996), Art Spiegelman addresses the possibility that the comics might offer negative representations of women: "Though there are bound to be those who will loudly declaim that the

Tijuana Bibles demean women, I think it important to note that they demean everyone, regardless of gender, ethnic origin, or even species. It's what cartoons do best, in fact. It's also crucial to point out that there actually are no women in these books. This is a genre drawn primarily, if not entirely, by men for an audience of men, depicting women with omnivorous male libidos" (3).

Spiegelman seems to be arguing that women are absent from the comics because they are not depicted realistically. In fact, no one in the comics is depicted realistically. Men in the Tijuana Bibles are overwhelmingly drawn with penises that are far larger than human anatomy would allow. The only instances in which men have realistically sized penises are when they are being emasculated or queered. However, this stretch of reality does not lead Spiegelman to conclude that men are not present in the comics. Similarly false is the claim that the Tijuana Bibles demean everyone equally. There are countless examples of blatant and unabashed racism and the promotion of white supremacy that can be found in any modern anthology of the cartoons. Take, for example, *The Tijuana Bibles: America's Forgotten Comic Strips* (2008), edited by Michael Dowers. Although the essays included make no mention of race and slight mention of gender, the comics speak for themselves. The final comic included in the book is titled, "Coozing Around the World with Popeye," and depicts the popular sailor and his hamburger-consuming friend Wimpy sailing around the world in search of exotic sexual encounters. Accompanying Popeye and Wimpy is Geezel – a stereotypical and anti-Semitic character, which the Tijuana Bibles did not create, but are helping to perpetuate. He was a recurring character in the original Popeye comic strip until changing social norms demanded his retirement. In "Coozing," "these men first engage in intercourse with women from Hawaii, Singapore, and China. Popeye is then depicted having sex with a Black woman, drawn with

exaggerated and stereotypical features that make her look like a person in Blackface, and only identified as "one of our native girls." A native of where is unclear because she speaks in African American Vernacular English, saying, "Um-m-m Mr. White Man yo' sho' has it" (511). This is the first time a woman speaks in the comic. The only other women who speak are the two white women depicted – a Polish woman and a "Sea Hag" – who mark the end of the characters' conquests. For some reason, this "pussy-chasing hunt," (496) ends with an implied homosexual act between Popeye and Wimpy.

Throughout the comic, while Popeye and Geezel are having sex with women of color, Wimpy is desperately trying to have sex with his male friends. In the early 20th century queer sexuality and transgression of the gender binary were extreme social taboos yet in the pages of the Tijuana Bibles queer sex and transgender characters were commonplace. That is not to argue that these representations were positive — they were misogynistic, racist, homophobic, and transphobic but they were inclusive in that they provided something that was not easily accessed in the period from 1920-1960, namely printed masturbation material for gay men.

Victor Banis, one of the first widely published writers of gay erotica, fiction, and nonfiction, writes about this in the introduction to his cult-classic collection of erotica, *The Tijuana Bibles Reader*. Published in 1969, the book is a compilation of stories written by Banis and his friends. Explaining the book's title to readers, Banis argues that the Tijuana Bibles were so named for two reasons, one being that the city of Tijuana is synonymous with sex, "the very use of the name Tijuana designates erotica and sexuality, the erotic arts are specific" (3) and the other being that San Diego is an extremely gay town, a fact that Banis attributes to the presence of tens of thousands of military personnel. He writes, "These guys are young and horny. They're a long way from their homes, where, as often as not, these stories were a rarity and hard to come

by (no pun intended). Most if not all of these guys end up sooner or later with a few of these readers in their possession" (4). Banis goes on to discuss the general queerness of San Diego and San Diego's pornography supply, which he estimates is 50 percent gay.

Towards the end of his forward Banis makes a claim that is central to an understanding of the work the *Tijuana Bibles* are doing as cultural texts. He argues that pornography, more than any scientific study, depicts the unadulterated truth about society. He writes, "Here he utilizes the shield of anonymity, the freedom of literary exercise, the full strength of his imagination, to demonstrate what he really feels, thinks, desires. Here are no cloaked meanings, no innuendos, no carefully couched phrases designed to protect the ego. This is how it is, all the way inside, all the guts and damn the general" (5). This statement makes clear that the Tijuana Bibles are significant, not as a curiosity or collectible rarity, but as a window into the sexual imaginings of men in United States in the first half of the 20th century. If we use *Coozing Around the World with Popeye* as an example, we see that these imaginings were underwritten by deep-seated, gendered, fantasies about race.

In his article "Jazzing the Comics," Goldstein describes the function the Tijuana Bibles served for a generation of young white men who used the books as masturbation material. He completely disregards issues of race, but even his title "Jazzing the Comics," expresses overt racialization and hypersexualization.[10] I am interested in a specific anecdote he relates, in which a white man who "got his first stiffie in a schoolyard from a Tijuana Bible, then travels to Mexico, where he "found the filthy mother-lode." This reveals that although the comics were not

[10] There is much controversy around the etymology of the word jazz, with many prominent Jazz musicians (Wynton Marsalis and T.S. Monk among them) stating that the word means sex, specifically prostitution. Although G.L. Cohen (2015) argues that the word was first seen in print in the sports section of a San Francisco newspaper, discussing baseball.

produced or set in Tijuana, they were closely tied with the city in the U.S. imaginary and were in fact sold there. While Tijuana Bibles are an early example of the primacy of racialized sexuality in U.S. comic culture, their legacy is clearly seen in comics created south of the border as well.

Memín Pinguín

While it's true that pornographic comics can offer insight into the fantasies of a society, this can be said more generally about comics as whole. As argued previously, comics and the characters in them often speak to social anxieties, fears, and imaginings. This is the case in the comics of Mexico, where the most popular comic for the second half of the 20th century is arguably a serialized minstrel show. The story goes that the ubiquitous Mexican comic book character Memín Pinguín was created in 1943 by Mexican author and telenovela writer Yolanda Vargas Dulché, who thought up the idea for the series after observing Black children on a trip to Cuba. The comics, in which Memín and his mother are the only Afro-descended people depicted, take cues from U.S. minstrel cartoons of the early 20th century and are a staple in Mexican culture. While weekly issues of the comic book continued to be reprinted and sold widely, they were at the height of their popularity in the 1970s and 1980s and helped to inform the racial ideology of multiple generations of Mexicans.

In 2005, the government of Mexico released a series of 5 stamps commemorating Memín Pinguín and was immediately met with international outcry. The George W. Bush White House issued a statement condemning the stamps as racist. Then Mexican president Vicente Fox immediately responded in an exclusive interview with the Associated Press (AP), stating that, "Quienes opinaron no tienen la información, francamente" (Those who gave their opinion do not have the information, frankly). He goes on to state that those who made the official statement on behalf of the U.S. government and those who spoke up in defense of minorities also did not have

"the information." The truth, he states, is that this character is known and loved throughout Mexico. An AP article published in the *Los Angeles Times,* "Mexico's Leader Defends Divisive Postage Stamp," quotes Mexican customers who were in line to purchase the stamps: "At the post office, some people waited hours to buy the stamps. Americans are "the racists," said Cesar Alonso Alvarado, 53. "They're worse than we are, but they just want to belittle us, like always." The article ends with a sentence-long explanation of anti-Black racism in Mexico, followed by a quote from an Afro-Mexican activist: "Mexican Blacks said they weren't surprised by the stamp, and many attested to being ignored or mistaken for foreigners in their own country. 'Police frequently make people sing the national anthem if they get you on the highway or in the bus station, because they think you might be a Central American,' said Eduardo Anorve, a Black rights activist." ("Mexico's Leader Defends Divisive Postage Stamp") The unnamed AP reporter, rather than giving one of the abundant examples of blatant anti-Black racism from the pages of Memín Pinguín, or even a quote from this activist about his opinion on the comic itself and its perpetuation of Mexican anti-Blackness, reveals to readers that Mexico does not consider its own Black citizens as Mexicans but gives no context for this information and no explicit connection between the issue of the Memín Pinguín stamps and this experience of systemic racism by the Afro-Mexican activist that was interviewed.

The argument from Mexican officials, media commentators, and citizens interviewed by the press was that charges of racism from the U.S., the country that exports its racist ideology around the globe, were laughable given U.S. history of Jim Crow laws and systemic racism and anti-Black cultural production. In fact, many argued that the tropes that the Memín Pinguín stamps were being said to resemble, the Pickaninny caricature and the Mammy caricature, were U.S. creations, which they are. As scholars writing about the stamps in the aftermath of the

controversy have noted, what was missing from the Mexican response to the outcry was any acknowledgement of Afro-Mexicans, of racism in Mexico, or of the actual overt anti-Blackness depicted in the pages of the Memín Pinguín Comics, beyond the very overt violence of simply the images of Memín and his mother, which they also failed to acknowledge as racist.

Moreno Figueroa and Saldívar Tanaka begin their 2016 article on nationalism and post-race ideology in Mexico with the account of Ángel Amílcar Colón, a Black Garifuna (Afro-Indigenous) migrant and activist from Honduras who was beaten and arrested by Mexican police. In the brutal account of his beating, Colón notes that the police, after making him lick their boots clean, called him Memín Pinguín and spat on him. This act of violent humiliation, the authors note, occurred in 2004, just four years after the stamp controversy erupted. That the police officer, while engaging in the violence and brutal dehumanization of a person, would invoke the name of a comic book character (one referred to as beloved, cherished and nostalgic), is not at all surprising if it is understood that this character itself is a violent dehumanization of Black bodies, and the representation being produced in the comics creates and perpetuates a culture that sees Black people as non-human and as such not deserving of human dignity. [11]

A close reading of one of the issues of Memín can offer a glimpse into the way anti-Blackness operates in the comic. In one installment, titled "Ayyy! Memín," the main character and his classmates are chased by dogs and end up running through mud. They go to his rich friend Ricardo's house to clean up. The ridicule of Memín begins when they all take off their clothes. The white boys all have age-appropriate bodies but Memín, who is about a foot shorter than all his friends, has the body of a small child. When they strip down to their underwear, the

[11] The character is referred to as "beloved", "cherished" and "nostalgic" by stamp purchasers as reported in the LA Times July 13. 2005

friends start to laugh. Memín is wearing ruffled underwear. As his friends call him an old lady and a clown, he tells them that this is how his mother dresses him.

Figure 14 Memín Pinguín #3, "Ayyy, Memín" (1980)

While the other boys are depicted as self-sufficient and mature, Memín is constantly infantilized. As his friend's shower and tease him, Memín gets in the bathtub and pretends he is a submarine. This revelry is cut short as Ricardo's parents return to the house and he tells his friends to get out before they are discovered. Memín grabs the first towel he can find and hides in a closet. When Ricardo's mother goes upstairs, she finds a mess in the bathroom, including Memin's ruffled underwear. She picks them up and washes her hands but cannot find the hand towel, because Memín took it. She opens the closet, pulls the towel off Memín and screams, "Ayyy! Que horror! Un mico!"/ "How awful! A monkey!" (3-30). Hearing things, Memín thinks there is a monkey in the closet with him, and runs away, towards Ricardo's mother, who now

thinks the monkey is chasing her. This is meant to be the punchline of the issue.

Although Haiti is not explicitly mentioned in the pages of Memín Pinguín, there is a connection between the racialized trope of the simple-minded child, a representation of Haiti created in the U.S., that would have a significant impact on Mexican popular culture. John Vandercook's 1928 book, *Black Majesty* attempts to detail the childhood of Henri Christophe, of which little is known, outside the fact that he was born enslaved in Grenada. He describes the baby Henri Christophe alternately strapped to his mother's naked hip, and sitting in the dirt with other babies, crying and being bitten by ants. He then proceeds to romanticize the experience of enslaved Black children in the Caribbean. As Vandercook writes, "and childhood after that … one long, gallant summertime when a Black was free, free for the only time till death, and justly for that long season, more free than any white child ever was" (8). This glorification of slavery is not only horrific, but it also mirrors a sentiment that is present in the Memín Pinguín comics, as echoed by contemporary fans of the comic, who persistently state that the appeal of Memín is his carefree innocence. *Black Majesty* has another connection, as the husband of Memín Pinguín's creator, Guillermo Parra, and their son, Manelick Parra, co-authored a series of comics on the Haitian Revolution that was based on Vandercook's book.

Fuego

The first part of the series "Fuego: Majestad Negra," tells a grossly fictionalized account of the life of Henri Christophe while the second part of the series, "Fuego: Nobeleza Negra" follows the exploits of Christophe's fictional mulatto son, Andres Cristobal. This series, first published in Mexico in the late 1970s, was a great commercial success and was distributed widely across Latin America starting in 1982. According to the Catálogo de Historietas de la Hemeroteca Nacional de México, (Comic Catalog of the National Newspaper Library of

Mexico), the comic series was “based on the novel "Black Majesty" by John W. Vandercook, which very arbitrarily recreates the history of the struggle for the independence of Haiti, led by Henry Christopher in 1791, and his later reign on the island.” The actual book “Black Majesty,” published in 1928, is not a novel at all, but more of a historical memoir. In the preface, Vandercook stresses that the book is not a “work of reference”, but he includes a selected bibliography, with works cited in order of importance. These include books on Haitian history published in Haiti, France, the U.S., and England.

Nothing about the book seems arbitrary, although the author does, at times, use speculation when filling in gaps, as evidenced in his re-telling of Christophe’s childhood. The postscript of the book includes a brief biography of Vandercook, who at the time of publication was still in his early twenties. The biography explains his interest in the subject of Haiti and the life of Henri Christophe:

> “While a young newspaperman out West, he witnessed the lynching of a Negro, and that awoke his interest in the whole Negro problem. He has been to every Negro republic on the face of the globe. With his young wife, a well-known sculptor, he spent many months in Haiti and the Dominican Republic, studying psychological and political conditions, and gathering material for his biography of the Black Emperor – Henri Christophe – whose story he has told so vividly in Black Majesty.” (208)

Here, the reader learns that the genesis of the book is the violent murder of a nameless Black man, who in Vandercook’s biography serves merely as a point of interest almost as incidental as the fact that the author’s wife was a sculptor. This man’s death served as an “awakening” for Vandercook, who used the experience as inspiration to become a travel writer and anthropologist. That the family that made its name off the publication of the Memín Pinguín comics would gain inspiration for their next project from this man’s book, with its blatantly racist depictions of Black bodies, and seeming disregard for Black personhood, is not surprising. However, while Guillermo and Manelick De la Parra used Vandercook’s basic structure, they

based their series on a fabricated love affair between Henri Christophe and an affluent white woman. In *Fuego*, the Haitian Revolution is merely a backdrop for this sordid tale that played on social anxiety around miscegenation. The second issue of the comic details Henri Cristophe's parents' capture, transatlantic journey, and sale into slavery in Haiti (all in the first few frames). Most of the issue centers around the character development of Ubo, Christophe's father, who is depicted as superhuman and impervious to pain. There is much research (Wallace, Clarke, Lendrum) on the buck stereotype in U.S. comics but little scholarship on how this same stereotype is employed in Mexican comics and film.

Enrique Garcia does take this up in his article on Haiti in the work of Derek Walcott, in which he offers an analysis of Fuego and its significance in Latin America. He compares Antonio Gutierrez's art in the comic to the visual style of Mexican melodramatic films and telenovelas and comments on the similar racial aesthetics at play. He writes, "The art of Fuego fails to convey correctly Christophe's race because it uses the principles of old Mexican films in which gallant and beautiful Africans are portrayed by Caucasian actors in Blackface makeup" (185). In fact, Ubo is depicted this way, as a muscular man with what are ostensibly white facial features, and dark skin. His wife Zura looks white and is racialized in the comic as "Arabe" and the daughter of a Sheik. The comic continues with Ubo and Zura being sold separately. Ubo is sold to a man, whose white wife wants to make him submit to her, and Zura goes to a man, who sees her and immediately "his eyes become aflame with lust" (2-2). He buys her and takes her home, where his wife, immediately and correctly, accuses him of buying her for sexual reasons. She laments the number of mulatto children she has observed on the island, stating, "Da vergüenza que jovenes franceses busquen esos monstrtuos, que ni siquieren parecen mujeres" (It's embarrassing that young French people look for those monsters, who don't even look like

women) (2-28). Her husband responds by pointing out that they are pretty much the only women on the island. She presses him further about why he purchased the beautiful young women, and he tells her he bought them for her. She is shocked by this, stating that she would not want to be in proximity with Black women. He reassures her that the woman he has in mind for her is not Black and tells her to see for herself, thereby introducing her to Zura. Matilde examines her, commenting: "De piel oscura, pero de faccio nes como las de nuestra raza…no eres blanca del odo; anunque, al menos, no pareces un mono como las demas" (Dark-skinned, but with features like those of our race… you're not white in the ear; although, at least, you don't look like a monkey like the others) (2-12).

This statement is of particular interest considering the author's proximity to the character Memín. In *Fuego*, De La Parra is writing intentionally racist dialogue spoken by a jealous white slave mistress in which she compares Black women to monkeys. It seems clear he puts these words in her mouth to show how racist she is. At the same time, an advertisement for his wife's flagship series Memín Pinguín is printed on the back of this very same issue, and Memín is drawn, as always, to very closely resemble a monkey. This depiction of Memín, as evidenced in in the press coverage of the stamp controversy, is not seen as racist by many of the comic's mestizo fans.

While De La Parra's comic is telling the story of Black enslaved Haitians rebelling, successfully overthrowing the French, and creating their own government, he deploys racist and gendered tropes to in his telling of the story to diffuse its radical potential. As seen in figure 15, the wife of Ubo's owner expresses her ever increasing interest in him and is jealous of his fidelity to his own wife. At this point, as her husband escorts her away from the field where Ubo is working, the narration states, "Pero mientras se alejaban sus ojos seguian fijos en la poderosa

masculatura del esclavo” (” But as she walked away, her eyes remained fixed on the slave's powerful masculature.” She exclaims “¡Lastima que ser negro!” (Too bad he’s Black!” (2-28).

Figure 15 *Fuego* #2 (1982)

It is not remarkable that De La Parra is depicting French slave owners in Haiti as racist but the important thing to glean from his depiction is his rigid adherence to specific stereotypes: the buck, the tragic mulatto, tragic miscegenation, and a specific racialized sexualization of Haitian Blackness in particular. In the following scene, Zura gives birth while accompanying her mistress on a sea voyage. Because Zura is Arab, the mistress expresses shock when the baby is born Black. She covers her mouth - “¡Un niño negro!” (A Black child!”). At this moment her

husband takes possession of the baby by physically grabbing him from his mother but also with his words - “¿Que importa el color? Es un nuevo esclavo y lo llamaremos… Henri… Henri Christophe” (What does the color matter? He is a new slave, and we will call him Henri… Henri Christophe). The episode ends with a sleeping Zura waking up to the sounds of “¡Un rito vodou!” (” A vodou ritual!)” and baby Henri is nowhere to be found. She runs outside to find a priest holding a knife in the air above her child, and the panel concludes with the words, “Continuara la proxima semana” (To be continued next week). What would seem to be the major plot points of this issue, Cristophe’s parents arriving in Haiti and being sold into slavery and Christophe’s birth, take up a tiny fraction of the comic, which is almost entirely focused on the drama of racialization and miscegenation.

Writing from a U.S. standpoint, Diana Paulin offers insight into the obsession with representing miscegenation in cultural production. She argues that often when a story is focusing on miscegenation, it is covering over other social anxieties about race and race-relations, using the drama that miscegenation stirs up to direct attention away from other anxieties that threaten whiteness. Paulin frames these representations of miscegenation “as a “cover story” for the complex processes of racialization and the ongoing performances of bifurcated nationhood” (xii) like the fear of Black freedom made manifest by the Haitian Revolution.

Sara Johnson’s groundbreaking book *The Fear of French Negroes: Transcolonial Collaboration in the Revolutionary Americas* (2013) examines the worldbuilding networks that were created between Haitian revolutionaries and radical freedom fighters throughout the hemisphere. To describe this process of connection between colonized and formerly colonized peoples, Johnson coins the term transcoloniality and argues that New Spain (which would become Mexico) was a part of this transcolonial network of sustained anti-colonial struggle, a

network that again was rooted in Haiti and the Haitian Revolution. (Johnson 2012 p.3) Mexico has a very different relationship to the Haitian Revolution than the United States does, and this is evident in the fact that Mexico's mainstream cultural production includes a hugely popular comic book about the Haitian Revolution. *Fuego,* like Brother Voodoo's character, depicts Haitian masculinity as heroic but the comic similarly falls back on depictions of Graphic Voodoo.

Haitian Comics

Although Haiti has been represented in comics by writers and artists from outside Haiti since comics became a part of popular culture, comics produced by and about Haitians have only recently begun to circulate more widely. In his article on representations of Haiti in comics, Charles Forsdick briefly outlines the history of comics produced in Haiti or by Haitians in the diaspora, starting with Andre Le Blanc, who rose to fame as an assistant to Will Eisner in the 1950s and drew the first widely published illustrated bible, the *Picture Bible,* in 1979. Le Blanc also created a comic about Haitian religion, but issues are all but impossible to locate.

In the contemporary moment, several Haitian artists and writers are responding to the lack of widely available Haitian comics. One example from within Haiti is *Djatawo,* created by Anthony Louis-Jeune and billed as the first Haitian superhero. The goal of *Djatawo,* published in Haitian Kreyòl, is to spread pride in Haitian culture among youth in Haiti. Louis-Jeune has also created a character named Tanama, who uses her superpowers to support local farmers as they combat climate change through tree planting. A synopsis of the comic on the Tanama Project website reads, "her mission is to promote tree planting, support smallholder farmers and advance gender equality. She helps children and youth understand why all three are important and interconnected, and how they can contribute to making each happen."

The producers of the comic are very intentionally creating a representation that Haitian children can connect with in a positive way. Haitian spirituality is a major component of the Tanama comics and Louis-Jeune represents Vodou as being about love, light, and protecting people and the environment. In the first issue of the comic, *Tanama Origins*, a girl from a farming family is injured when her family's moringa and cotton farm are destroyed by an evil fly. She is rescued by Dedouble, a man whose body is covered in glowing symbols that give him incredible power. As the comic explains, these symbols are "a fusion of visual energy created by a powerful Atlantian alchemist, along with Tno magicians and Nisibidi wizards." (Tanamaproject.org) The magic in the story comes from the history of Vodou, which is believed to combine West African spiritual practices with those of the Taino people who are indigenous to Haiti. Nisibidi is a system of pictorial writing from Nigeria that scholars of African language believe is linked to Haitian veve. (Asante 2007) Louis-Jeune careful crafts this history and presents it alongside his artwork, which represents Black Haitian women as powerful heroes (Loius-Jeune refers to them as supersheros).

Figure 16 Tamana origins (2020) English Version

After Dedouble rescues Rochelle, he is guided by energy to a rock, where the sage women, who are born with magical ancestral farming knowledge, are trapped. In a large panel at the top of the page, we see the back of Dodouble's head and shoulders, which are bare save for the glowing veve that adorns them. In front of him we see what he sees, the sage women prepared to fight him, not knowing that he is there to get help. They are radiant, with glowing white dresses and are emanating veve light symbols from their hands. Rochelle's aunt Flo, who is one of the sage women, intervenes, and in the next panel we see the defiant sage women on the right, Dedouble holding Rochelle's limp body on the left, and Aunt Flo between them, separating them with a grid of light-power. At the bottom of the page Aunt Flo is standing above Rochelle,

her light-power flowing in a stream into Rochelle's sleeping face. The last panel shows Aunt Flo doubled over with two other sage women comforting her. She has used her energy to save her niece's life.

The images depict women supporting each other and drawing on power that is rooted in their ancestry and spirituality to protect their community. The sage women end up using their power to make a life-sustaining cocoon around Rochelle and planting a huge forest around the cocoon so the trees can bring her back. Rochelle becomes infused with the trees' power, transforming into the supershero Tamana. The contrast between Tamana's character and the Marvel character Calypso is so stark that it almost goes without saying. Yet it is important to understand that Louis-Juene is intentionally undoing a violence enacted by Todd McFarlane in his depiction of Calypso. To be fair, McFarlane did not create Calypso but he did choose to center his first story as a writer on her and it was the story that launched his career and the whole genre of dark, postmodern comics. He intentionally made Calypso primitive, hedonistic, and evil. She is obsessed with sex, power, and death. It is clear that McFarlane's intended audience was not Haitian youth. He was specifically writing Spider-Man for white U.S. American boys.

In fact, McFarlane was criticized in 2013 when he attended a press conference to promote a PBS documentary on the history of superheroes. When asked about his representation of women, he repeated an idea that he had stated in the 2006 interview quoted earlier in the chapter: that comics were the fantasies of their creators, this time adding the adjective, "testosterone-fueled." (Logarta 2013) He goes on to say that if he wanted his daughters to read something empowering, he would not direct them toward comics:

> "I've got two daughters, and if I wanted to do something that I thought was emboldened to a female, I probably wouldn't choose superhero comic books to get that message across. I would do it in either a TV show, a movie, a novel, or a book. It wouldn't be superheroes because I know that's heavily testosterone – driven, and it's a certain kind of

> group of people. That's not where I would go get this kind of message, so it might not be the right platform for some of this." (Logarta 2013).

McFarlane's assertion that superhero comics are inherently not a space for the empowerment of women is made clear not only in his words in this interview but possibly even more so in the women characters he writes.

In creating Tanama, on the other hand, Louis-Juene's intention was to create characters and stories that would empower all Haitian young people, showing powerful heroes working together to sustain each other. Louis-Juene's work does contain darkness and violence (Rochelle's father has his head beaten off with a baseball bat by the evil fly) but this violence does not rely on the racialized sexual fantasies of the author to propel the narrative. In Louis-Juene's comics, Haitian people are depicted as holding unique knowledge about the earth and spirituality, as being self-reliant, and as having power that comes from their identity as Haitian.

In the second installment of *Tanama*, *Tanama: Metamorphosis*, Louis-Juene explores themes of anti-colonialism in a storyline that involves a coup, international intervention in Haiti, and the resulting closing of Haiti's borders so that the country can heal from the violence of colonialism. Tamana awakes from her forest-cocoon to discover that this newly healed Haiti is again threatened, this time by alien lizard people, so she must travel to Spain to repatriate Taino artifacts that will help defeat them. Louis-Juene's comics offer readers a glimpse of a fantasy that is not degrading or dehumanizing but that is imagining a world where indigenous ancestral knowledge can repair the damage done by racialized capitalism and colonialism.

Comic creators in the Haitian Diaspora have also created representations of Haiti that contrast and push back against the U.S. and Mexican comics discussed previously in this chapter. An example of this is a comic history of the Haitian Revolution titled "The Revolution that Gave Birth to Haiti/Revolisyon Ki Akouche Ayiti." The comic came about in 2017, when theNib.com,

a progressive digital comic site, approached author Laurent DuBois about creating such a comic. In a conversation he had with famed Haitian author Edwidge Danticat, she recommended illustrator Rocky Cotard for the project, which was published by theNib.com in 2018 and is now widely used by educators and available in English, French and Kreyol.

One important intervention the comic makes is to directly address the issue of representation. Towards the end of the comic the author is discussing the aftermath of the revolution and the fact that Haitians knew there were many enemies to emancipation. The next panel features an illustration of a white man who could be from the contemporary moment and is clearly not dressed like a person from 1804, reading a newspaper titled "News Now" with a photograph of shirtless Black men with machetes committing violence against what appear to be kneeling white men in suits. The text accompanying the illustration reads, "The Haitian Revolution was often represented at the time -and since- as an unleashing of barbarism, with white victims as martyrs. Many scoffed at the idea that Blacks could rule themselves, or even understood what freedom was" (Cotard).

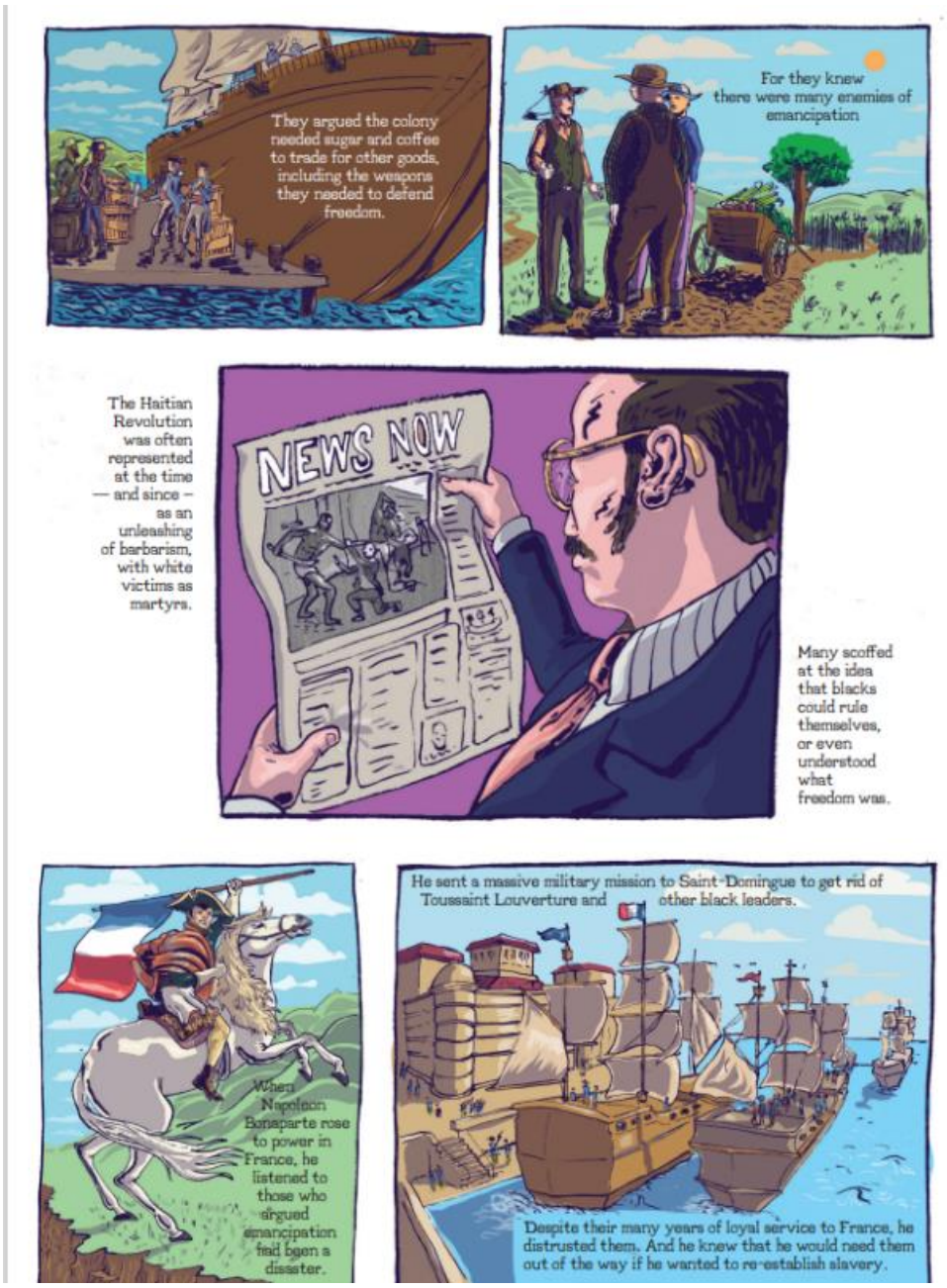

Figure 17 The Revolution that Gave Birth to Haiti/Revolisyon Ki Akouche Ayiti by Rocky Cotard and Laurent Dubois reveals the effects of narratives about the Revolution.

This is important not only because it calls attention to the power of representation as an obstacle to the sustained success of the Haitian revolutionary project in 1804 but also the legacies of those representations in the contemporary moment as evidenced by the "News Now" title, the photograph, and the attire of the man holding the newspaper. This may bring to readers'

mind how Haiti is being represented in current media and the material effects of those representations at the close of 2022, as the U.S. was poised to launch another invasion of Haiti under the guise of protecting the country from gang violence. This offers young readers a way to connect the lessons of history with what is happening in the present.

While this is a necessary contribution to unbiased education about Haitian history, not all examples of contemporary Haitian comics are about the Haitian revolution or Haitian spirituality – some are simply superhero stories. *Spirits Destiny*, a comic created in 2016 by Dorphise Jean, tells the story of Destiny, a Haitian-American high school student living in Miami who discovers she has superpowers. In the first issue, as Destiny is introduced, her Haitian identity is not foregrounded in the story. It seems that first and foremost, she is a high school student struggling with typical teen issues and testing the boundaries of her family and other authority figures. The only real evidence we get that Destiny is Haitian is an asterisk next to words spoken by her grandmother informing the reader that this speech is translated from Haitian Creole. On the page we see a Black mother and her adult daughter eating breakfast, fruit and coffee on the table, and the mother reading a book. We see the granddaughter standing in the doorway in her school uniform with a cross on her polo shirt indicating she attends a Christian or Catholic school. Like her mother, she has black hair with a bold streak of white on the front. We see a close-up of her hand grabbing an apple from the table. In the last panel the granddaughter is walking away, eating the apple, as the grandmother issues a protective reminder to chew her food, so she doesn't choke.

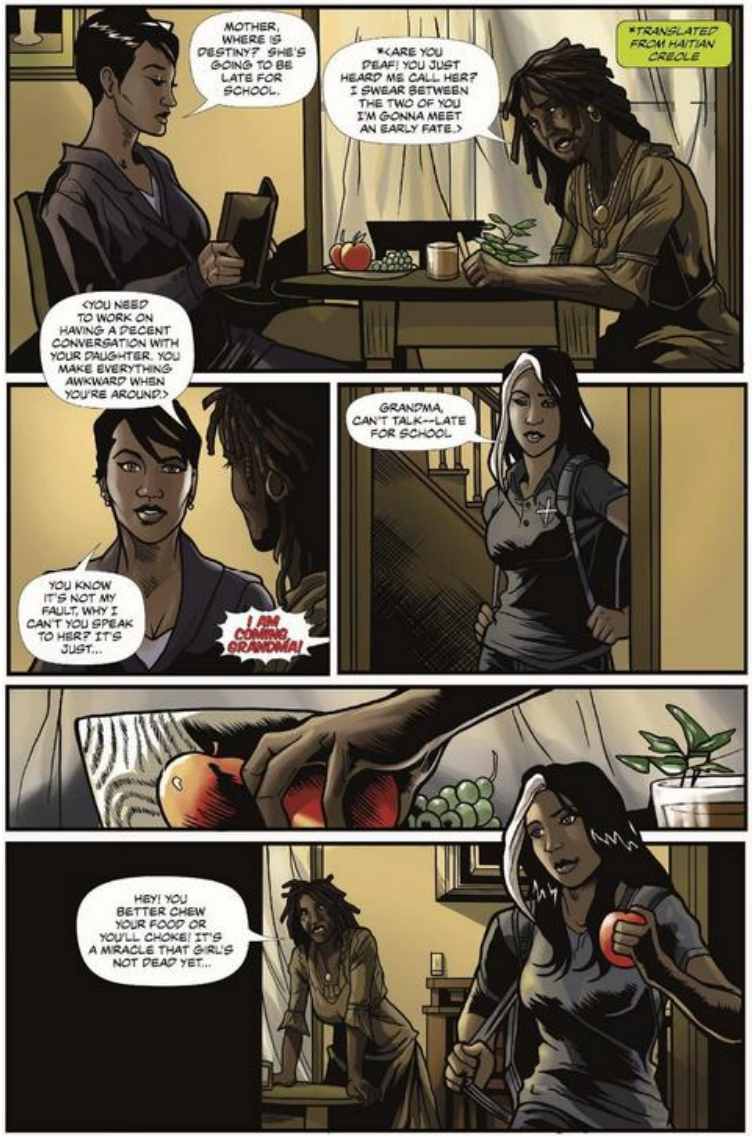

Figure 18 *Spirit's Destiny* (2016) by Dorphise Jean depicts its hero at home eating breakfast with her family.

The interaction depicted here is reminiscent of the domestic scenes between Peter Parker and Mary Jane in *Spider-Man* #1. There the reader saw Mary Jane asking Peter to join her for breakfast, reminding him that he needed to eat. Jean is depicting her Haitian characters the way the Marvel authors in the chapter depict their white characters, as human beings, and not as projections of social anxieties or fantasies. Unlike "Djatawo", 'Tanama" or "The Revolution That Gave Birth to Haiti," the first issue of "Spirit's Destiny" is not overtly making a statement

about Haitian identity or expressing a self-awareness about its importance as an actor in righting the representational wrongs inflicted by outside cultural production about Haiti. That is not to say, however, that the work this comic is doing is any less important. What "Spirits Destiny" is offering is a depiction of Haitian Blackness that is human and relatable, and not exoticized or fetishized. This reclamation of diasporic representation of Haitanness that is at play in *Spirits Destiny* reveals how Haitian artists are able to respond to representational violence in ways that have real and lasting impacts on the world.

This chapter began with a discussion of two poems about Haitian Revolutionary leader Toussaint L'Ouverture. The first was written just before his death by a white British poet of great renown, Wordsworth, who saw L'Ouverture for who he was, a hero who would be remembered on the gust of every wind because he led his people to freedom against great odds. The second poem was written 200 years into this hard-fought freedom by a Black Guyanese poet of great renown, Agard, who wrestled with his past experience of being forced to read the poems of Wordsworth about English flowers and rivers, poems that he could not understand or identify with. And then Agard discovered the first poem, Wordsworth's sonnet to L'Ouverture, and wrote the second poem, imagining L'Ouverture's response, identifying the vast chasm of difference between the poet and the revolutionary but acknowledging the bridges that can be built by love.

The next chapter continues to engage representations of Haitian Blackness in U.S. and Mexican media, moving now to film, to answer questions about how and why the Haitian zombie myth has been a major presence in the cinema of both countries. The chapter examines what the legacy of these zombie films means to contemporary Haitians and analyzes the work of Haitian filmmakers who are revolutionizing the zombie genre by making films that use the themes of love and liberty to reclaim the zombie, or zonbi, as a uniquely Haitian monster with

the liberatory potential to become an “unchained ghost” trumpeting love’s decree.” (Agard 2002)

Chapter 4: "You are less alive than the trees": Bodies and Borders in North American Zombie Cinema

"I say here is water that will make you pass one day onto the side of humanity! I say bonjour to this water coming to us from the confines of pain! Let's all say bonjour to this water coming to us from the depths of the sea! I say this water is the glorious zodiac that will vanquish all the monsters of our night!"
René Depestre, "The Early Morning Bath"

"Octavio Paz has said, "It suffices for a chained man to close his eyes for him to have the power to make the world explode," and I, paraphrasing him, add, it would suffice for the white eyelid of the screen to reflect the light proper to it to blow up the universe."
Luis Buñuel, "The cinema, instrument of poetry."

In 1966 Haitian poet René Depestre published a series of connected poems titled, "Un arc-en-ciel pour l'occident chrétien, poème mystère vaudou/A Rainbow for the Christian West," a vodou mystery poem. The book begins with a prelude explaining the setting and the cast of characters. A Black man in Alabama, enraged by the violent oppression of his people, is walking naked toward the home of an Alabama judge. Depestre writes, "Somewhere within me a loudspeaker was recounting the story of the childhood of my race. They crackled, thumping against one another like blind birds. Yet they gave rise within me to an unbearable hope" (Depestre 1977 Dayan translation). From the beginning, Depestre asserts that the narrative of the poem is rooted both in pain and powerful possibility. He then describes the white family, the Alabama judge, and his children, including a West Point cadet, a future republican senator, a future Ambassador to Panama, and the gods that this family prays to: Jesus, the Ku Klux Klan, the H Bomb, the Electric Chair, and the Statue of Liberty, stating that tonight these gods "are pledged to silence."

He proceeds to introduce "the great gods of voodoo" in a series of 16 poems, collectively titled, "The Epiphanies of the Voodoo Gods," in which each god, or loa, is given a chance to speak to the white family. Each of these is a reckoning, with the gods calling the family to account for the terror it has inflicted on Black bodies. In the second poem, the loa that is associated with the west African war god Ogun tells the family that his right arm is fire and that fire itself has run out of patience with the way

the family has been using it: “Fire does not draw fuel/ From the black man’s pain/ Fire likes to sing and laugh and drink/ To make love with the air…Each time a white hand/Hurls a black body to his depths/He burns it devours it/Absorbs it digests it/But in his fiery soul/Mute tears choke green leaves” (Depestre 1977 Dayan translation).

Again, Depestre is contrasting Black suffering with the possibility of something hopeful identified with laughter and love. Fire wants to drink the air, not devour Black bodies at the hands of this Alabama family. The ninth poem in the series introduces Captain Zombi who begins by explaining his mixed-up senses. He drinks with his ears; he hears with his fingers; and sees with his tongue. His nose is a radar that detects the human heartbeat. But he has a sixth sense, Depestre writes, an awareness of the dead. Through Captain Zombi, Depestre relates his macabre cataloging: “I know where they are buried/Our millions of corpses/I am accountable for their bones. I am inhabited by cadavers/Inhabited by the rattling of their dying/I am a floodtide of afflictions… I keep watch over a troop of black bones” (Depestre 1977).

Captain Zombi presents himself as the one who literally knows where the bodies are buried, in this case the victims of racial violence, and he is the shepherd of these bodies. A footnote to Colin Dayan’s translation of this poem explains that Captain Zombi is an attendant of Baron Samedi, the guardian between the world of the dead and the living, who introduces himself in the next segment. In the most vengeful of poems so far, Baron Samedi tells the family who he is, what he will do to them, and why. He lists their sins, including lynching, dropping the atomic bombs, and hating Black people. He then lists the members of the family one by one, saying he strikes them each on the head seven times, taking their souls. As Depestre writes: “With blows of the whip I take /Your little souls O Alabama Zombis/I carry off your little souls/I am the Baron of the rain/And you are less alive/Than the trees or termites of my household” (Depestre 1977 Dayan translation). In this poem, the members of this family

are all symbols of United States institutions that uphold structural racism, as defined by Ruth Wilson-Gilmore as "the state-sanctioned or extralegal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death" (Gilmore 2007). The judge stands in for the criminal justice system, the West Point Cadet for the military industrial complex, and the Ambassador to Panama for U.S. imperialism in Latin America. Whipping them all on the head seven times, Baron Samedi, who is also known as Ghede, the loa of death, but also of healing, has made these institutions into zombies under his control.

When one thinks of zombies from a U.S. cultural standpoint, a common touchstone will depend on a person's age and the era during which they entered an engagement with popular culture. But for most people outside Haiti, encounters with zombies primarily occur through film and television. Representations of zombies on screen offer a unique entry point for a discussion of the representation of Haitian Blackness, migration, and borders. The previous chapters discuss dehumanizing representation of Haitian Blackness. This chapter will focus on a representation of Haitian Blackness rooted in Haiti's own mythology, one that is dually depicted as superhuman and subhuman — the zombie. By analyzing how filmmakers in the U.S., Mexico, and Haiti have portrayed the zombie on screen, I illuminate a site where representations of Haitian Blackness, of migration and the Mexico/U.S. border converge.

Existing scholarship on zombie film has yet to examine the relationship between representations of the Haitian zombie and representations of the Mexico/U.S. borderlands. There is huge body of work on the topic of the Haiti and the zombie in cinema.[12] There is also excellent scholarship on cinema that represents the Mexico/U.S. border.[13] A recent book by Patrica Saldarriaga and Emi Manini investigates zombie narratives in cinema through a decolonial lens, arguing that through their on-screen

[12] See Lauro, Pressley-Sanon, McAlister, Moreman and Rushton
[13] See Iglesias Prieto, Maza Peréz, Noriega, Hanna and Sheehan

objectification, zombies are foregrounding a discourse of resistance (Saldarriaga and Manini 2022, 4). Building on this scholarship, this chapter begins by offering a brief history of the zombie and its representation in cinema. This will inform my discussion of a contemporary trend in U.S. cinema — the representation of migrants as zombies and the Mexico U.S. borderlands as a zombified space, which I analyze in the 2015 film *Savageland* (Guidry, Herbert, and Whelan, 2015). Next, I move to a discussion of the Haitian zombie and border zombies in Mexican cinema, looking at three luchador films featuring the wrestling icon Santo: El Enmascarado de Plata. These films show how race is constructed alongside Haitian Blackness in Mexican popular culture as well as how this construction is related to the national imaginary of Mexico's northern border. Finally, I will discuss the zombi in Haitian cinema through analysis of Arnold Antonin's film *Les Amours d'un Zombi* (2010). This film is a Haitian cinematic reclamation of the zombie and reveals its radical potential.

Rene Depestre wrote *A Rainbow for the Christian West* in 1966 but it was not made available in English until 1977, when it was translated by Colin Dayan. Dayan is a legal, literature and American studies scholar who writes about prison law and the legal and religious history of the Americas. In her 1995 book *Haiti, History, and the Gods*, she writes about how Haiti has been constructed culturally though an examination of alternative historical texts, including legal documents and vodou rituals. Like Depestre's poem that she translated, her work is concerned with the power of the legal system to grant or strip away people's humanity. This is evidenced in an article she wrote for *The Boston Review* in 2016, in which she discusses the release of U.S Border Patrol surveillance footage showing migrants in a detention center being forced to sleep on a concrete floor under space blankets, while co-current footage from another room in the center shows that room piled high with unused mattresses. The article goes on to detail horrific accounts of abuse, neglect, and torture endured by migrants detained at the center and Dayan explains that due to grey areas in the law, the abuses the migrants have endured are not the focus

of the court case. The lawyers of the plaintiffs were only trying to prove through the video footage that the migrants were deprived of mattresses that were readily available.

In the conclusion of her article Dayan relates the treatment of these migrants to tactics of dehumanization she argues have characterized punishment in the United States since chattel slavery. She then gives the example of a current tactic of incarceration, solitary confinement. Dayan writes, "Take solitary confinement, the modern tactic of dehumanization par excellence, which transforms living bodies not exactly into corpses, but into some liminal state between life and death" ("On Ice"). Although Dayan doesn't state it in the article, in her description of incarcerated people as "not exactly corpses" and inhabiting "some liminal space between life and death," she is comparing incarceration of people being punished for a crime, the incarceration of migrants at the U.S. Mexico border (who are not being punished for a crime), and the process of attempted zombification on the part of the immigration enforcement officials. As Daynan writes in her work on Haiti, "The phantasm of the zombi—a soulless husk deprived of freedom— is the ultimate sign of loss and dispossession" (Dayan 1995 37).

René Depestre's poem, specifically the epiphany of Captain Zombi, was featured in French director Bertrand Bonello's 2019 film *Zombi Child*. The film tells the story of Melissa, who is the granddaughter of Clorvius Narcisse, based on the true story of a Haitian man who is believed by some to have been turned into a zombie in the 1960s and to have escaped zombification to return to his family in 1980. Narcisse's life is the subject of another zombie film, Wes Craven's 1988 film *The Serpent and the Rainbow*. Melissa is a Haitian migrant living in France after her parents died in the 2010 earthquake. Her mother was a Legion of Honor recipient for her work against the Duvalier dictatorship, and so Melissa is the only visibly Black student at an all-girls boarding school founded by Napoleon for the daughters of people with the award, given for service to France. Melissa recites the poem to be initiated into a literary sorority, The lines Melissa reads from Depestre's poem are from the epiphany of Cap'tain

Zombi and includes the loa's references to slave ships and a sugar plantation and the lines, "Listen white world/To my zombi roar."

What is missing is any acknowledgment of the message of life, hope and love that is present throughout the poem. The French girls seem horrified and fascinated, and they let Melissa join the group, but they keep her at arm's length and watch YouTube videos about voodoo and zombies while staring at her. One of the French girls goes to her house to seek the help of her aunt, a mambo, or voodoo priestess. She forces the aunt to perform a ceremony that will allow her to become possessed by the soul of a boy who dumped her. She ends up being possessed by Baron Samedi instead and the aunt dies. It is unclear if the French girl is permanently affected by the ritual, but the film ends with Melissia wearing a white dress and participating in a vodou ritual.

I chose to discuss this film even though it is French because it reveals something about contemporary western zombie films that take up Haitian Blackness and colonialism. While meticulously researched with authentic references to Haitian history, spirituality, and culture, the film ends up being not about Melissa and her grandfather and her aunt as much as it is about the French girls at the school viewing Melissa as other, fetishizing her spiritual practices, and then suffering the consequences when their worst fears about those practices, that they are monstrous, turn out to be true. The lines Melissa reads from Depestre's poem are from the epiphany of Cap'tain Zombi and include the loa's references to slave ships, a sugar plantation, and the words, "Listen white world/To my zombi roar." In this scene there is no acknowledgment of the message of life, hope, and love that is present throughout the poem.

This idea of white horror/fascination with Haitian zombies can be traced all the way back to the first zombie film, *White Zombie* (1932). To understand the film, it is important to look at its position in the history of the medium, as well as the history of Haiti/U.S. relations. The film was released just four years after the advent of sound in motion pictures and about a year and a half before the industry

adopted the Hays Code, a set of rules censoring what was allowed to be depicted in films. Among the topics forbidden by the code were nudity, suggestive dances, the ridicule of religion, and miscegenation. There was a previous, suggested self-censorship code in place since 1927, called the Magna Carta, which included the themes listed above as well as a ban on depictions of white slavery. (Doherty 1999)

As the title of the film implies *White Zombie* is about a white woman who goes to Haiti to marry her (also white) fiancée but when she gets there, a rich plantation owner (again, white) wants her for his own. The plantation owner has in his employ an evil voodoo priest, Murder Legendre (played by Bella Lugosi and also white), who makes the woman into a zombie. For a film set in Haiti, there are very few Black characters. The reason there were so many white people in Haiti in 1932 is because the U.S. was 17 years into its military occupation of the country. The film was based on a book that was itself a cultural product of the U.S. occupation of Haiti, William Seabrook's 1929 travelogue, *The Magic Island.* The book is credited for introducing the concept of the Haitian zombie to the U.S. popular imagination as well as for participating in a wider discourse (the same seen in the *New York Times* and Marvel Comics) that painted Haitians as barbaric and in need of the perceived civilizing influence of whiteness, in the form of U.S. imperialism.[14] This book and the films inspired by it created a mythic image of the zombie, a half alive, half dead slave, in the U.S. imaginary as something monstrous and contagious.

In January 2023 the post-apocalyptic show *Last of Us* began airing on HBO MAX. Based on the video game of the same name, the show is set in a world where cordyceps fungus has evolved to inhabit humans, controlling them like zombies. However, the show's creators were careful that the creatures not actually be called zombies. In a widely tweeted interview, cinematographer Eben Bolter stated that the word itself was banned from the show's set: "We weren't allowed to say the Z word on set it was like a banned word. They were infected. We weren't a zombie show" (Hart 2023). This line of the interview

[14] See Means-Coleman, Harris 2023 and Dayan 1995

was tweeted by several media outlets, including Indiewire, PopBase and Vanity Fair, with the PopBase tweet being retweeted by almost 2,000 users. Many commenters on the PopBase tweet took issue with the reference to the word zombie as the "Z word" ---implying the word was a slur or somehow adjacent to the N-word. One user, @chanelenagomez, commented: "z word, just casually mocking Black people, the n word, and its history." Over 50 twitter users replied to this comment, many with statements that tested Twitter's newly revised policy on hate speech. One user's comment struck me as particularly relevant to a conversation about the contemporary zombie genre and race. User @Illdrim asked, "So you mean Zombies and N***** are quite the same?" This was clearly meant as a sarcastic response, but this commenter is picking up on something embedded in the history of cinematic representation of the zombie, as well as the recent turn by mainstream zombie shows like *Last of U.S.* and *The Walking Dead* to reject the use of the word zombie altogether. The story of a human body being divorced from its soul and manipulated by a parasitic host is always going to be a zombie story and will aways be linked to Blackness and to Haiti.

There is a vast body of scholarship interrogating the links between the zombie as it takes shape in western popular culture and notions of blackness. Two kinds of zombies exist in cultural production: the vodou zombie, directly related to Afro-Haitian spiritual practices and the Transatlantic slave trade and the viral zombie, an attempted post-racial appropriation of the Haitian zombie that seeks to remove the myth from its historical and geographical context and use waking death as a metaphor for contemporary social problems. The earliest examples of zombies in U.S. cinema were vodou zombies with a connection to Haiti. In *The Gale Encyclopedia of Religion*, Karen McCarthy Brown defines the zonbi as "either the disembodied soul of a dead person whose powers are captured and used for magical purposes, or a soulless body that has been raised from the grave to do drone labor in the field" (Brown 2005 9638). The first type she describes, "the disembodied soul of a dead person," is also known as an

astral zonbi, and is present in African religious traditions. The second type, a soulless body performing forced labor, is believed by scholars to be original and unique to Haitian vodou and is linked to the experiences of chattel slavery. Numerous scholars including Renda, Lauro, and Pressley-Sanon have written extensively about this link.[15] It is this second type of Zonbi that entered the U.S. imaginary in 1929 with the publication of William Seabrook's 1929 novel *The Magic Island*. On the other hand, the viral zombie entered U.S. popular culture through George Romero's 1968 film *Night of the Living Dead.*

Some argue that by dislocating the zombie from Haiti, Romero removed the figure from its connection to Blackness and to chattel slavery. As Means-Coleman and Harris write, "the film's reinvention of zombie mythos by removing the voodoo link and making the zombies autonomous beings with a taste for human sushi thankfully severed the root of this undead evil that had been inextricably tied to Blackness for more than fifty years." (44) This sentiment is echoed by media scholar Jeffrey Hinkleman, who discusses the fact that the monsters in *Night of the Living Dead* were not referred to or thought of as zombies by Romero but rather adopted by him somewhat reluctantly after the word was ascribed to the film's monsters by fans and critics. Hinkelman argues that by designating his flesh-eating monsters as zombies, Romero is removing their link to Haitian Blackness. As he writes, "The zombie is now a safely universal experience devoid of cultural specificity. Everyone dies so anyone can join the army of the undead… He took something local and made it universal" (Hinkelman 2017).

This idea that Romero and post-Romero or viral zombie are not connected to Blackness misses the fact that Romero's film is itself often cited as the first film to feature a Black lead in a colorblind role (one that doesn't reference his race as a defining aspect of the plot or character development). It also misses the implications of critics and fans reading Romero's mindless, flesh-eating monsters as zombies. Audiences were seeing a connection to the Haitian zombie in Romero's representation. Lauro criticizes

[15] See Renda 2006, Lauro 2016, and Pressley-Sanon 2017

the reading of the viral zombie as untethered from Haiti in her book, writing that the viral zombie is rooted in a Haitian myth that represented the suffering endured in chattel slavery and that this metaphor was then taken up by European U.S. and Mexican directors to be applied to other social anxieties. As Lauro writes, "the zombie was not only a metaphor for slavery but became a slave metaphor itself when it was forced to labor in cinema, carrying the psychic load of a formerly imperialist culture, made into a lamentation of capitalist greed rather than colonial servitude or postcolonial oppression" (Lauro 9). In contrast to what Means-Coleman, Harris, and Hinkleman are arguing about the viral zombie's dislocation from voodoo and therefore from Haiti and Blackness, Lauro is saying that Romero's choice to align his monsters with zombies was a choice to enslave the Haitian zombie myth to do work outside its original purpose. The zombie myth, she argues, was a way to make sense of social death under chattel slavery. Romero's film makes it a metaphor for the loss of agency in a consumerist society. I extend this argument to an analysis of how film representations of Haitian zombies have come to mean something both about Blackness and about migration across the increasingly militarized border between Mexico and the United States.

Patterson's 1982 theory of slavery and social death maintains that the conditions of chattel slavery in the U.S. and the Caribbean depended on the removal of Black enslaved people from the category of human. Patterson argues that this was enacted through natal alienation, or the removal of the enslaved person from any formally recognized social structure, family, or community, cutting all ties of inter-personal relation save the one with the slaveholder. Thus, the relationship between slaveholder and slave was predicated on the idea that the slaveholder was keeping the enslaved person in a state of perpetual proximity to death. As Patterson writes, "Slavery was not a pardon; it was, peculiarly, a conditional commutation. The execution was suspended only as long as the slave acquiesced in his powerlessness" (5).

This understanding of chattel slavery gives context to the formation of the Haitian zombie myth. A belief present in west African religious tradition evolved in response to the suffering endured by enslaved Haitians. The Haitian zombie as an allegory for chattel slavery became a compelling narrative that writers and filmmakers in the United States began to explore during and in the decades preceding the U.S. occupation of Haiti. As stated earlier, these films drew on and participated in a discourse about Haitian culture as savage and monstrous, but they also made unintentional statements about the monstrosity of whiteness and U.S. imperialism.

Lauro makes this argument in her discussion of the zombie metaphor's appropriation, stating that the zombie will always be linked to chattel slavery and the metaphor resists attempts to un-tether it from its Haitian roots. As she writes, "the metaphor rebels even against those who would make use of it for their own devices" (9). Lauro implies that the creators of western zombie texts are not in full control of the monsters, as evidenced by Romero's initial resistance and later acquiescence to naming his creatures zombies. In her chapter on the pre-history of the zombie, Lauro brings up Patterson and his critics, who argue that the theory of social death deprives the slave of agency. (52) Lauro posits the idea of death as a place where some Haitian revolutionary fighters instead gained power, agency, and freedom.

Patterson himself discusses the concept of Black freedom in his last chapter, where he interestingly offers an alternative framework for understanding the relationship between slaveholder and enslaved person, that of the slaveholder as a parasite. Patterson explains this framework in language that evokes the viral zombie film:

> "On this intersubjective level the slaveholder fed on the slave to gain the very direct satisfactions of power over another, honor enhancement, and authority. The slave, losing in the process all claim to autonomous power, was degraded and reduced to a state of liminality" (Patterson 337).

The process being described here is very similar to what actually plays out in many viral zombie films, in which a monster (or hoard of monsters) has an insatiable need to feed on human flesh,

specifically brains, and when this need has been met, the person who has been consumed is further victimized by being transformed into one of the walking dead. If we connect this notion of the slaveholder as parasite to Lauro's idea that the zombie metaphor can turn on those who appropriate it, we can understand that zombie films are always implicating whiteness as they depict Black monstrosity. Patterson explains the role of slaveholder as parasite, arguing that the parasite masked his role as blood-sucking monster by projecting that role onto Black enslaved people. He did this by creating a logic-defying discourse that Black enslaved people were dependent on the slaveholder. Social death and natal alienation, the tools that the parasite used to maintain its connection to its host, were never fully realized. Patterson writes that enslaved people responded to their conditions with resistance, forming meaningful social bonds, loving deeply in the face of loss and living fully while being told they were not fully alive.

According to Patterson, the parasitic slaveholder responded to this resistance by developing stereotypes of Black people that would mask the position of slaveholder as parasite, labeling the enslaved person as, "lying, cowardly, lazy buffoon devoid of courage and manliness," some of the very same stereotypes we see circulating in the media representations discussed in previous chapters. Patterson concludes that enslaved people rebelled by living with meaning, by refusing to become what the slaveholders saw them to be, effectively zombies. As Patterson writes, "Still, in his very pretense there was a kind of victory. He served while concealing his soul and fooling the parasite" (338). Patterson recounts a specific story that is worth repeating here — the response of an elder Black enslaved person to his parasite's ingenuous offer to grant his freedom. Patterson writes that the man responded, "you eated me when I was meat, and now you must pick me when I am bone." Here, as Patterson notes, the enslaved person is unmasking his "master," revealing the role of the slaveholder as a flesh-eating monster.

Films about migrant zombies draw on a common thread in the way Black bodies and migrant

bodies have been dehumanized both legally and in culture and have become increasingly interested in questioning old tropes and questioning who and what should represent monstrosity in films. In her book *Social Death: Racialized Rightlessness and the Criminalization of the Unprotected*, Lisa Cacho builds upon Orlando Patterson's theory of slavery and social death, applying the theory to the lived realities of some migrants, who she argues are "ineligible for personhood." (6) She defines this group as people who are subject to laws but have no legal means to contest or question those laws.

This status of migrants as ineligible for personhood has been examined on screen in films about migrants at the Mexico/U.S. border and some of these have been zombie movies. In their chapter "On the Border Between Migration and Horror," Bebout and Goldsmith argue that the Latinx migration genre has been fundamentally shaped by anti-immigration sentiment and policy in the United States, and that the horror genre has long relied on themes related social and political anxieties to serve as its monsters. (151)

Several films produced in the United States respond to social and political anxieties about migration by using the zombie metaphor. Notable among these is the 1991 film *Voodoo Dawn*, which is unique in that the migrants in the film are Haitian. The movie is very similar to the Calypso plot in *Daredevil* discussed in the last chapter. The film centers on a group of migrant Haitian farmworkers who fight a voodoo priest named Makoute (a reference to the paramilitary army of the Duvalier dictatorship), played by Tony Todd of *Candyman* fame. Makoute is killing the migrants and using their body parts to make a zombie army. His plot is only discovered because he kills a white college student and the girlfriend and two friends of this student go looking for him. The film was released to mostly bad reviews, save one in *Variety*, which stated that the film's class-conscious approach distinguished it from other entries in the genre. (*Variety TV Reviews, 1991–1992*) The film attempts to make a comment about the mistreatment of Haitian migrants but uses stale tropes about Haitian spirituality and brutality to do

so.

Another film in this vein is 2011's *The Zombie Farm*, a U.S. film by Uruguayan director Ricardo Islas. This film features a primarily Latinx cast and was originally released in Spanish in 2009 with the title *Macumba*, a word used throughout Spanish-speaking Latin America to describe African diasporic religious practices. The film tells the story of an undocumented woman named Ana Maria who is experiencing domestic violence and goes to a community organizer named Roque for help. While she is there, a filmmaker named Pilar approaches Roque, wanting to make a documentary about his activism. Roque ends up being a fraud and Ana Maria is forced to go to a curandera, or witch doctor, for help. This woman, named Mama Luna, tells Ana Maria that she can solve her problem without killing the abuser by using African witchcraft. Mama Luna then uses a supposedly Haitian voodoo ritual to turn the abuser, Antonio, into a zombie. Roque and Pilar are brought together as they try to help Ana Maria and uncover the fact that she has been using witchcraft to turn undocumented migrants into zombified farm workers. These zombies are an amalgamation of the Haitian soulless worker zombie and the Romero flesh-eating viral zombie. They are slaves controlled by Ana Maria but they also eat people.

This film was made by a Uruguayan director for a Latin American audience but is very invested in making specific statements about race in Mexico. A conversation between the two main characters seems like an attempt to call out Mexican anti-Blackness and ant-indigeneity but this effort is lost in an avalanche of machista rhetoric. Roque and Pilar are on their way to help Ana Maria and as they get in the car they seem to be flirting. Pilar askes Roque how she knew her boyfriend left her for a güera (white girl). Roque clarifies that he said he could tell she got dumped by a güero. This leads him to go on a rant about reasons why he thinks Latinas prefer white men, saying, "Some are cultural, like when they teach us as little kids that white is good and black is bad or when we go to church and there's a painting of Jesus Christ and he has blond hair and blue eyes like some surfer dude." He goes on to list

historical and anthropological reasons that he refers to as “sequels of the conquest” and “the Malinche principal,” which he then defines, saying the white Spaniard came to this land and raped and slaughtered millions, “and even so, the native women, they give themselves up to these guys, and betray their people, okay?” He goes on to connect this to U.S. imperialism, saying that when the Marines invaded Panama they left a “whole generation of brown-skinned babies with blue eyes,” then relates the conversation back to Pilar, pointing at her as he says she would do anything to get a white man by her side, to make white babies, better the race, and feel that she has finally entrenched herself in the category of whiteness. Pilar then suggests the woman who left him for a white gut must have really hurt him.

This story he is telling is central to Mexican national identity and conceptions of race and gender, as Malintzin, referred to by Roque as la Malinche, was an enslaved woman, the primary translator between the colonizer Hernan Cortes and the Aztec people, and the mother of the first mestizo, Martín Cortés. It may seem to some viewer to be out of place in a film about migrant farmworker zombies but the presence of this reference to Malintzin reveals that the film is operating as part of a larger racial project of defining race and gender in the borderlands, specifically as it relates to migration and who is seen as having access to personhood.

The other notable exchanges come towards the end of the movie, when Pilar and Roque have been captured by Mama Luna and she reveals that she and her white partner have been solving the work shortage created by increased immigration restrictions by making undocumented migrants into flesh-eating zombies. She then seems to enter into direct conversation with Patterson and Cacho when she tells Roque she is going to make him into a zombie and give him two things he’s never had, “a steady job and a family.” This joke, implying that forced labor will be the only real job that Roque has had and that his initiation into the undead migrant horde is the closest thing to a family he could hope to have is a

comment on Roque's belonging to the category of those ineligible for personhood.

This is in direct contrast to how Mama Luna addresses Pilar, tied to the same post as Roque, but facing a very different fate. As the zombie horde enters the barn they are in, Mama Luna gets in Pilar's face, saying, "Come on, you've seen this 1000 times in the movies, with your friends from high school maybe? You're from here, aren't you?" This line implies that being from the U.S. gives Pilar insider knowledge about the zombie as a touchstone of popular culture. Mama Luna continues getting closer to Pilar as she looks into her eyes, saying, "Second generation? College educated? I can't send you to the cornfield with the others. You're very important. An American citizen." Even though Pilar is Mexican, her legal status as a United States citizen automatically excludes her from the category of ineligible for personhood. She is, as Mama Luna states, ineligible for zombification. Unlike Makoute in *Voodoo Dawn*, Mama Luna doesn't make the mistake of zombifying a U.S. citizen; she instead tells Pilar that she will feed her to the migrant zombies.

This doesn't happen, however, because Pilar is able to break Mama Luna's zombie spell on Roque and in the process, Mama Luna is killed by one of her monsters. In the end, Ana Maria decides the United States is not for her and goes on a one-way bus to Monterrey. Pilar and Roque decide to continue their community activism together. Like *Voodoo Dawn*, *Zombie Farm* or *Macumba* uses the zombie metaphor to inform its social commentary on migration and U.S. capitalism. Unlike *Voodoo Dawn*, this film was made by Latinx creators with a Latinx audience in mind. Unlike films made from a U.S. viewpoint, there is a discussion of mestizaje, first-generation immigrants, and Malintzin. While still drawing on the old tropes about African spirituality, *Zombie Farm* relies on ideas about race, migration, and gender from the viewpoint of Latin America.

The 2015 film *Savageland*, written and directed by Phil Guidry, Simon Herbert, and David Whelan, is both a border film and a zombie movie but is unique in that it is a found-footage

documentary style film that openly presents itself as making a comment on the racialized criminalization of migrants. The film addresses both types of criminalization identified by Cacho as the stereotyping of a specific category of person as more likely to commit crimes and as the placing of a person into the category of criminal as a condition of their existence, as the U.S. government does with undocumented migrants, among others. (Cacho 6) Straddling multiple genres, *Savageland* is both a found-footage horror film and a true-crime mokumentary set in the fictional Arizona border town Sangre-de-Christo.

The premise of the film is that on June 2, 2011, all SDC's inhabitants were killed in a gruesome mass-murder. The police apprehended the only survivor, an undocumented migrant named Francisco Salazar, who was quickly found guilty of the murders and sentenced to death. In Arizona, defendants on death row are given an automatic right to appeal and during Salazar's second trial his legal team discovers photographs Salazar took the night of the massacre, showing that the people in SDC were killed by zombies. The judge rules these photos inadmissible and Salazar loses his appeal. The documentary is narrated by race scholar and human rights advocate Lawrence Ross, who plays himself. Ross makes connections between Salazar's treatment and the history of lynching in Arizona. The film also includes footage of Salazar being interrogated and interviews with the psychologist who interrogated him, who emphasizes that Salazar exhibited symptoms of severe post-traumatic stress disorder caused by his migration experience. The other people being interviewed include nativist locals from surrounding towns who spout racist anti-immigration policy and a documentary photographer named Len Matheson, who is questioned about the veracity of the zombie photos and insists that they are both 100 percent real and showcase a singular photographic talent. Matheson's character is played by Len Wien, mentioned in chapter 2, a Marvel writer who wrote *Brother Voodoo* in the 1970s. This is the only connection to voodoo in the film. The zombies only appear in Salazar's photographs and in surveillance footage at the end of the film, after Salazar has been executed and turns into a zombie

himself. These zombies are the viral kind, although they seem to only turn people into zombies after they have already died.

In their analysis of *Savageland*, Saldarriaga and Manini argue that the film is either portraying an invading horde of brown zombies moving north and leaving more zombies in its wake, or that it is simply portraying the violence that brown bodies are subjected to in the borderlands, but more important, they argue, is the fact that the authorities refuse to acknowledge the monsters and pin everything on Salazar. (44) The story does not end with Salazar's death and subsequent zombification but with his being positioned in death as a martyr and Chicanx cult hero. The film ends with a montage of footage taken in front of a mural of Salazar, where people embodying a cholo/chola aesthetic are shown sporting portrait tattoos of Salazar.

The last image before the credits end is a zoomed-out view of the Salazar mural, showing him painted in his orange prison jumpsuit with his arms outstretched and a white halo around his head. At the bottom of the mural is an army of zombies. In front of the mural people wear jeans, khakis, and white T-shirts. Some of the masculine-presenting people have Salazar's portrait tattooed on their stomachs. One such man stands in the foreground, beating his chest with his hands and screaming. Rather than being a moment of community solidarity or empowerment, this ending seems to undermine some of the work the film is doing to point out the ways undocumented brown bodies are criminalized and stereotyped.

In one scene earlier in the film, an anti-immigrant interviewee states that Salazar is La Raza, meaning that he is a Chicano. The person continues, "It's a culture that celebrates violence. They glorify death because they have nothing to look forward to." While this statement is meant to show the discourse that naturalizes the violence of the militarized border, the second sentence, "they glorify death because they have nothing to look forward to," seems to naturalize the condition of social death that

some migrants live under.

Figure 19 The final scene of *Savageland* (2015) shows the cult-following of an undocumented man who was wrongfully executed and then turned into a zombie.

There are many points in the film where it is clear Latinx people did not write or direct it but this ending is one of the most glaring of those moments. The promotion of Salazar to Chicano death-cult object seem to support the statement that Chicanidad celebrates violence and glorifies death. While we see stereotypical images of Mexicanness at the border being interrogated in the film, we also see the reproduction of some of these tropes, like the inherent violence of the border (beyond militarization) and the glorification of death. Similarly in *The Zombie Farm/Macumba*, a film made by and for Latinx people, the writers attempt to make a social commentary about race and anti-Blackness but the argument itself is rooted in the anti-Black rhetoric of mestizaje.[16]

The cinema of Mexico's golden age (1936-1964) reveals the way the Mexican racial project of

[16] See Vasconcelos, 1925, Tatiana Flores 2021 for evidence of mestizaje as an anti-Black racial project.

mestizaje, or racial mixing, was being imagined. To examine Haitian Blackness, the border, and migration in Mexican film, I analyze three films from the franchise *Santo El Enmascarado de Plata*, known more commonly as El Santo. The film *Santo Contra Los Zombis* was produced in 1962, at the tail end of La Época de Oro, the Golden Age of Mexican cinema. During the years leading up to WWII, Mexican cinema was beginning to gain an audience, but many scholars of the period argue that the war is what allowed Mexican cinema to flourish. While other countries with major film industries (the U.S. and France for example) focused primarily on war films during this period and the countries with the leading Spanish-language film industries (Spain and Argentina) were limited by being under fascist rule, Mexican filmmakers were taking up a broad array of topics and found themselves with an expanding global audience.[17] Many of the films made during this era were part of a national project instituted by the Partido Revolucionario Institucional, Mexico's ruling party from 1929-2000 and 2012 to the present.

One race-making tactic of the PRI was to use cinema to erase or marginalize Blackness in Mexico. After the Mexican Revolution, the country was ruled by a series of revolutionary generals, until Plutarco Calles founded the Partido Revolucionario Nacional, which became the Partido de la Revolución and then the PRI. The goal of the party was to institutionalize the ideals of the Mexican Revolution and part of this clearly involved defining what it meant to be a citizen of the Mexican nation. According to Christina Sue, Mexico's post-revolutionary government promoted an ideology that was based on three pillars, "(1) *mestizaje*: the embracement of race mixture and lauding of the mestizo; (2) nonracism, the contention that racism does not exist in the country; and (3) non Blackness, the marginalization, neglect or negation of Mexico's African heritage" (14). Sue argues that the government's promotion of mestizaje was intended as a push-back against scientific racism, which considered racial hybridity as an inferiority.

[17] See Lahr-Vivaz, Castro Ricalde and Irwin

Mestizaje as ideology was popularized during the Spanish colonial period through limpieza de sangre and the sistema de castas, and then rearticulated and redirected by Vasconcelos in the 20th century through the book *La Raza Cosmica*, published in 1925[18]. Vasconcelos, a Mexican writer who ran for president in 1927 put forth the theory that the mestizo race would come to dominate the world. He spread this ideology not only through his book but also through his position as Minister of Education from 1921-1924. Notions of mestizo world dominance are directly linked to the second pillar, nonracism. Sue claims that Mexico aimed to portray itself as a post-racial society and thus position itself in opposition to the U.S., which was at the turn of the 20th century, much as it is today, known globally for its hegemonic culture of systemic anti-Black racism.[19] The basic idea behind this discourse was that a country of mixed-race persons could not be racist. The third pillar, non-Blackness, invisibilizes Blackness in Mexico. Sue writes: "As with the other two pillars, because the non-Blackness ideology was consolidated in the context of nation-building efforts, it has implications for understandings of nation -- being Mexican means not being Black" (Sue 17).

Santo Contra Los Zombis deploys the zombie trope to establish a Mexican national identity as mestizo, conflating anti-Blackness and anti-indigeneity through discourses on work and criminality, respectability, and contagion. Although *Santo Contra Los Zombis* was filmed a decade after the peak of the cabareta films, it does feature a scene with a rumbera, an archetype of Cuban Blackness used in Golden Age films, in part to distance Blackness from Mexicanness. While the 1960s are considered to be the Golden Age of Mexican horror, in which the Santo films play a large part, the early years of the Golden Age were focused on melodrama and rumbera films, also known as cabareta films. In her study of Mexican melodramas, Elena Lahr-Vivaz argues that it was Mexico's racial diversity that caused the

[18] An important book on this colonial period is *Genealogical Fictions* (2008) by historian Maria Elena Martinez.
[19] See, for example, Kendi.

PRI to use cinema as a tool for forging a national Mexican identity in the post-revolutionary period. She writes that the PRI, following its tradition of commissioning murals and paintings from Mexico's famous artists, began in the early 1930s to bankroll films that depicted an idealized and racially unified Mexico. While the idea of the PRI was to bolster mestizaje, this often meant defining Mexicanness in opposition to Blackness. The rumbera films, of which hundreds were produced during the period, were viewed as importations of Blackness from Cuba.[20] In the films, Afro-Cuban actresses, usually light-skinned, took on the role of the rumbera archetype, dancing in a sanitized, sexualized way that made the dance about the gaze of the spectator (the Cuban rumba was always danced with a partner, but the Mexican rumbera always danced alone) a whitewashed version of the traditional Black, working-class and overtly sexual rumba. *Santo Contra Los Zombis* contains a scene that employs this archetype and other racial tropes common in Golden Age cinema.

The popularity of *El Santo Enmascarado de Plata* makes his films an important site to analyze how race, gender and sexuality are constituted in Mexican cultural production. El Santo is more than a Mexican wrestling icon; he is a popular hero. Although he rose to fame in the ring, his true legacy lies in his film career, which spanned 20 years, includes 53 films, and continues to fuel cultural production, including comic books, concept albums, and even a Cartoon Network series. In his first two films, which were shot in Cuba just before the revolution, Santo played a supporting character but the 1962 Mexican film *Santo Contra los Zombis* was the first film in which Santo took the lead role as a wrestler moonlighting as a superhero. The premise of *Santo Contra los Zombis* is that a Mexican professor who studies Haitian psychology has recently returned from Haiti and is kidnapped by a mastermind who uses his "formula" to reanimate the bodies of dead criminals. The film uses these zombie thieves to depict brown bodies as criminal and this criminality is spread through Afro-Haitian spirituality.

[20] See Piedra, Blanco Borelli

One clear indication of the way the film operates as a racial project is the very deliberate casting choices. The main cast is entirely composed of people with European features, as seen in *Santo Contra los Zombis*. The film opens with a ten-minute wrestling sequence that not only provides action but also cements Santo's position as a popular hero from the outset, as he is carried from the ring, victorious, on the shoulders of the cheering audience. He is not only a "good guy" but the embodiment of all that is good. As the detective states at the end of the film, he is the, "encarnácion de lo más hermoso" (Embodiment of the most beautiful). Through the film, the audience is meant to interpret this "más hermoso" as being constructed in opposition to Blackness and indigeneity. Figure 20 shows the main characters of the film, who are all white-passing. They stand in their mansion in evening attire, asking Santo for help. Figure 21 highlights an image of re-animated criminal zombies. Having been plastered with the vague label of criminals, these people's bodies have become not disposable, but useful. Their status as outside the human allows them to be made into proxy bodies through which the white mastermind can commit crimes without using his own body to do so. It is important that these zombified bodies are brown and have indigenous features. Unlike the people that Santo is helping, the zombies are not dressed in normal clothing but are wearing tights (to facilitate the wrestling scenes) and tunic-like vests that mark them as primitive.

Figure 20 The main characters of the *Santo Contra Los Zombis* (1962), who are all white-passing and have a European phenotype

Figure 21 Re-animated criminal zombies in *Santo Contra lod Zombis* (1962).

Victor Ramirez Ladron de Guevara has argued that the film deploys Haitian folklore as a stand-in for indigenous modes of being. He writes that the film positions Santo as a sort of savior of Mexico from its own indigenous roots and a symbol of enlightenment and modernity brought into relief by his interaction with and vanquishing of indigeneity as symbolized by the zombies. Santo never removes his

mask; in fact, he was famous for only revealing his face to the public years after his retirement from film but his features that are visible--dark eyes, a broad nose and thick lips--do not so much resemble the European phenotype of the other main cast members but more closely resemble mestizo, indigenous, or Afro-Mexican features.

Ramirez Ladron de Guevara's argument centers not around Santo's features, however, but around how his character is constructed in contrast to that of the zombies. He argues that the film uses voodoo to criticize indigenous belief systems without offending the sensibilities of Mexican mestizo ideology. He suggests that Haitian voodoo offers the filmmakers a distant target though which to criticize African and indigenous spirituality without directly referencing practices present and popular in Mexico. He writes, "El Santo's fight against these enchanted creatures is not only an act of heroism but also a clear endeavor to facilitate the construction of a Mexican national identity that rejects its indigenous roots" (2014, 4). This supposed threat, zombies as a stand-in for indigenous belief systems, according to Guevara, is thwarted by Santo, the mestizo savior.

While the zombies in the film are clearly racialized as indigenous, Guevara does not comment on how the film's use of zombies is not only anti-indigenous but also overtly anti-Black. In fact, depicting the use of Haitian "psychology" to reanimate dead criminals draws on a long history of the fear of contagion of Black criminality. The premise of the zombie plot is that a group of organized criminals is reanimating dead criminals who were known for being large and strong and who were killed by police, so that they have bodies to commit crimes with impunity. Blackness is not only implicated by the fact that the reanimation is achieved through stolen Haitian knowledge but also through a curious scene in the film when investigators visit the establishment of a former Mafioso turned restaurateur to learn if he knows anything about the recent jewel heists committed by the zombies.

The scene opens with Black musicians playing instruments in a manner that is decidedly

leisurely. Several studies on the Golden Age of Mexican cinema discuss the trope of the Black musician.[21] In his study of the Golden Age film *Angelitos Negros* (1948), an iconic film that centers on a tragic mulata narrative, Marco Polo Hernández Cuevas analyzes the way the PRI used the film to promote their racial ideology. He argues that to speak of the possibility of a Black experience in Mexico would have been considered an act of dissidence. In the film he takes up, everyone that can pass as white, regardless of their racial mixture, is labeled as white; the only indigenous people are assimilated mestizos. According to the film, "Blacks are exotic, purely musical and passionate beings from a tropical paradigm" (2004, 76). This is precisely how the Black musicians in *Santo Contra Los Zombis* are depicted. They are performing in a bar that has a tropical, tiki theme and are wearing flamboyant clothing that stands out in sharp contrast to the drab suits of the main cast. They are also somehow smoking cigars while performing, as seen in the stills below. The camera vacillates between close-ups of the men's hands beating their drums, and their mouths as they suck on the cigars, which are operating as phallic symbols.

This emphasis on phallic symbols is part of a long history of Mexican representations of Haitian Blackness that emphasize phallus size. In her study of visual representations of Blackness in the aftermath of the Haitian Revolution, Sara Johnson discusses portraits of Haitian revolutionaries being depicted with phallus-like swords. In fact, the image that she uses to illustrate this point, a portrait of revolutionary leader Henri Christophe with a huge sword between his legs, was painted by a Mexican painter. The caption reads, "Christophe, commander of the Army, moves through the island of Santo Domingo burning and killing its unfortunate colonists" (Mexico; Mariano Zuniga y Ontiveros, 1806). The long Black scabbard, as Johnson points out, hangs between Christophe's legs like a penis. Here the focus on Black men's genitals is directly related to a scene of the colonizing, slave-owning society's

[21] See Blanco Borelli, Hernandez Cuevas

worst nightmare: successful Black revolutionary activity. This fear is underscored by the captain's reference to the “unfortunate colonists,” who were not innocent victims, but perpetrators of the horrors of chattel slavery. This connection between a fear of Black uprising and the racialized sexualization of Black male bodies leaps across time, from the Mexican etchers’ page in 1806 to the silver screen in the 1960s.

The sexualization of Black male bodies in the film works in tandem with the sexualization of a female body. The musical performance is accompanied by a light-skinned woman dancer who could have African ancestry but is demonstrably lighter than her accompanying musicians. For the duration of her performance, the musicians stare at her noticeably as she masterfully moves her hips in time with the music. This scene is an example of what Blanco Borelli terms hip(g)nosis, the sharing of corporeal knowledge through the mulata body, specifically through rhythmic hip movements. The Golden Age filmmakers may not have intended or been aware of the meaning and power in these scenes. As Blanco Borelli writes: “Only those who can accept kinesthetic knowledge as valuable and female-made cultural production as essential can “hear what these hips say. Mere reliance on the visual component of hip(g)nosis brings forth a hypnotism which counters what the corpo-real's hips mobilize and, more importantly, express–a lived, gendered and racialized history.” (Blanco-Borelli 2008)

In the cabareta scene featured in *Santo Contra Los Zombis,* actress Martha Arlette, credited as “ballerina,” commands the film for a brief moment and her body is the star. For some viewers, this scene can stand outside of the PRI’s racial discourse, as Arlette transmits transgressive truths through her movements. I analyze this scene through the lens of Hall’s encoding/decoding model of communication, which states that there can be a “lack of equivalence” between what is being intended by the producer of the media and the meaning that is being made by the audience as they consume and interpret the media. In this case, the audience will be aware of the intended message encoded into Arlette’s performance but

if they identify with Arlette's body and with her performance, they may experience not the intended pleasure of fetishization but a pleasure operating outside the intended meaning of the scene and only available to those who perceive Arlette's performance beyond the confines of the scene.

Figure 22 Martha Arlette's character "ballerina" in the cabareta scene of *Santo Contra los Zombis* (1962)

The Black musicians are constructed as deviant by virtue of their Blackness in a film that is painstakingly constructed to depict Mexico as mestizo and mestizo as white. This musical interlude is immediately followed by an interrogation of the ex-criminal owner of the bar, who maintains that he is a hardworking restaurateur now and has no knowledge of robberies.

The focus of the film on crime, specifically robberies, being opposed to work recalls Stuart Hall's argument in *Policing the Crisis* that crime takes on such moral stigma in popular representation precisely because it allows the criminal an escape from work. As the authors write, "Crime, in the proper sense, when involving robbery or pilfering, is set off against work in the public mind, precisely because it is an attempt to acquire by speed, stealth, fraudulent or shorthand methods what the great majority of

law-abiding citizens can only come by through arduous toil, routine, expenditure of time, and the postponement of pleasure" (2017, 141). While the Black musicians in the film are depicted, technically, as working in a restaurant, they are at the same time depicted as leisurely and definitely not postponing pleasure. These musicians, playing Caribbean music in the restaurant of a former criminal who is later revealed as the source of the dead bodies being reanimated, are characterized as criminal. As Hall et.al. argue, this characterization can take place with little effort, because of the way ideology around crime and race already operate. While the authors are specifically referring to the ideology of England, the relationship between crime and work and the racialization of crime are overtly present in this Mexican film that uses the Haitian zombie to comment on Mexican society.

The figure of the zombie itself, while often deployed as a negative racializing tool, can also be a site of resistance. Sarah Juliet Lauro explains how the Zombie figure emerged as a way to grapple with the material realities of slavery and its aftermath in Haiti. Lauro writes that the first evidence of the zombie in written text occurs shortly after the Haitian revolution and offers a critical analysis of the rebel slaves' rallying cry, "Long live death!" She states that this motto both evokes the slave's existence as a non-living human-object and suggests the welcoming of literal death rather than the living death of enslavement. As she writes, "It is in making use of the zombie, -- either claiming to possess the art of zombification, or in ownership of its myth and its capacity to terrify one's enemies, that resistance is possible" (63).

This example of the zombie as resistance is seen in Depestre's poem that opened the chapter, as well as in zombie movies made in Haiti. While the zombie is often depicted as a re-animated corpse used for work or a savage cannibal, Lauro claims that it is the power to ignite fear similar to the fear in the eyes of the "unfortunate" colonists in the 1806 engraving of Henri Christophe. When considering the roots of the zombie in the Haitian Revolution, it is limiting to argue that the use of zombies in the film is

a stand in for Mexican indigenous belief systems, especially when taking into account the premise of the film, that professor Sandoval was in Haiti and that he possesses the secret to zombification, something that several characters throughout the film express the desire to decode and own for themselves. The use of zombies and of Haitian voodoo is making a more specific statement about Mexico's own anxiety around its relationship to revolutionary Blackness.

If, following Lauro's argument, we consider the possession of the formula for zombification as a site of possible resistance, then the film has different implications entirely. It may in fact be a warning against resistance. This theory is supported by the fact that the reanimated corpses were all criminals killed by the police. Those in possession of the zombie formula are actively undermining the power of the state but in the end, they fail, because they are overpowered and outsmarted by Santo. In this film Santo is a police officer in tights and a mask, similar in some ways to Batman in the United States. He upholds the racial ideology of the state and helps to physically enforce the policing of brown bodies and Black ways of knowing.

The ending, a final assertion of whiteness (or mestizo proximity to whiteness) as the embodiment of good, stands in clear and sharp contrast to the Black and brown criminals and zombies and their failed resistance to the state and sends a clear message of anti-Blackness and pathologizing of race and criminality to the audience of the film. The film ends with Santo, having vanquished the zombies, vanishing into the unknown, leaving the main cast of the film to wonder who he is. The investigator states that he is justice, and that he embodies all that is good. While the villain in the film is technically the white-Mexican professor, the real villain is Black spirituality. By going to Haiti and obtaining this knowledge, the professor has aligned himself both with Blackness and with criminality. The film identifies Mexican nation-building as an elite creole project and shows the ways that Blackness is a threat to that construction.

The relationship between Mexican identity and Haitian Blackness is at the heart of another entry in the Santo franchise, *Santo Contra la Magia Negra* (1973). Shot entirely in Haiti, in this film Santo is called to Haiti to investigate the mysterious deaths of two Mexican scientists and to protect the remaining scientist who has extracted uranium for Haitian soil that can create an explosive stronger than an H bomb. The film extends the anxiety around Blackness and indigeneity expressed in the first film to include treatment of Mexico's perception of its role as potential colonial power and exploiter of natural resources of Haiti. At the center of the drama is a white vodou priestess named Bellamira, played by Montenegrin-born actress Sasha Montenegro. Bellamira's character is represented as being uniquely positioned in a role normally reserved for Black Haitians. In fact, her identity as the film's villain goes undetected precisely because she is white. When her identity is finally revealed, Santo remarks incredulously, "A white woman! A Mambo?"

Bellamira's character has two foils in the film, another white woman, the daughter of the scientist that Santo is meant to protect, and a light-skinned Black woman who is depicted as a "good" mambo, and who ultimately saves Santo and defeats Bellamira. Montenegro's presence in the film is significant because of because of what she represents in Mexican popular culture. A huge sex symbol of the late 1960s and early 1970s, she has been called in U.S. media outlets "the Raquel Welch" of Mexico. Montenegro was the mistress and then wife of Mexican former president José López Portillo. As president, Portillo took an active role in film and media and used both to bolster Mexican national identity. Thus Montenegro, a symbol of the modern Mexican mestizo woman (although she was European), is, as Bellamira, being portrayed as wielding the perceived weapon of Afro-Haitian spirituality. Her proximity to Blackness as a betrayal of her Mexicanness is revealed both by Santo's shock when her identity is revealed: he comments specifically on her whiteness and also on the fact that the film ends with her punishment in the form of death.

The final Santo film I discuss is both a border film and a zombie film, but unlike the films made in the U.S., the migrants are not the monsters. Decades before it became a theme in U.S. cinema, Mexican filmmakers were depicting the migrant worker as zombie. *Santo en la frontera del terror* is a border zombie film in the vein of those discussed earlier in the chapter, but unlike those films, *Santo en la frontera del terror* does not rely on a hierarchy of citizen as human and the casting of undocumented migrants as outside of that category. Santo runs into a mad doctor turning immigrants into mind-controlled zombie slaves. In the film no one utters the word "zombie" and there is no reference to Haiti but the viewer, a mere year after Romero's *Night of the Living Dead,* is called upon to interpret the victimized workers depicted as zombies. The film tells the story of two migrants trying to cross from an unnamed Mexican border city (located somewhere on the Texas/Mexico border) into the U.S. El Santo happens to be in town for a fight. Fernando crosses the border into the U.S. and makes it to the farm, where he is promised a high-paying job. But the audience soon learns that the workers are not only imprisoned and not paid but they are also being experimented on. Dr. Sombra, played by the luchador and actor Jean Safont, is a gringo doctor who is secretly selling the organs of migrant farmworkers to fund his mind-control experiments. Fernando and his friend Gerardo discover this plot and are captured by Dr. Sombra and his henchmen (workers who are in a zombie-like state and under his control).

This film clearly depicts the migrant worker zombies as victims and the mad scientist as a monster. When, thinking he has outsmarted his opponents, the doctor reveals his evil plan, Fernando exclaims, "You have killed the workers, you have murdered them!" To this, Dr. Sombra responds, "Those men were nothing! I've made them immortal! They died in the name of science!" Sombra is emphasizing what he feels to be common sense, that these undocumented workers are outside the category of personhood and therefore exist to be useful to him as laboring bodies or as laboring corpses. Gerardo responds, "You don't have the right to dispose of human lives." Dr. Sombra tells Gerardo that

he does have the right to kill undocumented Mexican workers because their deaths will save the lives of other "more dignified" people. Again, we see Sombra defending this hierarchy of citizen as human and undocumented as outside of that category and therefore less worthy of life. He tells Gerardo that he has discovered how to turn workers into loyal servants who "obey me blindly" and that Gerardo will soon join them. "You'll find pleasure in licking my shoes." he states. At this point the audience get relief as Santo saves the day, this time on the side of the dehumanized zombies.

In this film we see undocumented workers being depicted as no people, disposable and vulnerable, but the film casts them not as monsters but rather as would-be-victims turned heroes. The workers at the center of the story triumph. The farm owner. Mr. Richards, discovers the jar of eyes and confronts Dr. Sombra, saying in Spanish, "por eso siempre pediste indocumentados"; however, the English subtitles on the film's 2003 DVD release translate that as "That's why you always asked for illegal aliens." The Spanish undocumented translated to the English as "illegal alien" is a deliberate choice that creates different meaning for the English-speaking viewer. Yet unlike many of the U.S. migrant zombie films, this movie depicts the dehumanization of undocumented workers as crazy and unnatural. In the scene where Dr. Sombra tells Gerardo and Fernando that he is killing workers for their organs to save the lives of those, "more dignified," Gerardo responds, "Damn old crazy man!" At the close of the film, Gerardo is the one who shoots Dr. Sombra's fleeing helicopter out of the sky, resulting in a fiery explosion. While Santo aids the migrants, they are the ones who themselves vanquish the monster.

Zombies mean something entirely different to Haitian audiences than to those of Mexico and the U.S. While outside representations of Haitian zombies undoubtedly affect Haitian people, specifically those in the large and growing Haitian diasporas in the U.S. and Mexico, they also fall flat for Haitian audiences, who have their own artists that represent the zombie in a Haitian context. The zombie is a

common theme in Haitian literature as Kaiama Glover shows in her 2005 article, “Exploiting the Undead: The Usefulness of the Zombie in Haitian Literature.” Glover explains that in Haiti, as in much of the Caribbean, there is a vast gap between intellectual and popular culture. Until recently, most literature and poetry in Haiti was written in French, while, as of 2021, only 5% of the population of Haiti spoke that language fluently. Glover argues that the zombie, always an important figure in the popular culture of Haiti, became a part of its literature during the Duvalier dictatorship. (Glover 105)

Colin Dayan also explains the embrace of vodou in Haitian literature in her introduction to her translation of *A Rainbow for the Christian West*. She credits anthropologist Jean Price-Mars with legitimizing Haitian voudu as a religion through his studies of Haitian popular spirituality. She writes that Price-Mars sought to counter western representations of Haitian Blackness that portrayed Haitians as, “the refuse of humanity, without history, without morality, without religion.” (Price-Mars 1) In the face of an occupying U.S. that promoted a degrading discourse of Haiti’s history, Price-Mars encourages Haitian intellectuals to go back to their African roots.

This led to the Indigenist movement in Haitian literature in the late 1920s founded by Jacques Roumain, Carl Brouard, Normil Sylvain, Emile Roumer, Phillipe Toby Marcelin, and Antonio Vieux (who was my grandfather’s cousin by marriage). The poems published by this group embraced themes of Africa, of Vodou, and of sexuality, clearly influencing the next generation of poets to which Depestre belonged. This new generation of Haitian intellectuals embracing Vodou also included a young doctor name François Duvalier who twisted the ideals of Indiginisme and Negritude, using Haitian Vodou as a means of ideological control as he rose to power, becoming president and dictator of Haiti. (Glover 106)

Glover frames Haitian literature’s use of the zombie around the two meanings of the word exploit, one negative and one positive, arguing that the zombie, a forced laborer, is an inherently exploited figure and that Haitian writers have employed it to their advantage. (Glover 107) She points

out that, unlike in U.S. and Mexico, where films and comics have depicted zombies as monsters, in Haiti, the zombie is the ultimate victim. (Glover 108) Existing in the liminal space between life and death, the Haitian zombie is not only a symbol of death, but also of life, similar to the loa Baron Samedi discussed earlier in the chapter. As Glover points out, if the zombie eats salt, it becomes self- aware, and is in a sense, brought back to life. The zombies represented in Haitian literature are largely these zombies that have tasted salt and been reborn. (Glover 109)

While the zombie has been a theme in Haitian literature for decades, there is only one major Haitian cinematic work that is about a zombie. The first zombie movie made by a Haitian director for a Haitian audience, like the literature of Haiti, represents the zombie not as a monster but as a would-be victim who rebels to heroically overcome the non-human condition that has been imposed on him. Arnold Antonin's 2009 film *Les Amours d'un Zombi*, in English *The Loves of a Zombie or can a Zombie be President?* chronicles the experiences of its protagonist Zephirin, who is made into a Zombie after sleeping with another man's wife. He then eats salt and while this does not totally un-zombify him, he is able to talk and express himself.

Toni Pressley Sanon's book *Zombifying a Nation* contains an excellent chapter on the film in which she draws on Franck Degoul's work that considers the way the zombie has become a figure that is exogenous to Haiti because it is most commonly taken up by U.S. and European creators to project their own anxieties on to Haitians. One reason that the zombie has not been taken up more commonly in Haitian film is that the film industry in Haiti, and thus the number of Haitian films being made, is very small. Arnold Antonin addresses this himself in a 2008 article published in *Small Axe*, in which he offers a history of cinema in Haiti. He explains that over a two-day span in 1899, the first film was screened in Haiti and the first footage was filmed in Haiti, both by Joseph Fillipi, a visiting representative of Lumiere Cinema. Antonin writes that despite this early introduction, Haitian popular art has always

favored painting and sculpture rather that audiovisual media (Antonin 2008) He also states that while very few films have been made in Haiti, there is a huge number of titles made by Haitians in the diaspora, significantly by Antonin himself and by Raoul Peck. After the fall of the Duvalier dictatorship, Antonin returned to Haiti, where he has been behind the camera on projects filmed entirely in Haiti, including *Les Amours d'un Zombi*.

The film begins with a quote from Spanish-Mexican filmmaker Luis Buñuel: "Cinema is the best weapon through which to express the world of dreams." This quote is taken from Buñuel's essay "Cinema, instrument of poetry," in which the surrealist filmmaker states that the cinema is unique among all forms of artistic expression, in that it can produce media, moving pictures with sound, that get closer than any other form to the pictures and sounds the human mind produces when we dream, and is the only visual art form that can express the feelings and emotions at the root of poetry. (Buñuel 1958) He argues that despite this, the majority of films being made "wallow in moral and intellectual vacuity" (113). He sees mainstream film as repeating the same stories ad nauseum, while lacking the things that make film powerful. Successful films, in his view, tell stories that speak to the concerns, problems, and anxieties of society while containing elements of mystery and fantasy.

A similar sentiment is proffered by Antonin in his essay on Haitian cinema, where he laments the lack of quality films available to the Haitian public during the Duvalier regime. While Haitian movie theaters once featured Italian and French films, Duvalier only allowed specific Hollywood films to be shown, and these, Antonin writes, were mostly martial arts films and Westerns. He goes on to explain that movies being made in Haiti are not films, but video, often with low production quality and, he seems to argue, artistic merit. He then questions his own view, asking if filmmakers in Haiti were telling the same compelling stories as diasporic filmmakers, only in a more authentically Haitian way:

> "What if Haitian cinema was but these fictions filmed in video in the vein of popular farce or vaudeville with all their technical and esthetic failings? And what if this primitive, naïve, and

> kitsch cinema, often inspired by stereotypes and sentimental stories, was not the usual rubbishy film but the condition for the birth of a popular mass cinema? (92)

Antonin wrote this essay around the time he was making *Les Amours d'un Zombi*, and he seems to have taken these questions to heart, attempting possibly to answer them in the affirmative with his film.

This film is unlike many of his previous films in that it is not a documentary or serious political drama. It is a dark comedy, absurd at moments, about a cuckolding zombie named Pierre Zéphirin, who holds a press conference to announce he is looking for his lover Swamen, who disappeared after her husband died. The plot largely relies on sentimental stories (Zéphirin's love for Swamen) and stereotypes (women are represented through the virgin/whore dichotomy in the film). The movie cinematography, acting, and set design feel in some ways to have technical failings. It is noticeable when the camera pans too quickly, for example. The aesthetics of the film could be described as naïve, and kitsch, exemplified in the scene depicting Swamen's husband's funeral (See figure 19). The mourners are wailing excessively and unbelievably, while Baron Samedi (the loa of the cemetery, of life and death) announces to his henchmen (Ghedes) that he is in love with Swamen. The Ghedes are sexualizing her, as they do every woman, in a manner reminiscent of adolescents. It seems as though with these characters, Antonin is attempting to imbue his film with something of the popular farce, the vaudevillian, that he saw being represented in the contemporary Haitian movies he criticizes. Antonin's essay point to his interest in helping develop a Haitian popular mass cinema. This film and a reclamation of the zombie on screen are his first attempts towards that goal.

Figure 23 Baron Samedi and his Ghedes standing on a tomb in *Les amours d'un Zombi* (2009)

In this still from the funeral scene, we see Baron Samedi in his customary top hat and bow tie, with his Ghedes standing on a tomb above him, laughing and making sexual gestures, one with a broomstick between his legs, smiling as he thrusts his hips. Pressley-Sannon makes a compelling argument about the role of the Ghedes in the film, reiterating the ideas mentioned in the earlier discussion of Depestre's poetry, that the Ghedes and Baron Samedi, mentioned previously in this chapter as featured in Depestre's poem are the guardians of the underworld and thus are associated with bringing death but also with giving life. It is this idea that the Ghedes give life, according to Pressley-Sannon, that explains their obsession with sex. As she writes, "Their open celebration of human sexuality affirms the continuity of life, even in the presence of death. As the masters of human sexuality, the Ghedes not only oversee death but also the source of life itself" (145). I would like to extend her analysis of the Ghedes' fixation on sex and therefore life in the face of death by emphasizing that another life-affirming aspect of sex, beyond the literal reproduction of life that can occur in heterosexual sex, is pleasure, and that an emphasis on sexual pleasure is also a powerful affirmation of life.

The other aspect of the film's plot is the political storyline. When a group of Haitian elites see the nation captivated by a zombie that can talk and his love story, they see the puppet president of their dreams and they ask him to run for president, telling him he will just be the face of the party while they call the shots. This plot is foiled by Baron Samedi, who shows up at a campaign event to confront Zéphirin, and immediate assails him with sexual taunts, saying that he is the only one that can satisfy Swamen, and that "When my hand slides over her body, her pleasure makes all of the worlds cemeteries shiver." As soon as she says this, the crowd gathered around them collectively "ooooooooo"s, emphasizing the power this statement gives Baron Samedi over Zéphirin but also again adding a feeling of adolescent posturing to the scene. Baron Samedi announces that he will not allow Zéphirin to become president unless he gives up on Swamen.

It is this commitment to love, the film reveals that made it impossible for Zéphirin to be zombified. We find this out in a scene featuring Nicole, a journalist who is helping Zéphirin and whose house he is living in. Nicole and her little brother, who looks about 10 years old, are talking in front of a desk which is decorated with family photos and a Haitian flag. Her brother asks her if she wants to be a zombie and she seems taken aback. He explains that everyone loves Zéphirin and it might be good to be a zombie. Nicole explains to her brother that children can't become zombies because they have pure hearts with too much love in them. She tells him that the love he has for his mother, and grandparents, his country ("this is important," she emphasizes), and his neighborhood, make it impossible for his soul to be captured. She continues, realizing that is also the reason Zéphirin never became completely zombified. She says, "This is what makes Zéphirin different. It is because he has a lot of love." The film is putting forward the thesis that the enactment of radical love, romantic, and familial, communal and (importantly) national, makes it impossible for a person categorized as ineligible for personhood.

The chapter began with an epigraph from Haitian poet René Depestre's book *A Rainbow for the*

Christian West, specifically from the poem "The Early Morning Bath." This poem takes place after the loa have introduced themselves to the family of the Alabama judge and confronted them with their transgressions. He tells them, "Now dear family of Alabama throw your last chimeras at my feet. I am going to dissolve all the white dirt that human follies have accumulated into your hearts" (Depestre 163). Reminding the family that he has channeled the power of 16 gods into his body, he tells the family these gods are asking why they see Black people as so little. The poet announces that he will answer this question by turning the family's transgressions into a bathtub and filling it with sea water. He writes, "The same green swell where we threw the last rose of Black hope. Now it has become the same water of your bath before daybreak" (163). He is going to use a vodou ceremony to cleanse the family, who represent the horrors of systemic racism and colonialism, with the water of the ocean, the same water that that kidnapped Africans crossed during the transatlantic slave trade. Each of the loas will add a dewdrop of Haitian wisdom into the bathwater that will cleanse the family. The first God pours a bouquet of jasmine flowers, another, half a bottle of rum. Cap'tain Zombi pours "a few drops of the first period of an Alabama fairy." Baron Samedi adds leaves of campe loin and basil, known to ward off evil spirits. The last two loa add water to the bath. One adds water from seven rivers of the earth, including several African rivers, the Mississippi and the Amazon. The final loa adds seven teardrops from an Alabama boy who was the victim of lynching.

Depestre ends his poem with an incantation, a prayer of cleansing. These powerful place-based totems of ancestral knowledge and ancestral trauma create an elixir capable, like Baron Samedi and his Ghede, of granting new life:

> "I say here is water, the voice of human future, and it speaks in the name of all men! I say here is water going forward with all the magic of hope! I say here is water carrying in it all the childhood of human joy! (165)

Rather than punish the Alabama judge, the ambassador to Panama and the Republican senator,

Depestre recognizes the continuing presence of the pain they caused, drawing on the power of this pain to make a potion that can wash clean all of humanity. He uses the words future, going forward, hope, childhood, and joy, emphasizing that these are conditions of being human. The last line of the poem, printed in the epigraph, asserts that the water will, "vanquish all the monsters of our night" (165). Through this metaphor of the Alabama family defeated by the cleansing water crafted by Haitian gods, including those that control zombies, Depestre reveals that the monsters are not Black Haitian bodies or migrants at the border — the monsters are the structures in place that create the conditions of social death that Black bodies and migrants are then forced to live in. Films such as Antonin's, which emphasize the power of radical love to resist dehumanizing processes, are, to use Buñuel's phrasing, weapons of expression and rebellion that allow us to imagine a different world.

Chapter 5 Epilogue: Performance as Resistance: Byenveni nan Ayitiwana/Bienvenidos a Haitíjuana/Welcome to Haiti-juana

"Entrust me with your grief, there is no death in the soul
That two hearts cannot defeat[22]."

-Richard Brisson - The Crucified Ones[23]

As many writing before me have noted, in Haiti and its diaspora, art and resistance are inseparable.[24] Scholars often cite the songs that inspired Haiti's enslaved people to mount a successful revolution and the murals that spread ideas and dissent around the country during times of political upheaval. Félix Morisseau-Leroy, one of the first playwrights to author plays in Kreyòl, wrote that theater is, "a weapon of mass awareness that gives the spectator the means to free themselves."[25] In the previous chapters, I analyzed how news media, comic books, and film interact with this idea of freedom. Some of the case studies examine representations that participate in a discourse that tries to obscure and demean the humanity of the Haitian people, more specifically Black Haitian people, and more recently, Black Haitian migrants. A critique of these examples is necessary to show the significance of the other representations I discuss, those that act as weapons against, or to borrow from Depestre, water that washes clean, the violence of dehumanizing characterization.

In chapter 3, I discussed Orlando Patterson's theory of social death and slavery to add to this idea. While the book largely examines un-freedom, at the very end of his book Patterson argues that freedom as a concept in contemporary Western civilization is directly informed by the enslavement of kidnapped Africans. He writes of the person enslaved under chattel slavery, "the struggle itself forced

[22] The word grief here is translated from the French *cafard*, which normally means cockroach, but was turned into a synonym for grief or melancholy by French poet Charles Baudelaire in his 1857 book of poems, *Les Fleur du Mal*
[23] Brisson 1972, translation mine.
[24] See Wagner 2020, Johnson 2012, Corneille 2023 and McCarthy Brown 1996
[25] Qtd. In Corneille 2023

upon him a need that no other human beings have felt so acutely: the need for disenslavement, for disalienation, for negation of social death, for recognition of his inherent dignity" (340). Here he is arguing that before a massive system existed to permanently restrain people and their descendants by totally removing them from human society and from the category of human, human beings could not have, and would not have reason to consider the removal of restraint an ideal. (Patterson 340) He states that freedom exists as a defining paradigm of Western culture precisely because chattel slavery existed.

The last line of the book asks the question, "are we to esteem slavery for what it has wrought, or must we challenge our conception of freedom and the value we place upon it?" (342) Nowhere is this question more relevant than in a discussion of Haiti, the first nation of people to collectively rise up and unequivocally claim this freedom from chattel slavery, and whose people are still struggling, as evidenced in Del Rio, Texas, for recognition of their inherent dignity. At the end of this study, I want to analyze what it means in the context of Haiti and Haitian migrants in particular to conceptualize performance as a weapon in a fight for freedom.

If one person in the history of Haiti could be considered a symbol for using performance as a weapon, that person is my uncle, Richard Brisson. Before I was born, he was tortured and murdered after trying to invade Haiti and overthrow the dictatorship of Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier. When he landed with a paramilitary group of Haitian exiles on Île-de-la-Tortue, an island of the northern coast of Haiti (about 41 miles from Môle Saint-Nicolas), he was not armed with a gun or a sword and was rumored to be carrying only a microphone and cassette tapes that he had recorded in Miami. He was charged with erecting a clandestine radio antenna and announcing the overthrow of Duvalier. This invasion was organized by Bernard Sansaricq, a Haitian businessman living in Florida, who never even made it on the island, having alerted a nearby U.S. Coast Guard ship that his vessel was in distress. He is thought to have abandoned his invasion attempt, leaving Brisson and 7 others to be captured and

executed.

Brisson was not a soldier or a fighter; he was a poet, actor, and station manager of Radio-Haiti-Inter, Haiti's progressive radio station and the first to broadcast news in Kreyòl, the language of Haiti's majority working-class. In one of the many memorials for Brisson broadcast after the fall of Baby Doc in 1986, station owner Jean Dominique reported that when he interviewed Richard's friends, Haitian folk legends Manno Charlemagne and Marco Jeanty, they said, "Richard pa mouri," Richard is not dead.[26] Dominique then goes on to explain why Richard is still alive in Haiti, listing his artistic contributions to Haitian culture:

> "He remains among us, still alive, his Poémons, his tales of wind and waves, his Diary of a Madman, and one evening at the Institut Français — that remarkable moment, unforgettable and moving — his cry of passionate love for Yvette, Yvette, lost in the audience, lost in her tears… A smattering of operatic arias he used to whistle, hands in his pockets, and the lament of another unloved soul, Jean Genet, whose poems he played on the radio to the outrage of the right-mind" (Dominique 1987 Wagner Trans. 2018)

Besides his poetry, Brisson's art that keeps him alive in Haiti is his performance — his theatrical adaptation of Gogol, his moving cry of love for his mother while on stage during a performance, his way of being in the world that was inseparable from performance, and his radio broadcasts, including his choice of broadcasting his classical music show in Kreyòl, to the ire of the elite, all contribute to the legacy that sustains his life.

In 1980, shortly before his first arrest and torture that sent him into exile, Brisson wrote a piece that was set to music and broadcast on Radio Haiti, entitled, "Omaj mizikal pou «botpipèl» ayisyen, or Musical tribute to Haitian refugees at sea." The poem features the phrase, in Kreyòl,"dan reken pi dous pase kacho prizon"/"the shark's teeth are gentler than the prison cell."l[27] This piece was recently

[26] Qtd. in Wagner 2018
[27] Qtd. in Wagner 2020

sampled by Leyla McCalla on her 2022 album “Breaking the Thermometer.”

Duke University, which hosts the Radio Haiti archive, commissioned McCalla, the daughter of Haitian migrants, to make the album and craft a performance around it in conversation with the archive. The full title of the performance was ‘Breaking the Thermometer to Hide the Fever,” which, according to Radio Haiti archivist Laura Wagner, is a phrase journalists at the station used to describe government censorship of the station. In her article announcing the piece, Wagner gives a compelling history of Haitian performance as resistance while positioning McCalla’s work firmly in this tradition. What does it mean for Brisson, whose commanding voice can be heard at the end of “McCalla’s track “Dan Reken,” to have died after being brutally tortured in a Port-Au-Prince prison after invading Haiti armed with a microphone?

Figure 24 A flyer from Brisson’s 1981 Brooklyn performance of his stage adaptation of Gogol’s *Diary of a Madman*, courtesy of Laura Wagner.

Brisson's sexuality, his queerness, is at the heart of his legacy as a performer and as a freedom-fighter. In 2017 his close colleague Roody Edmé, wrote an article about Brisson, using a review of Judith Butler's writing on performance and vulnerability to think through Richard's role in Haiti's cultural history. Edmé writes:

> To be gay in a social order that rejects homosexuality is to be vulnerable, as vulnerable as migrants deprived of their human rights or workers stripped of their employment, to say nothing of women denied social equity. Reading Éric Aeschimann and his fascination with Judith Butler's depth of thinking, I cannot help but think of Richard, talented interpreter of Nicolas Gogol's Diary of a Madman (Edmé 2017).

Edmé importantly connects Brisson's sexuality, his vulnerability as an openly gay Haitian performer in the 1970s and 1980s, to the vulnerability of migrants. This was a connection Brisson made in his own work in his tribute to Haitian migrants, in which he maintained that a violent death, the shark's mouth, was gentler than the dehumanization of incarceration.

In September of 2021, the *New York Times* reported that there were 20,000 people detained in U.S. immigration facilities, with thousands more waiting in Mexico to have their cases heard. (Markham 2021) The legacy of the representations discussed in this dissertation are legible in Mexican and U.S. media discourse about migrants, specifically Haitian migrants at the Mexico- U.S. border. Media have often referred to the increase in the migration of Haitians to Tijuana as a "crisis," an "influx," a "stream," and other negative and dehumanizing nouns. On October 4th, 2016, the Mexican news satire site ftontera.info, a Tijuana-based website similar to the U.S. satire newspaper *The Onion*, published an article titled, "Nace en Tijuana Primer Bebé Cruza de Sinaloense con Haitiano" (First Baby Crossed with Sinaloan and Haitian Born in Tijuana). The first thing to note about this headline is the use of the word "cruza," which is not normally used to discuss human babies but is reserved for conversations about the breeding of animals. This is in keeping with the whole of the article, which ends with the following claims: "Some blood studies done on the baby indicate that it is a new human race; which

some anthropologists have already begun to call informally as "Haitinaloas" and from which they expect to see more specimens as migrants assimilate into the Mexican population."


El diario divertido de Tijuana. FTONTERA.INFO

Nace en Tijuana primer bebé cruza de sinaloense con haitiano

Tijuana es una ciudad de movimientos migratorios únicos en donde se encuentran personas de todas las razas y lugares del mundo, tal como lo demuestra el nacimiento del primer bebé híbrido producto de la cruza entre sinaloense y haitiano.

Debido a la separación geográfica entre Sinaloa y Haití, sumado a cuestiones culturales, nunca antes se había dado la oportunidad de que personas originarias de ambos lugares procrearan hasta que se encontraron en Tijuana.

El bebé, que lleva el nombre de Brayan Makenley Dardompre Quintero, nació hoy a las 5:00 AM y es producto de una madre sinaloense y un padre haitiano concebido en algún momento de enero o febrero cuando se intensificó la migración desde el país isleño.

De acuerdo a los médicos que atendieron su nacimiento, el pequeño Makenley (llamado así por su papá) se encuentra en perfecto estado de salud y tanto él como su madre ya han sido dados de alta. Ambos padres rechazaron dar entrevista o comentarios al respecto.

Figure 25 Screen capture of an article from Tijuana satire site, ftontera.org

This article is satire but its viral spread among Tijuana Facebook users, along with memes depicting interracial couples on the beach with the caption, "Meanwhile in Tijuana," reveals what seems to be a growing moral panic over the presence of Blackness in the city. Like the mass-market newspapers and the film industry, social media has a global audience but there are some key differences. The most significant is that social media is free and its publishing platform is available to anyone with Internet access. This means that, unlike the newspapers and film production companies, there is less control over who is producing culture via this venue and the types of culture being produced. It still seems, however that the racial projects that were propelled by the forms of media discussed earlier in the

dissertation are deeply rooted and pervasive, as the same attitudes and racial stereotypes evidenced in *The New York Times* articles about Haiti Tijuana, Marvel Comics, and *Santo Contra los Zombis* are seen in social media posts made by people in San Diego and Tijuana in the present day.

Tijuana has a complicated relationship with anti-Blackness, which can be explored via a case study of one of Tijuana's most famous residents, Maria Luisa Castro, also known as La Maguana. La Maguana de Tijuana, who passed away in March 2018, was a Black sex worker who lived on the streets of el centro de Tijuana. Over decades, she became an unofficial mascot of the city, and proximity to her was a kind of symbol of authentic Tijuanense-ness. An article on La Maguana in the *San Diego Reader* newspaper begins not with context about who she is but with a Facebook post from an unknown person that says, "I love Tijuana." To which another user replies, "Until you make love to La Maguana I'm not going to believe that you truly love this city" (Suárez 2014).

Tijuana's relationship with La Maguana shares some similarities with the Golden Age rumbera archetype in that every article about her leads with the fact that she was a dancer and positions her as non-Mexican. In addition to the sexual objectification of La Maguana, there is paradoxical othering of her as she is the most authentic artifact of Tijuana and yet she is almost always depicted as being from somewhere outside of Mexico. Myths surrounding her origin state that she was from San Diego, was half Black and half Filipino, and came to Tijuana to work in strip clubs, or that she was originally from Cuba. These imagined origins outside of Mexico place her safely within the official Mexican racial discourse of non-Blackness. On the other hand, there are also stories that she was adopted as a child by a Tijuanense family. Whatever her origins, she stood out in a city where she was often the only person in the crowd with a Black phenotype. People in Tijuana came to think of her almost as a patron saint, taking photos with her and asking her for blessings. Her funeral was a parade in her honor attended by thousands of people.

Today, el centro de Tijuana is no longer devoid of Black faces. Among the street vendors, nightclub patrons, and restaurant goers, Haitian migrants can be found living, working, and enjoying the everyday pleasures of the city as if they had always been part of it. Despite the negative representations published online by sites like *Frontera*, there are examples of Haitian migrants and Tijuanense coming together to resist these representations, such as the representations depicted in the dance scene of the *Santo* film, through performance. Art spaces in Tijuana, most notably Casa de Túnel, have been hosting Haitian dance performances that raise money for the migrants but also give them a place to showcase their art and connect with the city that is now their home.

In April of 2018, Casa del Túnel posted on Facebook about their first Haitian Multicultural Night, which included music, dance, and food. The post goes on to explain that more than 20,000 Haitian migrants have arrived in Tijuana since 2106 and that 3,000 remained living in the city. These events became a regular occurrence as Haitian migrants made a stage for themselves to use performance as a form of resistance. Instagram posts from these multicultural events are sometimes captioned with the hashtag #haitijuana, a mashup that exists as a resistance to nationalist discourses that erase Blackness, as well as resistance to the fear of Black revolutionary activity that leads not only to the negation of Blackness but also to the spread of ideas about race that entrench the legacy of the racialization and sexualization of Haitian Blackness. In this way, through online newspapers and social media, the Internet both facilitates resistance to and enables the propagation of representational violence.

Border poet and scholar Gloria Anzaldúa has famously called the border "una herida abierta," an open wound (25). This signifies the constant violence being enacted by the border in the lives of border-dwellers. The wound never heals because the border is an ongoing process. She writes that the blood from this wound creates a third country whose inhabitants are both racialized and sexualized. As she writes: "A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an

unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants" (25). She uses words like unnatural, prohibited, and forbidden to describe the space and the people in it. She goes on to explain that race and sexuality are what make these border-dwellers forbidden and prohibited.

This notion of a constant state of becoming, a wound never closing, is in some ways echoed by the work of queer theorist and performance studies scholar José Muñoz. He argues that queerness is a something that is never reached, like a distant shore that is always visible, but never close enough to touch. In his words, "We may never touch queerness, but we can feel it as the warm illumination of a horizon imbued with potentiality" (1). Can the third country of the U.S./Mexico border be theorized as an open wound and a queer utopia at the same time? Muñoz might argue that this can happen through performance. As he writes, "Queerness is also performative because it is not simply a being but a doing for and toward the future. Queerness is essentially about the rejection of a here and now and an insistence on potentiality or concrete possibility for another world" (1). At Casa del Túnel, Haitian migrants are using performance to imagine new worlds, and a third country is being enacted (#hatijuana).

Figure 26 Haitian migrants performing at Casa del Túnel in 2018 (screen capture from Facebook) photo by Omar Martinez.

Photos shared on the Facebook page of Casa del Túnel showcase the radical power of performance as a world-making tool, as Haitian migrants are seen dancing on stage on a Tijuana rooftop, under a huge Haitian flag. One of the dancers is wearing a ruffled dress typical of the costumes worn by the rumberas of the Golden Age. In another photo, a dexterous migrant performer is seen doing a back-bend as the audience takes photographs. Black singer and songwriter Nina Simone once said, "Freedom, to me, is living without fear." (1970) Although in some ways my main focus has been on representational obstacles to freedom, I hope that it is clear throughout that, like the poet Depestre, I have centered resistance and futurity--the Black press' resistance to the *New York Times'* discourse on Haiti; Martha Arlette's hip(g)notism; the notion of the Zombie as reclaiming the power behind fear in Antonin's film; the life and art of Richard Brisson; and the dance performances of Haitian migrants in Tijuana, the revolutionary weapons that bring humanity closer to freedom and insist on the possibility of another world.

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