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# Race, Nation, and Religion in the Americas

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# The Jew in the Haitian Imagination: A Popular History of Anti-Judaism and Proto-Racism

*Elizabeth McAlister*

Each year in Haiti, the Holy Week of Easter sets the stage for carnivalesque street theater all throughout the country. While Catholics reenact the Passion of Christ, some practitioners of the Afro-Haitian religion called Vodou take to the streets in enormous musical parades called Raras. There they conduct the spiritual warfare that becomes possible when the angels and saints remove to the underworld, along with Jesus, on Good Friday. The cast of characters who have a hand in the week's events include the deities of Vodou, the *zonbi* (spirits of the recently dead), as well as Jesus, the two thieves crucified with him, a couple of Haitian army officers who secretly witnessed the resurrection, Pontius Pilate and the Romans, Judas, and "the Jews." The week's events combine the plots and personae of the Christian narrative with the cosmology of Afro-Creole religion, and perform them in local ritual dramas. Throughout the week, Haitians perform rituals generated from various moments in the history of the Atlantic world, from the European Christian Middle Ages to the contemporary racialized Americas.

The most boisterous of all the performances, the Rara festival begins right after Carnival, on Ash Wednesday, and builds throughout Lent until Easter weekend. Occurring in multiple localities, Rara represents the largest popular gatherings of Haitian *pèp-la* (the people, the folk). Groups numbering from fifteen to several thousand people play drums and bamboo horns, dance along the roads, and stop traffic for miles in order to perform rituals for Vodou deities at

crossroads, bridges, and cemeteries. Rara can be read as an annual ritual period when the religious work of Vodou is taken into public space. In this sense, Rara is a peripheral branch of this Afro-Haitian religion—a fluid, inherited, oral tradition of relationships with deities from various African societies, as well as relationships with ancestors.

Rara festivals remember the religious and racial history of American conquest. Said by some Haitians to be "an Indian festival," the Raras provide a fleeting yearly remembrance of the 250,000 Tainos who died in the first two years after Christopher Columbus's fateful 1492 arrival in Haiti, known as Aiyti-Kiskeya, the "mountainous land."[1] But this is only the first of many fragmented historical memories. The Raras also recall and activate religious principles from the African kingdom of Kongo that lost untold numbers to the slave trade. The festival carries Creole memories of the Americas as well. Rara parades come to their climactic finish on Easter Week precisely because Holy Week was mandated (in 1685, under the Code Noir) to provide a respite from labor for enslaved Africans of the colony. Undergirding all of these memories are rituals and references from the Spanish Inquisition. Families and villages make straw dummies of a "Jew" (who is sometimes the apostle "Judas") and drag him through the streets, beat him, and finally burn this "Jew" in effigy. Yet at the same time, Rara bands also enact the role of "the Jews" as they were portrayed in the Gospels and celebrate the crucifixion with music and dance.

This essay explores these images of "Jews" in Haitian Rara in order to illustrate a broader argument: that race is inextricably bound together with religion, especially in the nascent phases of racial discourse in Europe, but also in lasting examples in the contemporary Americas. It is possible to discern historical connections between religious and racial thought at the start of American history by unpacking these seemingly obscure, ongoing religious dramas in Haiti. This case suggests that anti-Black racism in the Americas—like modern anti-Semitism—had its genesis in the anti-Judaism of medieval Europe.[2]

The seeds of both white supremecy and anti-Semitism lay in medieval European Christianity, particularly in the religious thought of the Spanish Inquisition. Inquisition mythology and practices would be transported to the Americas, and serve as a blueprint for the structures of racialization that would develop so tragically there.

The first agent of such thought in the Americas was Christopher Columbus himself. After all, Columbus and the early colonists were products of the religious worldview of the late Middle Ages, when the Inquisition was in full force. In a telling coincidence of history, Columbus set sail for what he would call the *outro mondo* (other world) in August 1492, only three days after the final departure of the Jews from Spain.[3] This was the era during which Spain expelled its entire Jewish population, and the Inquisition reserved special tribunals for any *anusim*, or *conversos*, converted Jews, who were suspected of "Judaizing."[4]



"The Jews," as Sander Gilman argues, were the original "Other" of Europe, the very first object of projection, marginalization, and demonization for Christendom.[5] Flexible popular tropes about "the Jews" hinged on the figure of the devil and linked the devil with "the Jews."[6] And the imaginary initially reserved for European "demonic" Jews was portable and easily transferred onto the Native peoples and Africans in the Americas.[7] I argue here that many of the negative images of Africans in the colonial Americas draw from and elaborate medieval European images of Jews. Europe's demonization of the Jews became a mythological blueprint for the encounter with Native peoples and Africans in the Americas. The ideologies and practices that developed in this encounter ultimately became a full-blown system of race and process of racialization. We can thus discern a process of domination that married Christianization and anti-Semitism to the formation of racialized capitalist expansion in the Americas.

But the subjects of Othering tell their own stories, and build their own identities. The story is never simply about a one-directional process of demonizing a conquered people. So this essay is also about the agency of the disenfranchised, in their expressions, reactions, and representations. It looks at how some in the African diaspora have inherited, used, and manipulated European Christian anti-Judaism to contest their class position in a racialized society. In contemporary Haiti, local dramas represent the symbolic presence of Judas and of "the Jews" in complicated and ambiguous ways. In the course of Easter week, "Jews" are demonized and burned in effigy by some—but they are also honored and claimed by others as forefathers and founders of the Rara bands. Various Rara leaders embrace the identity of "the Jew" and claim a sort of mystical Jewish ancestry. In accepting the label of "Jew," these Rara leaders take on a mantle of denigration as a kind of psychic and social resistance. In carving out a symbolic territory as "Jews," these Black Haitians symbolically oppose the powers that historically have sought to exploit them—the mulatto Haitian Catholic elite. Myths, by their nature, create imminent and shifting imaginaries, not easily controlled by orthodoxy. Exploited peoples embraced the image of "the Jew" and creatively perform oppositional dramas in which they critique the morality of Christianity and their own place in a racialized class structure.

## The Intersections of Religion, Race, Nation, and Class in Haiti

It has long been routine to speak of Haiti as being a "divided society" consisting of two major classes: the rural Black "peasants" and the French-identified mu-

latto urban "elite." This cliché oversimplifies a complex historical process and the resulting heterogeneities of the various class actors in that country. It *does*, however, refer to a stark divide in Haitian society between a politically and economically enfranchised minority and a disenfranchised, exploited majority. But class by itself is not the only dynamic at work in creating this divide. Class is articulated together with gender, race, and religion. Religious affiliation with Catholicism or Vodou, as well as phenotype and complexion color, with all their racial connotations, are part of the articulation of class position.

The roots of Haitian inequality began in colonial plantation slavery, under European, Christian, and capitalist dominance. Independence in 1804 overthrew France and slavery but ushered in devastating economic policies. Agricultural goods produced with the simplest technology by a growing peasantry were and still are taxed at customs houses and provide the bulk of government revenues. This basic scenario of an overtaxed, unrepresented, nonliterate peasantry exploited by an urban bourgeoisie remains unchanged to the current time.[8]

Social patterns in Haiti are typical of other postcolonial societies, where social status is refracted through class, lineage, color, gender, religion, literacy, and language. The educated urban population—historically called "the mulatto elite"—typically has been French-speaking, Catholic, and with lighter complexions and has carried a sense of aristocracy, or consciousness of old family lineage. Meanwhile, the peasantry is overwhelmingly made up of relatively dark-complexioned people of African descent who are nonliterate, speak Creole, and tend to affiliate with the Afro-Creole religion of Haiti called Vodou. This simple picture must be elaborated by the many gradations of status within these groups.[9]

But social thought about race, color, and nationalism in Haiti complicates this scheme. We must keep in mind that race is a form of fluid and changing thought that understands inconsequential physical differences between peoples to be innate and unchangeable and attaches these differences to intellectual or moral capacity. Europeans' ideologies of race and white supremacy were gaining dominance in the early nineteenth century, just as Haitians revolted against France and abolished slavery. Consequently, Haitians have broadly shared a national identity that has viewed Haiti as a symbol of the redemption of the "Black race." In speaking about Haiti in an international context, Haitian nationalists have long underscored Haiti as the first Black nation to fight white supremacy, where the descendants of Black Africans united together with the descendants of mulatto freed people to form a racially Black nation.[10]

Yet, paradoxically, as social actors inside Haiti's borders, Haitians inhabit an elaborate status hierarchy coinciding with color and phenotype distinctions that were formed in the colonial era. Such a racialized understanding of difference can operate just as easily within "all-Black" nations like Haiti as in white-majority societies elsewhere. So, as David Nicholls notes, "as ethnic solidarity on the basis of race declined in Haiti, ethnic divisions based on color assumed a new importance."[11] In their nationalism, then, Haitians have historically identified as racially "Black." Yet at the same time, Haitians reproduced racial hierarchies based on color and class that, like race, took visible difference, education, and religious affiliation and debated whether they were signs of unbridgable difference.



Much Haitian intellectual thought has argued for the equality of all the races and consequently for the equality and dignity of the Blacks and the peasantry. However, forces of foreign investment and drastic economic disparity have continued to divide Haitian society.[12] The enfranchised classes denied the peasantry political representation, economic resources, and education, using arguments that often replicated the racist anti-Black arguments in other parts of the hemisphere. The historically mulatto classes understood their own French lineage to result in greater intelligence and refinement. Some argued that the Black peasantry shared only "African blood" and that its unbridgeable, innate inferiority held the peasantry back from development. Yet Haitian nationalism insisted on a shared "Haitian blood" when speaking as national subjects.[13] These contradictions have remained salient throughout Haitian history, and the Haitian public sphere has continuously debated diverse positions on race, Blackness, religion, development, language, and education.

Now, the peasantry and urban poor are not unlike other peoples of the so-called developing world, and they occupy a local structural position embedded in the postmodern context of racialized global capital. The Haitian nation-state is a virtually powerless entity on the international stage, and the peasantry and urban poor are caught in a system that constitutes them as the lowest link in a globalized capitalism.[14] The majority of these classes are affiliated with Vodou, and they make up the majority of Rara participants.

These social divisions also follow racialized *religious* cleavages. In Haitian cultural politics, Catholicism has positioned itself against Vodou as an official, European, legitimate, orthodox tradition associated with civilizing power and authority. Vodou occupies an oppositional space that is creole, home-grown, racially Black, unorthodox, diverse, and by extension illegitimate, impure, evil, and satanic. Politically, then, the two traditions have been constructed as polar opposites. The Lenten period becomes an interesting and tense time when Catholic and Vodou practices clash.

Given the drastic disparity of wealth in Haiti, the appearance of thousands of peasant-class people in public space is inherently a deeply charged moment, considered dangerous both culturally and politically by dominant groups. For members of the educated enfranchised classes, hundreds of noisy people celebrating in the streets conjure up nightmarish fantasies about mass popular uprising. As a large-scale popular festival, Rara is structurally oppositional to

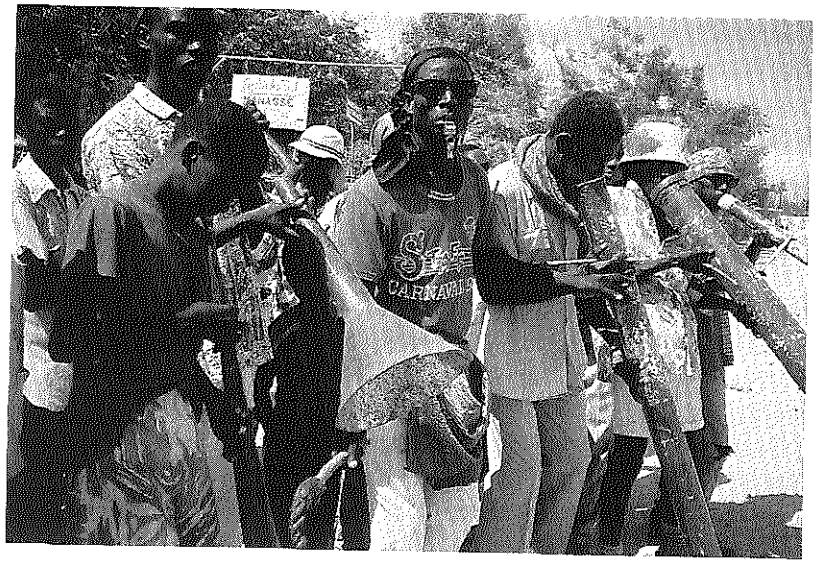

FIGURE 2.1. A Rara *kolonel* and his horn players pause for a photo. Artibonite Valley, 1993. Photograph by Elizabeth McAlister.

the dominant classes who make up the Haitian enfranchised minority: the literate, monied classes, in their various aspects, who have historically depended on the Haitian army and United States support to maintain power.

## Bwile Jwif: "Burning the Jew" in Effigy

It was Holy Thursday night, and my research team and I were out recording and filming a Rara band in the narrow back streets of Port-au-Prince. We were dancing along down the dark hilly streets at a good clip, on our way to a small cemetery to try to get some zonbi to *chofe* ("heat up") the band for the season's climax on Easter. We stopped while the band paid a musical salute to the invisible guardian of the cemetery gates in Vodou. I looked up and noticed a straw dummy sitting on the roof of the house across the street. It was a "Jew."

*He was sitting in a chair in the open air, on top of this one-story tin-roofed house. Made of straw and dressed in blue jeans, a shirt, suit jacket, and sneakers, this "Jew" wore a tie and had a pen sticking out of his shirt pocket. His legs were crossed, and over them sat what looked to be a laptop computer fashioned out of cardboard. A cord seemed to run from the computer down into a briefcase that sat by his chair.*

*I asked around for the mèt Jwif-la, its owner. An older man missing a few teeth came forward, offering a callused, muscular handshake that revealed a life of hard*



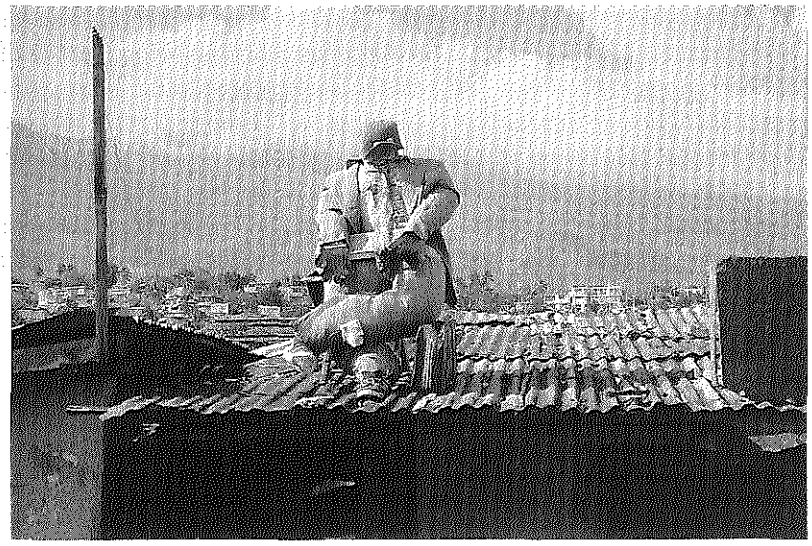

FIGURE 2.2. Effigy of a "Jew" waiting to be burned in a Port-au-Prince neighborhood, 1993. Photograph by Elizabeth McAlister.

*physical labor. He was from the countryside in the south of the island, a migrant to Port-au-Prince. I found myself in the ridiculous position of having to compliment him on his work. "Nice Jew you've got there," I said ("Ou gen yon bèl Jwif la, wi"). "Oh yes, we leave it up for the Rara band to pass by. Tomorrow afternoon we'll burn it," he said. "Aha . . . well . . . great . . ." said my research partners and I, flaring our eyes at each other. I guess nobody told the guy that Jean-Claude Duvalier banned the practice in the 1970s, around the time of a rush of tourism and foreign industrial investment. I bet other people still do it, here and there.*

The Easter ritual of burning "the Jew" or burning "Judas" in effigy was practiced until recently by all classes in Haiti. There were many local variations, but usually by Maundy Thursday an effigy was erected in some central location, and at three o-clock on Good Friday it was burned by the local community.[15] This was done in a ritual retaliation against Judas, who betrayed Jesus, or against "the Jews" who "killed Jesus."

Local peasant communities enacted this carnivalesque theater, and so did wealthy plantation households. Thérèse Roumer, a writer from the provincial city of Jérémie, remembered the "Juifs errants," the "wandering Jews" of her childhood. Her father owned expansive tracts of land in the region and maintained a large family home. A "Jew" was erected at the beginning of Lent. He had stuffed pants and shirt, with a pillow for a head, and he sat in a chair on the veranda by the front door. The idea, said Madame Roumer, was to kick the

Jew whenever you went in or out of the door, "say any bad words you had," and scold him for killing Jesus. On the Saturday morning before Easter, all of the children from town would find wooden sticks, come to the house to beat him, and burn him up in a bonfire.[16] Children were exhorted by the grownups to "pray for the conversion of the Jews."[17] The family would then go off to church for some holy water and wash down the verandah.[18]

Most people I interviewed remembered that the Jew in effigy was part of a child's game, in which the "Jew" represented Judas himself and was hidden by the adults in the neighborhood. William Seabrook, whose book *The Magic Island* has sustained many critical blows since its publication in 1929, wrote this tongue-in-cheek account, worth reproducing in its entirety.

> On the last bright Easter morning which I spent in Port-au-Prince—this was only a year ago—the Champs de Mars, a fashionable park adjacent to the presidential palace and new government buildings, resembled an untidied battlefield on which scenes of wholesale carnage had been recently enacted.
>
> It was impossible to drive through it without swerving to avoid mangled torsos; it was impossible to stroll through it without stepping aside to avoid arms, legs, heads, and other detached fragments of human anatomies.
>
> It was impossible also to refrain from smiling, for these mangled remains were not gory; they exuded nothing more dreadful than sawdust, straw and cotton batting. They were, in fact, life-sized effigies of Judas and Pontius Pilate's soldiers—done to death annually by naive mobs bent on avenging at this somewhat late day an event which occurred in Palestine during the reign of Tiberius. . . .
>
> I had made the acquaintance, so to speak, of one Judas before he betrayed our Lord and fled to the woods. All the little community had contributed toward his construction. He sat propped in a chair outside the doorway. They had stuffed an old coat, a shirt, and a long pair of trousers with straw, fastened old shoes and cotton gloves, also stuffed, to the legs and arms, and had made ingeniously a head of cloth, stuffed with rags, with the face painted on it and a pipe stuck in its mouth. They introduced me to this creature very politely. They were rather proud of him. He was Monsieur Judas, and I was expected to shake hands with him. You see—or perhaps you will not see unless you can recall the transcendental logic which controlled the make-believe games you used to play in childhood—that Judas had *not yet* betrayed Jesus. He was, therefore, an honored guest in their house, as Peter or Paul might have been.
>
> And so their righteous wrath will be all the more justified when they learn on Saturday morning that Judas has turned traitor. Then it is that all the neighbors, armed and shouting, the men with machetes and *cocomacaque* bludgeons, the women with knives, even more bloodthirsty in their vociferations, invade the habitation where Judas has been a guest, demanding, "*Qui bo' li?*" (Where is the traitor hiding?)
>
> Under the bed they peer, if there is a bed; behind doors, in closets—I happened to witness this ceremony in a city suburb, where they do have beds and closets—while members of the household aid in the search and make excited suggestions. But nowhere can Judas be found. It seems that he has fled. (What has really occurred is that the head of the house has carried him off during the night and hidden him, usually in some jungle ravine or thicket close on the city's edge. Judas usually takes to the forest as any man would, fleeing for his life. But this is not always predictable. A Judas has been known to hide in a boat, in a public garage yard, even under the bandstand in that Champs de Mars whither so many of them, wherever found, are dragged for execution.)
>
> So tracking Judas becomes a really exciting game. A group collects, shouting, beating drums, marching in the streets, racing up side-alleys; meeting other groups, each intent on finding the Judas planted by its own neighborhood, but nothing loath to find some other Judas and rend him to pieces *en passant*. Crowds may be heard also crashing and beating through the jungle hillsides. It is rather like an Easter-egg hunt on a huge and somewhat mad scale.[19]



Other cultures practice the tradition of burning Judas in effigy at Easter week, notably in Mexico and other parts of Latin America.[20] The practice probably stems from the liturgical dramas, or "evangelizing rituals," produced by early Jesuit missionaries. The Jesuits are known to have staged elaborate dramas in the communities where they worked, playing out scenes from Jesus' life.[21] Passion plays spread the idea of Jews as "Christ-killers." According to this ritual logic, Judas, who betrayed Jesus, is conflated with "the Jews" who "mistreated Jesus," making all Jews into "Judases."[22] The role that the Jews supposedly played in the crucifixion, as described in the New Testament, embellished in legend, and portrayed on the stage, was familiar to both cleric and layman. It was a logical starting point for moral teaching.

The idea that "the Jews killed Jesus" is rooted, of course, in the New Testament, which can be read as a polemic that displays the anti-Judaism of the early Church. Sander Gilman has argued that the negative image of difference of the Jew found in the Gospels (and especially, we might note, the figure of Judas) became the central referent for all definitions of difference in the West.[23] During the medieval period, European Christianity produced the image of "the demonic Jew," an inhuman creature working directly for Satan. Joshua Trach-

tenberg writes in his classic work *The Devil and the Jews* that "the two inexorable enemies of Jesus, then, in Christian legend, were the devil and the Jew, and it was inevitable that the legend should establish a causal relation between them."[24] By the medieval period, the devil was cast as the master of the Jews, directing them in a diabolical plot to destroy Christendom.

In the medieval Passion plays that set the tone for the popular Christianity of Christopher Columbus's Europe and the colonial Jesuit missions, the Jews are handed the entire weight of blame for Jesus' death, and Pontius Pilate and the Roman participants in the narrative fade into the background.[25] Medieval European Mystery plays were popular liturgical dramas, reenacting various scenes from scripture. They grew into village festivals performed in marketplaces and guildhalls, taking on the "secular, boisterous, disorderly and exuberant life of the folk."[26] In *Le Mystère de la Passion*, a fourteenth-century French play depicting the crucifixion, the Jews are the villains of the piece, egged on by devils. In the climax, the devils instigate Judas to betray his master and howl with glee when they are successful.[27] The idea of Jews as demonic "Christ-killers" was elaborated throughout the medieval period, forming a central theme of the anti-Judaism that authorized the persecution of Jews during the Inquisition.

The clergy of Spanish Hispaniola, like the French that followed them, were few in number and faced the overwhelming project of planting and maintaining Christianity. It is likely that the island's Jesuit, Dominican, and Franciscan missionaries made use of the theatrical tactics deployed by their colleagues in New Spain to convert the Native Americans. In that colony, large-scale popular dramas were modeled after the Mystery plays of Spain and France, depicting the winners and losers in the Christian story and making clear parallels to the colonists and the conquered. Judas, "the Jews," Jesus, and the apostles made for a cast of characters that would illustrate the larger drama of power relations at the start of the colonial enterprise.[28] The Christian story and theatrical public rituals generated narratives that were meant to authorize and display the technologies—chains and whips—of servitude. European Christendom dramatically performed itself as a sole civilizing force, against the barbaric and demonic forces of Jews, Native Indians, and Africans.[29]

The historical antecedents of the Haitian *bwile jwif* ("Jew burning") rituals may well be in these sorts of Passion Plays that referenced the events of the Spanish Inquisition. In the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries—as the Spanish were establishing the slave trade to the colonies—conversos believed to have secretly practiced Judaism were sentenced to be burned alive in Spain. Conversos in hiding were sentenced in absentia and burned in effigy.[30] These auto-da-fé practices were probably the model on which the Latin American rituals are based. Although the Inquisition was never organized in Hispaniola, the Easter effigy burnings are most probably rooted in Inquisition symbolism and its attendant public ritual terror.[31]



Anti-Jewish sentiment was an implicit part of the ruling process of the French colony of Saint-Domingue. The church itself was among the largest of the slave-owning landholders in the colony, and it won an advantage with the establishment of the Code Noir.[32] This edict by King Louis XIV mandated the planter class to baptize and Christianize the slaves, just as it simultaneously outlawed the exercise of any religion other than Catholicism. The Jesuits, working as an order before the official establishment of their mission in 1704, manifested a marked dislike of Jews and their religion. In 1669 they appealed to the Crown representative to take actions against "tavern keepers, undesirable women and Jews."[33] In 1683 the Church induced King Louis XIV to expel all Jews from the colony and to impose a religious test on new immigrants.[34]

It would have been only logical, then, for the colonial clergy to take the image of the Jews as an evil, anti-Christian force and hold them up in comparison with early forms of Vodou—the real threat to Christianity in the colony. Although the Christianization of the Africans in colonial Saint Domingue was a halfhearted and badly organized enterprise, enslaved people were mandated by the Code Noir to be baptized, and they sporadically attended Mass, married, and were directed in catechism.[35] In their efforts to control the enslaved, the clergy preached Paul's letters to the Ephesians and other biblical passages exhorting slaves to obey their masters. Most of their practical worries revolved around the "superstition" of the Africans, their magical abilities, and their knowledge of poison, for greater than the fear of diabolism was the more imminent threat of uprising and rebellion. Numerous regulations were passed in the colonial period and after making various religious and magical practices illegal.

Underlying anti-Vodou sentiment was the notion that Africans, like the Jews before them, were acting in consort with the devil. And in both cases, European Christians debated whether Jews and Africans were even capable of true conversion and thus capable of entering the Church—and society—as equals. Under the Spanish doctrine of *limpieza de sangre* (purity of blood), even converted Jews were tainted with "impure blood." This religious doctrine marked and excluded an ethnic population on the basis of supposedly unbridgeable differences that could not be converted or assimilated. It was a defining moment of religious racism, or protoracism. By the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, European popular thought held that Jews were evil by nature—and not only because of their refusal of Christianity.[36] This racializing logic would be transferred to colonial Africans, embedded in the same popular mythology.

The litany of charges that had been leveled against Jews in medieval Europe was transferred wholesale onto the Vodouist. The list of devilish crimes attributed to European Jews was an elaborate series of evil activities aimed at destroying Christendom. Jews were accused of a range of magical crimes, from superstition, sorcery, and desecration of the host all the way to ritual murder,

the drinking of Christian blood, the eating of human flesh, and poisonings.[37] It is striking that this list was replicated in the colony, targeting Africans and Creoles of Saint Domingue. Like the Jews, the Africans were subjects of a religious protoracism, since even the Christians among them were under suspicion for being "of African blood."

Like the converted Jews constantly under suspicion of "Judaizing," African converts to Christianity were suspected of sorcery. Joan Dayan writes of the eighteenth-century San Domingue that "it seemed as if the more Christian you claimed to be, the more certainly you could be accused of conniving with the devil."[38] A decree passed in 1761 complained that slaves' religious meetings at night in churches and catechizing in houses and plantations were actually veiled opportunities for prostitution and *marronage*. Slaves who had taken on roles of "cantors, vergers, churchwardens, and preachers" were charged with "contamination" of sacred relics with "idolatrous" intentions.[39] Africans asked to be baptized over and over, believing in the mystical properties of the rite.[40]

The legal codes of the colony, from then till now, have criminalized numerous practices known as "sorcery," linking the devil with the Africans and Creoles. A decree passed in 1758, for example, prohibited the use of "*gardecorps* or *makandals*."[41] Still in use today as *pwen* (lit: "points"), these "bodyguards" were objects infused with spiritual force, directed to protect their wearers. Makandal was also the name of the famous Maroon leader in the Haitian revolution. An adept botanist as well as a revolutionary, Makandal was convicted of instigating a campaign of poisoning planters' wells in 1757, during which more than six thousand Whites were poisoned.[42] Besides being labeled superstitious, sorcerers, poisoners, and false Christians, Africans and Creoles were accused of stealing and desecrating the host, drinking blood, and cannibalism, thus rounding out and replicating the litany of Christian charges against Jews.

However, the doctrine of limpieza de sangre was never successfully applied in San Domingue, and in fact there was a great deal of intermarriage and *mélange de sang* ("mixed blood") in the colony. George Frederickson has noted the paradox that Spain and Portugal were "in the forefront of European racism or protoracism in their discrimination against converted Jews and Muslims, but that the Iberian colonies manifested a greater acceptance of intermarriage and more fluidity of racial categories and identities than the colonies of other European nations."[43] Still, Frederickson is absolutely right that late medieval Spain is critical to the history of racism because its ideologies serve as "a kind of segue between the religious intolerance of the Middle Ages and the naturalistic racism of the modern era."[44] Emerging ideas about race remained tied to religion, with the idea that people with certain "blood" were suspect in their relationship to Christianity, their morality, and their ability to govern themselves. To see how such ideas have been elaborated in the history of the Americas, we can look at later periods in Haiti.



## Satan's Slaves: Vodouists in the Catholic Imaginary

The Catholic clergy in Haiti consistently placed Africans and Creoles with "African blood" under suspicion because of their affiliation with the evolving religious system known as Vodou. The Catholic clergy quickly cast Vodou as a cult of Satan, a complex of African superstitions to be purged from the beliefs of the Haitian majority. In cycles of violent repression throughout Haitian history, Vodou practitioners have been jailed, tortured, and killed and sacred objects burned. Using the image of slavery so salient to a population once enslaved and perpetually negotiating its sovereignty, the church's antisuperstition campaigns figured Vodouists as slaves of Satan, who is himself working to contaminate and destroy Christianity. As I've shown, these images came straight from popular Inquisition-era conceptions of "the Jews." Consider this rhetoric from a Haitian catechism of the antisuperstition campaigns of the 1940s:

> —Who is the principle slave of Satan?
>
> The principle slave of Satan is the oungan [Vodou priest].
>
> —Why do the oungan take the names of the angels, the saints and the dead for Satan?
>
> The oungan give the names angels, the saints and the dead to Satan to deceive us more easily.
>
> —Do we have the right to mix with the slaves of Satan?
>
> No, because they are evil-doers and liars like Satan.[45]

Yet in a sense, institutional Catholicism in Haiti *depended* on its opposition to Vodou, since it was the opposition of the Church to the impure and illegitimate that strengthened Catholic virtue—and authority—in Haiti. Cultural complexes that evolve in unequal relations of power take on a process similar to the culture wars between "high" and "low" culture articulated by Stallybrass and White:

> a recurrent pattern emerges: the "top" attempts to reject and eliminate the "bottom" for reasons of prestige and status, only to discover, not only that it is in some way frequently dependent upon the low-Other . . . but also that the top includes that low symbolically, as a primary eroticized constituent of its own fantasy life. The result is a mobile, conflictual fusion of power, fear, and desire in the construction of subjectivity; a psychological dependence upon precisely those others which are being rigorously opposed and excluded at the social level.[46]

The trope of the Jew was used by the enfranchised classes as a fantasy "low-Other" that authorized Catholic mulatto superiority. The equation of non-

Christians with Jews gave these bourgeois Haitians one more cultural difference between themselves and the nonliterate Vodouists. Besides being dark-complected, nonliterate, Creole-speaking peasants, they also were pagans and anti-Christians. Symbolically, they were Jews. And like the Jews of medieval Spain, the moral capacity of these Vodouists was debatable. Haitian Catholics came to depend, in a sense, on the trope of the Vodouist-Jew as a force to oppose and exclude, a way to define the Catholic self through a negative referent. Although they shared the same "African blood," the ongoing practice of Vodou made the peasants a class—some argued, a caste—apart.[47] These distinctions were both religious and quasi-racial. And at no time were (and are) these social divisions more pronounced than at Easter.

Theologically, Easter is the most important holiday in the Catholic calendar, celebrated in Haiti both in official church mass and popular ritual. All classes practice the reenactment of Les Chemins de la Croix, the stations of the cross, after church on Good Friday. For this Passion play, a series of ritual stations are set in place, and barefoot pilgrims, some dressed in burlap, visit each station, fasting, without water, and reciting prayers before each spot. A local man plays the role of Jesus, and other actors portray other figures in the story. The Passion play was honed as a genre in medieval Europe, and this somber drama drawn from the four Gospels is still enacted in numerous locations on Good Friday all over the Christian world.

Yet at the same time that Catholics engage in these Easter rituals, Rara bands are busy parading through public thoroughfares. In fact, some Raras deliberately plan to walk past churches on Sunday to annoy the Christians. In the early 1990s, I heard a priest in Pont Sonde end mass with the admonishment "Don't go in the Rara," worried he might lose some parishioners to this "devil's dance." In the imaginary of the Haitian bourgeoisie, Vodouists have been cast as evil slaves in Satan's army. As anti-Christians, they became symbolic Jews.

## "If You Go in the Rara, You Are a Jew."

*A Rara band called "Ya Sezi" ("They will be surprised") walked for miles all day on the Good Friday of 1993, along the banks of the Artibonite River. They were on their way to the compound of Papa Dieupe, a wealthy landowner in the region, and also the "emperor" of a Shanpwèl society. My team and I had chosen Papa Dieupe's as the best place to be for Rara; we figured we could comfortably stay put in one place and watch the bands come to salute the "big man."*

*Ya Sezi's entrance was spectacular for a sleepy country day. We could hear the banbou blowing for miles, and children would run through and breathlessly announce that the band was coming to salute the emperor. They came up the path, and did the ritual salutes for the Vodou spirits living in the trees in the compound, and then turned to salute Papa Dieupe's "children" in the society. Finally, after they'd played until about midnight, Papa Dieupe himself emerged from his small house and received them.*

*After playing music in the compound for much of the night, the group slept, and awoke early Saturday morning to play and "warm up" before they left. While the musicians played, each of the dancers (who were all women) took turns holding the whip belonging to the leader, and ran in circles through the compound. The other dancers set off in hot pursuit, their dresses streaming out behind. Papa Dieupe told me they were taking turns being Jesus, running from the "Jewish soldiers." Pilate's Roman soldiers were nowhere in evidence but rather had been collapsed into a new bloodthirsty figure of "Jewish soldiers." Comically enacting Jesus' suffering on his walk to Calvary, the Rara members were amusing themselves by taking turns portraying both Jesus and his "killers," "the Jews."*[48]



Catholic Haitians make a clear connection between the exuberant celebrations of Rara on the anniversary of Jesus' death and "the Jews who killed him." A popular expressions says "If you go in the Rara, you are a Jew" ("Ou al nan Rara, se Jwif ou ye"). Even some university-educated Haitians have a vague concept that "Rara is a Jewish festival." At a fancy cocktail party in the wealthy enclave above Petionville, I was introduced to a young Haitian architect from the "mulatto elite." "Studying Rara?" he asked incredulously. "Well, you'll find that it's a Jewish thing." Pressed on how a Jewish festival could have found its way through history to be adopted by the Haitian peasantry, the man shrugged his shoulders and reached for his rum punch.

Every Rara band member I interviewed, on the other hand, remembered that Rara "came from Africa," with the slaves. This seems a clear historical fact: Rara continues and extends a number of African cultural principles, including the centrality of community enterprise, relationships with the ancestors and the deities, the use of natural sites for spiritual work, as well as the African-based drumming, call-and-response singing, and dance in public festival.

After establishing the African roots of the festival, however, Rara leaders would invariably go on to articulate the idea that Rara was linked to the Jews. Many of them cited the precise origin of Rara as the celebration of the crucifixion itself. "It was the Jews who crucified Christ who made the first Rara." One oungan explained it this way: "long ago, after they finished nailing Jesus to the cross, the soldiers who did that saw that it would be even more satisfying to put out a Rara to show that they were the winners. They put out a Rara, they made music. They were rejoicing, singing and dancing."[49]

This idea that "the Jews who crucified Christ" rejoiced and made the first Rara was expressed to me over and over by Rara members. The historical genealogy of the notion is obscured here, as is the cultural history of most dispossessed groups. Yet one returns to the Passion plays of the colonial

church, modeled after the ones in medieval France, England, and Germany. The Jews are the central villains of these stories and are directed by demons and devils hovering in the background. Together the devils and the Jews convince Judas to betray his master and celebrate when they are successful. Joshua Trachtenberg describes it thus: "around the cross on which Jesus hangs the Jews whirl in a dance of abandon and joy, mocking their victim and exulting in their achievement." This explicit scenario of a crucified Christ surrounded by joyful, dancing Jews celebrating their victory seems to have made its way from the popular European imaginary to become a memory of former African slaves.[50] Another Rara president reiterates: "Rara is what they did when they crucified Jesus, on Good Friday. At that point, all the Jews were happy. They put the Rara out, they masked, they danced, they dressed in sequins, they drank their liquor and had fun."[51]

The link between Rara and "the Jews who killed Christ" was strong enough in the Haitian imagination that Rara members became Jews in their own rememberings. A oungan told me: "it was the Jews who came with this tradition. Now it's become our tradition."[52] Another oungan provided an explanation that implicitly described how the Africans could have inherited this celebration of the ancient Hebrews. "Rara is something that comes from the Jewish nation. So, mystically speaking, Haitians are descended from Africa. The Africans always kept their mystical rites."[53] In this logic, Africans are equated with the ancient Israelites, and it is this linkage that explains how Haitians have inherited Rara from the Jews. Through Rara, these Haitians embraced the subversive identity of "the Jew" and thus see the Jews as forerunners, somehow, of their African ancestors. "The Jews" became a kindred religious and racial group.

When Rara members embrace the negative cultural category of "the Jew," the mythology they generate may be understood as a repressed people's subversion of the ruling order. This class- and race-based resistance to Catholic hegemony is a form of theatrical positioning on the part of the peasants that says "We are the Jews, the enemy of the French Catholic landowners." Like other groups that take on the negative terms ascribed to them by the powerful, Haitians take on a mantle of denigration in the face of a hostile dominant class. Just as "high culture" includes "low culture" symbolically in its self-construction, so here does the "popular culture" include the "elite" in its turn.

Vodouists' interpretations of biblical stories can be understood as creative subversions of official discourse. Like the Rastafari of Jamaica, Vodouists are adept orators and creative interpreters of myth and scripture. Every imaginative Vodou practitioner may offer a new visionary interpretation of the Bible and of history. These versions allow Vodouists and Rara members to authorize their own history while positioning themselves, for themselves, in terms of the dominant class and its religious ideology.

Jesus Christ is the subject of much theorizing on the part of Vodouists. In one myth, God created the twelve apostles just after he created the earth and



the animals. The apostles were rebellious and challenged God. In punishment, God sent them to Ginen, the mythical Africa of Vodou's past and future. The apostles and their descendants became the *lwa*, while a renegade apostle who refused to go to Ginen became a sorcerer and took the name Lucifer.[54] Throughout the oral mythologies of Vodou is a clear theme of morality and a distinction between working with the Ginen spirits and working with the forces of sorcery. Usually the sorcerer is also a slave master of captured spirits and souls, and so themes of morality are bound together with philosophical issues of slavery and freedom.

One story I was told creatively posits Jesus as the first *zonbi*, or soul that has been captured and sold in order to work for its owner. This myth creatively positions Jesus and God as the innocent victims of two unscrupulous Haitian soldiers who secretly witnessed the resurrection. It was related to me by a sorcerer who confided that he knew the techniques of capturing the spirit of the recently dead (zonbi) and ordering it to work:

> "the whole reason that we are able to raise people after they die goes back to when they crucified Jesus Christ. Christ was sent by Gran Jehovah, by *Gran Mèt* [lit.: "Great Master"]. He also sent Mary Magdalene. Along with two bodyguards for Jesus from the Haitian Armed Forces. When Jehovah gave the password to raise up Jesus from the dead, the soldiers stole the password, and sold it. It's been handed down from father to son, which is how I could get it."[55]

Vodou takes what it can use theologically and constantly re-creates itself with fresh material. The Vodouist fits biblical figures into an already existing Afro-Creole scheme. Jesus is problematic for the Vodouist: the heavy catholicizing of the French and later, the Haitian elite, makes him the god of the dominant classes. This story subtly acknowledges the teller's opposition to Christianity: a worker (a Haitian foot soldier) stole something from Jesus (the god of the whites and elite). The stolen knowledge now becomes a tool for the subordinates, since it is Vodouists who now control the resurrection secrets of God. This tale illustrates how the Vodouist uses oppositional mythology as one of the ongoing weapons in everyday Haitian class and color warfare.

Rara leaders I interviewed accepted the Catholic label of *pagan, African, satanist,* and *Jew* and theorized their position in a specific Vodou theology. This view agrees that Rara is anti-Christian. As one leader explained, "Rara is basically against the power of God. Because Rara is what they did when they crucified Jesus, on Good Friday."[56]

## Conclusion

Rara may be "against the power of God." But on some level God has abandoned poor Black Haitians. The president of Rara Mande Gran Moun in Léogane

explained: "God made the King Lucifer. God commands the sky, and the King Lucifer commands the earth. Everybody who is poor on this earth is in hell."[57] In this interpretation, God rules the heavens but has given Lucifer control over the earth, so humans—especially the poor—are actually the political subjects of King Lucifer. In the face of a class structure divided by access to the means of production but marked, in many ways, by color and religious affiliation, the response of the Vodouist is to embrace and creatively rework the identity given them by Catholics. Commenting directly on the suffering generated by extreme economic exploitation, the figure of Lucifer stands as a kind of moral commentary on the state of Haitian government and its history of class and color inequality.

Rara leaders construct theology through the appropriation of "high" cultural elements into allegories of empowerment. The stories of the "Jewish Rara" and the "zonbi Christ" construct a sort of engagement with the texts of the Catholic mulatto classes in which the power of the Vodouists or Rara members is hidden inside the images of demonization. Haitian sorcerers construct themselves as active enemies of the Catholic order, as Jews, or as allies of thieves who stole from God. The narratives support Hurbon's statement that "in the eyes of the Voodooist, his mysticism is his power. Thus it may be correct to say that the Voodoo cult, since its inception with a creole coloration, is used by Voodoo believers as a power base from which to deal with the power elite."[58]

These myths can be seen as antihegemonic counternarratives that reconfigure histories and genealogies to cast power with the Black peasantry. In Haiti, and many other repressive contexts, cultural expression generates double-voiced, allegorical strategies so that the dominant culture is turned back on itself, transformed by the subordinate. The myths generated and performed in Rara reveal how "high" Catholic culture and the "low" Vodou culture are constructed in relation to one another, each mystically exoticizing the other in the ongoing performance of class and color in Haitian society. Each end of the class spectrum reaches for the figure of "the Jew" to authorize its own power in the religious imaginary of Haitian class and color warfare.

## NOTES

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1. Bartolome de las Casas, *History of the Indies* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), cited in Catherine Keller, "The Breast, the Apocalypse, and the Colonial Journey," in *The Year 2000: Essays on the End*, edited by Charles B. Strozier and Michael Flynn (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 42–58. Haiti has had various name changes: The Amerindian "Aiyti–Kiskeya" was changed by Columbus to Hispaniola, "Little Spain." Later, in 1697, the French named their colony Saint Domingue, and in 1804, newly independent slaves and people of color returned the land to its original name of Haiti.

2. This is also argued with much more historical breadth in the new work by George M. Fredrickson, *Racism: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 2002.

3. Ronald Sanders, *Lost Tribes and Promised Lands: The Origins of American Racism* (1978; New York: Harper Perennial), 1992, 90.

4. Cecil Roth, *A History of the Marranos* (Philadalphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1932). *Anusim*, Hebrew for "forced ones," has now replaced the English "Crypto-Jews" or the Spanish *conversos*, or "converted Jews," and the more derogatory *marranos*, or "swine," in Jewish Studies literature. See also David M. Gitlitz, *Secrecy and Deceit: The Religion of the Crypto-Jews.* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996).

5. Sander Gilman, *The Jew's Body* (New York: Routledge, 1991).

6. Joshua Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews: the Medieval Conception of the Jew and Its Relation to Modern Antisemitism* (1943; reprint, New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1966), 20.

7. See Fernando Cervantes, *The Devil in the New World: The Impact of Diabolism in New Spain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), for work on the ways Christendom linked the Jews, the devil, and native peoples in New Spain.

8. Linda Basch, Nina Glick Schiller, and Cristina Szanton Blanc, *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects, Postcolonial Predicaments and Deterritorialized Nation-States* (Langhorne, Pa: Gordon and Breach, 1994), 159.

9. It is important to note that using "light" and "dark" terminology for complexion color is problematic, since a moral valence is attached to the terms. "Light" connotes "truth" and "darkness" is related to sin and other negative categories; this language is embedded in Christian symbolism. "Melanin-rich" and "melanin-poor" are terms used by some scholars, yet this discourse of melanin is also problematic and politically charged.

10. Nicholls calls this "the mulatto myth" in *From Dessalines to Duvalier: Race, Colour and National Independence in Haiti* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press), 1996, 100–101.

11. Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier*, 254. He goes on to note that foreign intervention in periods of Haitian history have resulted in the abatement of such color conflicts and in the development of ethnic solidarity based on race.

12. Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier*, 103.

13. Nina Glick Schiller and Georges Eugene Fouron, *Georges Woke Up Laughing:*

*Long-Distance Nationalism and the Search for Home* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press), 2001, 103.

14. Perhaps the most crucial factor in upward mobility today is access to family and resources from *lòt bò dlo* (the other side of the water)—New York, Miami, or other points in the Haitian diaspora. Haitian transmigrants send home an estimated one hundred million dollars a year to families and small businesses.

15. This is the time of Jesus' death noted in scripture.

16. Thérèse Roumer, interview, by the author. Petionville, Haiti, February 16, 1993.

17. Georges Fouron, personal communication, New Haven, Conn., November 1997.

18. Thérèse Roumer, interview, Petionville, Haiti, February 16, 1993.

19. W. B. Seabrook, *The Magic Island* (New York: Literary Guild of America, 1929), 270–272.

20. See, for example, Muriel Thayer Painter, Edward H. Spicer, and Wilma Kaemlein, eds., *With Good Heart; Yaqui Beliefs and Ceremonies in Pascua Village* (Tuscon: University of Arizona Press, 1986), and James S. Griffith, *Beliefs and Holy Places: A Spiritual Geography of the Primeria Alta* (Tuscon: University of Arizona Press, 1992), 95.

21. See Marilyn Ekdahl Ravicz, *Early Colonial Religious Drama in Mexico: From Tzompantli to Golgotha* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1970), and Richard C. Trexler, "We Think, They Act: Clerical Readings of Missionary Theatre in Sixteenth-Century New Spain," in Steven L. Kaplan, *Understanding Popular Culture: Europe from the Middle Ages to the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Mouton, 1984), 189–227.

22. In *Judas Iscariot and the Myth of Jewish Evil* (New York: Free Press, 1992), Hyam Maccoby points out the consistent use of Judas by Christian myth as a symbol for all Jews. "Of all Jesus' twelve disciples, the one whom the Gospel story singles out as traitor bears the name of the Jewish people."

23. Gilman, *The Jew's Body*, 18.

24. Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews*, 20.

25. Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews*, 20.

26. Painter, Spicer, and Kaemlein, *With Good Heart*, 352.

27. Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews*, 22.

28. Trexler, "We Think They Act."

29. For a discussion of the conflation of British, Protestant, and civilized into one identity against Native American "heathens," see James Axtell, *The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

30. See Roth, *A History of the Marranos*. The anti-Judaism taught by the Catholic clergy in Haiti bears the characteristics of a classically premodern Jew-hatred centering on the betrayal of Judas. In this logic, Jews are primarily polluters and traitors; there is little reference to the modern anti-Semitic tropes of a Jewish conspiracy of exploitation hinging on issues of capital or usury. See Gavin I. Langmuir, "From Anti-Judaism to Anti-Semitism," in *History, Religion and Antisemitism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 275–305.



31. On the Inquisition and the Jews in Mexico, see Seymour B. Liebman, *The Jews in New Spain: Faith, Flame and the Inquisition* (Coral Gables, Fla.: University of Miami Press, 1970).

32. Carolyn E. Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990), 278.

33. George Breathett, *The Catholic Church in Haiti (1704–1785): Selected Letters, Memoires and Documents* (Salisbury, N.C.: Documentation, 1982), 4.

34. Anne Grene, *The Catholic Church in Haiti: Political and Social Change* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1993), 76.

35. Debien, "La Christianisation des esclaves des Antilles francaises aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siecles," *Revue d'histoire de l'Amerique francaise* 22 (1967), 99–11.

36. Fredrickson, *Racism*, 32–33.

37. See Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews*.

38. Joan Dayan, *Haiti, History and the Gods* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 1995, 252.

39. Dayan, *Haiti, History and the Gods*, 253.

40. Moreau de Saint Mery, Description topographique, physique, civile, politiqueet historique de la partie français [1797] 1958, 1:55.

41. Dayan, *Haiti, History and the Gods*, 252.

42. Dayan, *Haiti, History and the Gods*, 252.

43. Fredrickson, *Racism*, 39.

44. Fredrickson, *Racism*, 40.

45. Cited in Laënnec Hurbon, *Dieu dans le Vaudou Haïtien* (Port-au-Prince: Editions Deschamps, 1987), 21.

46. Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1986), 3.

47. Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalieres*, p. 201.

48. The band Ya Sezi can be heard playing in Papa Dieupe's compound on track 19a of the recording compiled by me: *Rhythms of Rapture: Sacred Musics of Haitian Vodou*, Smithsonian/Folkways Recording SF 40464, 1995.

49. Interview with Papa Mondy Jean, Port-au-Prince, April 1992.

50. A few Rara presidents told me that there was a game, a noisemaker, that the Jews held in their hands and spun at the crucifixion. This made a noise that came to be called "Rara." One notices the possible connection with the noisemakers of Purim.

51. Rara costumes are elaborately sequined in parts of Haiti. Interview with Simeon, by the author, Bel Air, Port-au-Prince, July 30, 1993.

52. Interview with Simeon, by the author, Bel Air, Port-au-Prince, March 20, 1993.

53. Interview with Simeon, by the author, Bel Air, Port-au-Prince, July 30, 1993.

54. Alfred Metraux, *Voodoo in Haiti* (1959; reprint, New York: Schocken Books, 1972), 326.

55. Interview with Papa Dieupe, by the author, Artibonite, Easter Sunday, April 11, 1993.

56. A smiliar symbolics works in Afro-Cuban religion, Lukumi. Unbaptized ritual objects and "working" charms are called "*judeo*," "Jewish."

57. Interview with Mayard, by the author, Rara Mande Gran Moun, Leogane,

times because of—the long histories of non-White Christianities throughout the Americas.

The essays in this section explore the making and (attempted) unmaking of this White Christianity. In "A Great Racial Commission: Religion and the Construction of White America," Daniel Lee examines how Whites in the United States in the mid- to late nineteenth century forged a sense of racial and national identity around the unifying cause of evangelical Protestantism—a sense of identity strong enough, they hoped, to withstand the challenges to White supremacy posed by Black emancipation, increased immigration, and other social forces. For many White Americans of that day, Christianity provided a means to incorporate non-White others into the hierarchical order of White society. In today's Brazil, by contrast, many Afro-Brazilians and antiracist activists hope that the incorporation of non-White cultural and religious practices into Catholic doctrine and liturgy will break the link between Whiteness and Christianity and undermine the hierarchical order of White society. In "The Catholic Afro Mass and the Dance of Eurocentrism in Brazil," John Burdick examines the efforts of the progressive Catholic Church to craft an antiracist, "inculturated" Christianity. He argues, however, that these efforts have foundered on an essentialist (mis)understanding of cultural difference—an impoverished multiculturalism that reduces the rich African heritage of Brazilian society to drumbeats, distinctive clothes, and dancing bodies.

Unfortunately, then, for both Burdick and Lee, it seems that the incorporation of racial and religious difference has only strengthened the bonds between Whiteness and Christianity. Taken together, however, their essays clearly show that these bonds are the products of history and society—products of human hands that may ultimately be broken by them.