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“WE MAKE THE STATE”:
PERFORMANCE, POLITICK, AND RESPECT IN URBAN HAITI

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In memory of Berman and Nerlande,

and with honor and respect for all “the people.”

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Men anpil chay pa lou.
With many hands, the burden is light.

Haitian Proverb

The weight of this dissertation was eased by "many hands" in Haiti. I know I will never be able to duly acknowledge all the gifts they delivered. Some were heroic acts that have forever altered my life and for which I lack words. But most are simply innumerable, the ordinary gestures of kindness and generosity that shape life in Haiti. The extra hand with a jug of water, the helpful directions down a winding corridor, the willingness to feed questions both naïve and sensitive, the patience with my accent, and the greetings that made me feel at home—are but some of the favors that people extended to me every day and that made this research feasible and fun. In this preface, I can only point out those who accompanied me along the research route and left an indelible mark on this work. In particular, I would like to thank my many hosts in Haiti, including the Prou, Pierre, Aide, Rémy, Chataigne, Pamphile, and Montout families. I owe a special debt to Moïse, Lesley, Sherline, and Nadege, the friends who walked with me around Bel Air before I felt comfortable *pou kont mwen* (by myself). I would have not gotten very far at all without my dearest friend and research (and life!) assistant, Lysa Aide. Her pedagogical wit will forever inform my thinking about Haiti and my philosophy of teaching anthropology, and her love and enjoyment of all things Haitian will always inspire me. I want to thank my academic home, the Faculté d'Ethnologie, and especially Professor Yves Blot for his unfailing support, both scholarly and otherwise. I am also grateful to my institutional homes in Bel Air, the schools of Korebel and Viva Rio. I owe a special debt to my students of English, who kept me grounded

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Writing a dissertation is a lonely process, but it is far from accomplished alone. This is starkly true in my case. This would be a very different, certainly less detailed, dissertation if my dear friends Eddy and Moïse Pierre had not searched for and miraculously recovered my notebooks and laptop from under the rubble in the weeks after the earthquake. I also thank the carpenter who made me the sturdy wooden desk that protected these valuables from the falling concrete of the two-story house in which I lived. I was so touched when Willy, Ducky, Fritznel, and Manno filled folders and plastic bags with photos and other notes when they thought I had lost everything. And, finally, I thank Lysa for securing her notes in a sturdy chest and sharing them with me.

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produce, but the fruit they brought back to their wide-eyed grandchildren were the stories that implanted interest in and compassion for those living beyond Chicago's suburbs. I am indebted to my paternal grandparents, Paul and Louise, who began in our family an appreciation for education that eventually inspired me to pursue this degree. I thank my parents for my socially progressive upbringing and their faith in my intellectual and professional pursuits. My father's deep concern for humanity, rigorous work ethic, and sense of humor, and my mother's political commitment, love of learning, and professional support, are behind all my ideas. My sister, Kelly, has long been driven by that killer combination of a love for the arts and a passion for politics, and I am certain that this work is yet another of my attempts to aspire toward her example. My brother has always provided unconditional love and support as a matter of course, and it is certain that my ability to take risks, intellectually and professionally, is owed to my knowledge of his confidence in me. Finally, I honor my dearest songwriter, Bill. For cheering the minor feats and laughing away all the worries, thank you.

NOTE ON ORTHOGRAPHY AND NAMES

The conversations and interviews for this dissertation were conducted primarily in Haitian Creole. Language in Haiti is a source of social tension and status. With an official orthography adopted in 1979, Haitian Creole, the native language of 100 percent of the population, is increasingly used as a conversational, formal, and written language in Haiti. However, a small fraction of the people I spoke with could converse in French and often used French phrasing in their speech. This population included government ministers, university professors, and other members of a professional or educated class. On rare occasions, conversations were conducted in English. My English students were especially eager to practice their evolving skills with me. It was more likely that English phrases and words were interwoven in Creole conversations. Because the choice to use a particular language was a decision embedded in ideologies of language use and strategies to communicate identity, status, and social ties, I have viewed language choice as an anthropologically significant aspect of my research, and have noted when English or French words were used.

I employed the orthography adopted by the Haitian National Institute for Pedagogy (*Institute Pédagogique National*) in 1979. I have translated all quotations into English, noting the Haitian Creole word when the English inadequately grasps the meaning of a phrase. I have also included the Haitian Creole texts of all songs, metaphors, and poetic phrasings, since it is as likely that this polyvalent language will take on new significance in time as it is that the reader will discover potential meanings that I have overlooked.

In order to protect the confidentiality of my subjects, I rely on pseudonyms for the majority of people who are cited in the text. In using pseudonyms, I have assigned one unique

name to each subject cited in the book so that the reader may follow particular characters through all of the chapters with the assurance that "Frantzy" introduced in chapter one is the same "Frantzy" in the conclusion. To honor the artistic talents and activism of my subjects, I have used the actual names of their staff, street bands, and social organizations, when given consent. Pseudonyms are used in all other cases. I refer to development agencies and transnational organizations by their real names, as well as political officials in Haiti and abroad.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

In October 2009, one year before the earthquake and two years before his inauguration as the President of Haiti, Michel Martelly visited Bel Air, an impoverished, downtown neighborhood in Port-au-Prince. He did not come as "Sweet Mickey," the performing and recording artist known for his ribald lyrics and pants-dropping performances at Carnival, but rather under the more serious auspices of his non-profit organization "Foundation Rose et Blanc." He planned to distribute "a little gift" to the children of Bel Air. Largely unfamiliar with the area, he found his footing by way of a prominent *staff*, or social clique, near the notoriously dangerous crossroads of "*Madam Kolo*." The staff managed the local Rara street band, *La Prophesie*, and a youth organization called *Pòt Pawol Ghetto*—"Ghetto's Press Secretary." Its two leading members, Erick and Patrice, had agreed to mobilize "their people" to orchestrate the distribution. In exchange for a small fee, they would provide crowd control, security, and oversee the distribution of the plastic bracelets that admitted children to the event. A largely spontaneous affair, this was a Herculean task. Just before Martelly arrived, and while dictating orders to his friends, Erick called and alerted me that they had an "activity" and that I should come to the house rented by the Brazilian NGO Viva Rio.

By the time I arrived, a huge crowd had gathered in the street. Word of the distribution had spread quickly, and parents were pushing and shoving their children up the stairs and into the house, hoping to get one of the handouts. Seemingly alarmed at the crowd, two truckloads of

MINUSTAH troops, the acronym for the UN peacekeeping mission, guarded the crowd. I spotted Patrice, a lanky twenty-year-old man with long dreadlocks, standing before the front door with some friends. He came to greet me and told me that Sweet Mickey was inside. Though not yet aware of his impending candidacy, Patrice seemed assured of his political aspirations. "He's making a campaign," he told me. After some struggle, we made it through the crowd and into the enclosed and overheated front room, where roughly a hundred children were seated cross-legged on the concrete floor. They were waiting for Erick, a young man with a beard and long dreadlocks tucked in a knitted cap, to usher them into the backroom. Here, seated in a white, lawn chair, was Martelly handing out large plastic bags printed with his foundation's logo. The children accepted the bags gleefully, sitting on his lap and smiling widely for the cameras that were present. Hoping for toys and sweets, they were surely unprepared for the bag's random assortment of "development" items: notebooks and ballpoint pens, packets of ramen noodles, small bags of sugar and rice, candles, bleach tablets, bandages, iodine, a gas station's sponsored map of the city, and appropriately, coloring books and crayons. The event lasted for less than thirty minutes. After several group photos, the children were escorted out the front door. Their parents grabbed the bags and hurried home. Shortly after, Martelly, his wife, and aides waved to the dispersing crowd before speeding off in a tinted-window SUV.

Figure 1. Distribution with Michel Martelly. Author photo, 2009.

After he left, Erick, Patrice, some friends and I cleaned up the house while drinking a handful of beers Martelly had left for the group. As we cleaned, we talked about the distribution and what it meant for their organizing in the neighborhood. After months of inactivity, they were delighted to act as leaders in their zone for the day. They excitedly chatted about how they would follow up on this contact to perform other distributions in the zone. Carrying themselves with a renewed sense of purpose and respect, they were clearly pleased that Martelly had gone through them to get footing in Bel Air. As a charismatic songwriter who could rally the crowd, Martelly appealed to these young men who were cultivating their own local personas and followings as

performers and leaders. They knew his power would be easily communicated in the zone. Conveyed through raucous performances, Martelly's popularity and influence were more transparent than other politicians. He was a singular "big man" that seemed, at least on stage, untangled from the bureaucratic jumble of governmental, transnational, and nongovernmental agencies ostensibly running the country. As Patrice told us, "The people don't believe in political parties, nor in big organizations, *the people believe in people* (*pèp la kwe nan moun*)."

Yet despite their involvement in politics, these young men were highly ambivalent about the political process and especially the merits of democratic procedures. This was apparent in their variable behavior over the course of the presidential election that followed. For example, the men did not support any one candidate, but rather used their influence and reputation in Bel Air as a means to forge alliances with candidates at each stage of the process, organizing local distributions and acting as informal monitors in the series of elections. When the final run-off was held, they joined eighty percent of the population and did not vote. But weeks later, when the results were announced, they took the band to the streets and joined the cacophony of other bands and young people celebrating Martelly's election. This topsy-turvy trajectory might appear rife with contradictions. Yet it actually attested to the simple fact that they were less interested in electing any one candidate than in publicly linking their group to power.

Some time later, in summer of 2011, Erick put this in words. We were chatting about the wave of activity his organization had experienced since 2009. Besides the election, they participated in the series of projects that bubbled up in the aftermath of "the twelfth," the date (January 12, 2010) of the devastating earthquake that decimated the capital and claimed an estimated 200,000 lives. They had organized a commission of organizations in Bel Air to participate in the United Nations Development Program's rubble removal campaign, and also

acted as a "camp committee" for people displaced near their base. Nonetheless, Erick still expressed a deep sense of discouragement about Haiti's political situation and future. I asked him why he stayed involved in politics if he did see any hope for bigger change. His answer I would not forget.

> That is two things. Democracy is not supposed to take place under the table. It's something you do with people, in front of people.
> You develop a leadership, with a lot of people who listen to you. And you show how you can communicate with the people… you make slogans, all things, and now the others see you have the capacity to convince them.
> That all takes place outside, in the street itself (*nan lari menm*).
> That makes one.
> The other thing. Let me explain: Haiti does not really have a state that is independent, that is strong enough (*ase fò*) to defend us. After the twelfth, it almost does not have one at all (*pa gen youn menm*)…a lot of organizations, a lot of *bandi* [thugs] that run (*jire*) everything.
> So, we have to make comrade (*compè*) with a lot of people. We show we have people behind us and in front of us, and to the side (*akote*) too. That helps us create activity in the zone.
> It's possible that the state is finished, but, nonetheless, we must try to make the state, make it appear in Bel Air, bring something for the people of the zone (*pote yon bagay pou moun zòn nan*). […]
> Now, I am making a lot of political analysis (*analyiz politik*). That will bring me nowhere (*okèn kote*). Actually, too much talk can bring me problems. We are supposed to act. Put something outside. Perhaps for that I don't want to make analysis about national or international politics again. That does not really affect (*touche*) me… agreed?[1]

***

In this dissertation, I examine the significance of street politics among residents of a place where the state is largely absent from everyday life. In particular, I focus on the political action and aspirations of members of street bands in Bel Air. Street bands, which include the traditions of Rara and *bann a pye* (carnival street bands), are enmeshed in a local network of youth organizations, religious societies, and gangs—"the base"—and are also connected to

[1] Personal conversation, August 2011.

broader political networks on the urban, national, and international stage. I consider these bands and their base, which are male dominated spaces, as sociopolitical formations that imagine, perform, and summon state-like authority, community, and force in their performances and various social engagements. My analysis begins with the description under which these activist or "organized" men (*nèg òganize*) describe themselves to be acting: "We make the state!" (*nou fè leta*) they say. "*Fè,*" from the French *faire,* unites the notions of performance and fabrication, which lends the description at least two meanings: to perform the role of the state and to performatively summon the state into being. In this way, I examine the ways in which these men envision the state as a role that is largely missing from their lives while simultaneously being enacted by them through performances that both position them as moral authorities and as subjects with moral entitlements. *Making state* is less an articulation of what state agents are doing than a metaphor that characterizes efforts to construct the social contract. Put differently, it figuratively illustrates the performative endeavor to inhabit the social position and embodied feeling that Haitians call *respè* (respect). This endeavor articulates the way particular men use social performance to position themselves as moral authorities that provide "their people" with a political voice, social appeasement, and common structures of pleasure. This positioning in turn forms part of a larger project to summon a responsible sovereign by performing "the people" as in need of a respectful or dignified way of life. My contention is that the rise of new forms of political patronage, shifting patterns of expressive politics, the proliferation of localized block formations, and intensified regimes of masculinity all are entangled in a generalized longing for statehood within a political architecture of respect. I argue that these phenomena are key to understanding emergent configurations of economic and political marginalization in contemporary Haiti as well as emergent forms of political engagement among the people of Haiti.

Of bands and bases

While the subjects that figure in this dissertation are the leaders and affiliates of bands, the organizing framework for this dissertation does not find its locus in the band but rather in *the base* (*baz*). The *base* names a political affiliation, geographic locale, and an informal network of "respected" men. The term is rooted in the "base communities" of Christian liberation theology, which was a key element of the popular movement that caused the demise of the thirty-year Duvalier dictatorship in 1986 and that mobilized to elect President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 1990. However, as a result of the militarization of the popular quarters during the democratic period, *the base* also invokes the idea of a militant stronghold. In Bel Air, many young men frequently identified with a "staff," or a male social clique, that was engaged in some joint activity. Each staff was, in turn, affiliated with a base—an informal network of political, social, and cultural leaders who exercised a degree of political and economic control over a delimited territorial area, namely the space surrounding a "crossroads" (*kalfou*). While the base is associated with armed actors, this "gang" (or armed staff) was, in fact, integrated into a wider network of cultural, religious, and social leaders. These leaders included those who ran the local Rara groups, carnival street bands, and youth organizations, as well as the heads of secret societies and prominent *vodou* priests or healers. These leaders did not exercise the level of respectable authority of, say, church elders, professionals, or even businessmen. They nonetheless embodied, and often channeled for the gang, a degree of moral authority and respect in the "zone" (*zòn*).

The band presidents and participants with whom I worked were deeply enmeshed in the politics of the base. Indeed, the bases in Bel Air are usually known by the name of the most prominent street band on the corner or block. This was, in part, because band outings, which

drew large crowds, provided a clear, public display of the social power of the base. It is also, however, because the band facilitated political patronage at multiple levels. While carnival street bands and Rara groups obtained a degree of official sponsorship from the government, the main sponsors of their performances and other activities were local businessmen and armed actors at the base. These local big men were not removed from governmental sponsorship, but were rather the less official beneficiaries of governmental handouts. In sponsoring the band, its outings, and its members, these local big men were able to position themselves as state-like actors defending and providing for their bases, while also engaging in seemingly "peaceful" displays of their control over particular zones. In turn, band presidents and affiliates could utilize sponsorship toward positioning themselves as moral authorities in the zone. Nonetheless, the relations that band presidents and members had with armed actors were filled with controversy, and most openly lamented their reliance on this form of sponsorship.

The base was certainly a geographic formation. Yet the base (like all places) was not reducible to a point on the globe. Hence, I do not turn to an "official" map of Haiti or Port-au-Prince to situate base formations. Instead I offer an alternative geography of the neighborhood: an example of the kind of map residents drew for me. These maps were interesting because they mediated political imaginaries. In the example below, the cartographers, a group of five young men, began with a neat and tidy street grid. Yet they soon found themselves defying this logic. The main problem was not the curved roads and back corridors that actually comprise the area. Rather, it quickly became apparent that this was not the most critical geography in Bel Air. What was more important was to locate particular landmarks, and the most significant landmark was not surprisingly, "the base."

The mapmakers identified two of the bases that figure prominently in this dissertation: that of the Rara ZapZap (upper left) and the carnival street band Samba the Best (middle left). They put a bold red dot by the latter in order to identify it as a "hot" area. This suggested that this base more than others was entangled in criminal and violent activity, an observation that foreshadows my discussion of tensions between band and gang leaders at this base (see chapter three). The only other base identified was that of Ozanana, an aging but once prominent carnival band. While they noted the intersection of Madam Kolo, they did not name *La Prophesie*. This, I would learn, was because of competing factions at this base. Beyond the flourish of fictive houses and trees, they also put a light bulb near the convent and friary associated with the area's principal Catholic church, *l'Eglise Perpetuel Secours*, marking the only space with twenty-four hour electricity. Finally, they attested to the urban centrality of the neighborhood by framing it with, among others, the National Palace, the most famous market ("Mache Tèt Bèf"), and the main commercial road (Grand Rue). This map of Bel Air is, to be sure, not the best street guide. It instead provides a glimpse of the way the base and the band organize life in Bel Air. It is, therefore, far more useful than a street map ever could be for understanding what it means to be "organized" in Bel Air.

Figure 2. Map of Bel Air. Author Photo, 2009.

As the map details, the base is identified by the name of the most prominent street band at the intersection. The band is the public face of the base, providing its most expressive enactment. Yet the band is not reducible to the base. For this reason, I will now provide a description of the street band on its own terms in order to better facilitate an understanding of this distinctive genre as background for a discussion of its sociopolitical role in the zone.

From Twelfth Night till Easter Sunday, the streets of Bel Air are filled with roving bands of musicians, dancers, spiritual leaders, and revelers that collide in rhythmic displays of worship,

competition, and politics. These"seasonal dances of the crowd," as Katherine Dunham (1994) called them, are outings that depend on uniting individual bodies into mass gatherings in public space. Covering miles of terrain, the bands circle the neighborhood, visit cemeteries, and descend onto the main public plazas of their zone and the city's central square. All along the way they engage in mystical work, wage spiritual and performative battles with each other, and send honorable salutes and coded critiques to big men, from local businessmen to political officials.

The street bands I worked with in Bel Air fall into two categories. On the one hand there is the *Rara*, which is associated with the Lenten season and the Haitian peasantry; and on the other is the *bann a pye* (literally "band on foot," also called *bann madigra,* or "Mardi Gras Band"), which is associated with the Carnival season and the urban lower classes. Sharing musical, performance, ritual, and organizational structures, the carnival street band is akin to what Haitian ethnologist Yves Blot calls an "urban Rara." It is thought to originate in Rara, and was formally incorporated into carnival in the 1940s. For this reason, the distinction between these genres is not always readily apparent. This is even more the case in Bel Air, where the two genres have coexisted for several decades, where the musicians are shared across genres, and where sizable economic resources often depend on the distinction, making it attractive for groups and particular individuals to straddle both genres. While the differences between street bands pose an interesting ethnological question, this is not my concern. [2] Rather, I am more specifically interested in the political dynamics that take shape in particular locales across these traditions. Nonetheless, it remains necessary to provide a picture of the common structural features of both genres, as well as account for the differences that were meaningful to my informants.

[2] While there have been several studies of Rara (Largey 2006; McAlister 2002), little research has focused on carnival street bands or the distinctions between the genres. See, for example, Averill (1999), Averill and Yih (2003), and Dunham (1994).

Every Rara and carnival street band in Bel Air is managed by an organizing committee and sponsored by a president, usually an influential personage in the zone. This organizing committee comprises the "directors" of the band. They are unlike bandleaders in that they need not (and are in fact usually not) musicians, though the songwriter often also occupies a high post, like President or Secretary General. When organizing performances, this committee mobilizes a core group of about fifteen musicians, though the complete orchestra may number fifty or more with the total number of revelers in the hundreds.

Sharing a similar musical and performance repertoire, Rara and carnival bands play the African-derived carnival rhythms of *maskawon*, *raboday*, and (less frequently) *nazon*, as well as the *ochan*, a musical salute derived from French military traditions.[3] The instrument most readily associated with these groups is the indigenous *bambou* (or *vaksin*), which in the city is a PVC pipe fashioned with a mouthpiece at one end and open on the other. Each *bambou* plays a single note with pitch being determined by the pipe's length. The *bambou* players create a melody by harmonizing their notes into a short upbeat pattern, occasionally adding to the rhythm by striking a *kata* (stick) on the side of the pipe. The *bambou* are played alongside other wind instruments. In Rara, these instruments tend to be trumpet-like horns called *kone*. They are metal tubes fashioned with a funnel-like end, with pitch likewise determined by dimension. In carnival street bands, the *kone* are usually replaced by the conventional trumpet, trombone, and tuba.

The percussion instruments are shared by both genres. Associated with the *petwo* ceremonial drum repertoire, they include the *manman,* or mother drum, the *kès*, and the *bas*. The mother drum is a single-headed, goatskin drum strapped to the body and played with both hands. The *kès* is a snare drum (though the snare is often detached), which is played with two wooden

[3] See McAlister (2002) and Averill and Gillis (1991)

sticks. The *bas* is a tambourine-like instrument with a wooden frame, a goatskin surface, and interlaced cords along the open bottom. It is carried in one hand and played with the other. Some bands also play with a tom-tom drum and cymbals, though this is more common at Carnival. Along with these drums, the bands incorporate several small percussion instruments that are carried by minor band members and dancers and singers: *katchapouf* (sometimes called *cha-cha*), a maraca-like shaker made of a seed-filled gourde; *graj*, a scrapper made of a serrated aluminum tube; *ogan,* a hoe blade beaten with a piece of metal; and a *chansi*, a closed metal tube with seeds, which is shaken.

In Bel Air and elsewhere in the city, the chorus of both groups is not filled with ranked, female religious society members, as it is among rural Rara groups. Instead, male and female fanatics who have learned the songs during the rehearsal season perform them. The dance repertoire, which is discussed in chapter four, is also shared across genres.

Despite these commonalities in instrumentation and repertoire, several differences exist between Rara and carnival street bands. The first is the distinct seasons of activity. In Port-au-Prince, carnival street bands perform for the five Sundays following Twelfth Night, and if selected by the Carnival committee, for the final "three fat days" (*twa jou gra*) of Carnival. While many Rara in Bel Air also perform during Carnival season on Saturdays, Rara season officially begins following Ash Wednesday and lasts until Easter. Alternatively, the main outing of Rara groups in Bel Air is Raranaval, an annual festival held on Holy Saturday on the area's hilltop. Because of their distinct seasons (or days) of performance, it was possible for musicians at any one base to play in both a Rara group and a carnival band.

The second concerns spiritual matters. Both carnival and Rara groups in Bel Air are presided over by spiritual leaders, are affiliated with a *perestil*, or *vodou* temple, and perform

ceremonial rites in their processions. More importantly, for both groups, these rites have a spiritual significance and play a role in their larger self-image as a popular performance tradition. However, it was widely asserted among the leaders of Rara and carnival bands that Rara is *more* mystical. While not always apparent in their processions, this was made evident in the affiliation of many Rara with the secret societies called *chanpwèl*, the heightened religious activity of their core members, and the spiritual contracts in which they were "engaged." Nonetheless, I also came to know many leaders of carnival bands who claimed to possess spiritual powers and who viewed the band as a spiritual medium. Hence, it is important not to posit a reductive binary in which carnival bands are "secular" and Rara bands "mystical," as some scholarship has done,[4] but to view the two genres along a continuum of spirituality.

The third distinction concerns sponsorship. Officially recognized carnival street bands receive sponsorship from the government to perform for the Carnival season. The few Rara groups that also perform for Carnival likewise receive governmental sponsorship, though this is largely informal. The governmental sponsorship of Rara groups is officially organized around Raranaval. Nonetheless, the bulk of sponsorship for both the Rara and the carnival street bands with which I worked was delivered via informal channels. The main sponsors were local "big men" in the zone, including gang leaders and businessmen.

Whether one stakes out a claim as a local leader by heading a carnival band or a Rara is not as consequential to this study as how these performative forms work together and enable a certain kind of leadership. What I have found most interesting over the course of my study is the way networks are established between various forms of male associational life at a particular crossroads or block in Bel Air. The leadership and musicians of a Rara are inevitably intertwined

[4] See Dunham (1994), for example.

with those of the nearby carnival street band, and vice versa. For this reason, I have decided not to treat them separately, but rather to follow the way they participate collectively in shaping a political formation and ideology at different locales in the neighborhood.

Bel Air as field site

In his 1797 history of colonial Saint Domingue, Moreau de Saint Méry attested that the majority of the old town was clustered on a hilltop called "bel-air" due to the pleasant ocean breezes that cooled the tropical air (1797). The breeze is indeed pleasant, but the history of the neighborhood has much less idyllic moorings. From early in the eighteenth century, Bel Air was designated by the French as an ideal setting for the building of a fortress because of its bird's-eye view of land and ocean traffic. In 1724, when M. de Champmeslin was sent to Saint-Dominique to temper planters' growing dissent toward the metropole (Laguerre 1976), he chose Bel Air as the site of a new township. He claimed it would enable the French to patrol the roads south to Léogâne and west toward the *cul-de-sac* plain. The land was not yet suitable, however. At the time, it was the site of a sugar plantation, *Habitation Randot,* where more than one hundred slaves labored. It was only after increasing pressure from France and seasons of heavy flooding that a group of *cul-de-sac* planters sold their land to France in 1749. With their cooperation, the colonial governor Larnage brokered a deal of 42,000 *livres* for the plantation of M. Randot, and Port-au-Prince was founded.

Figure 3. View from Bel Air hilltop, looking south at National Palace. (Palace collapsed in 2010 earthquake and is being rebuilt.) Author Photo, 2008.

Figure 4. View from Bel Air Hilltop, looking west at Bay of Port-au-Prince and National Port. Author Photo, 2008.

Though the plantations were no longer active, most of the slaves continued to live on this 200,000 square meter expanse of land. And while ostensibly awaiting their placement on new plantations, many were engaged in political subterfuge. Tensions between the slave population and colonial administrators, wealthy planters, and professionals quickly grew, and Bel Air was soon divided into upper and lower Bel Air—a distinction that is still used today, though with a nearly opposite valence. While lower Bel Air housed the colonial bourgeoisie, upper Bel Air was home to slaves, free blacks, and maroons. The role upper Bel Air played in fomenting the Haitian revolution, including maroon-led attacks on whites in the markets and the establishment of a free black class that challenged white supremacy, has been well documented (Corvington 1972). In 1791, a brigade of free blacks led by "Aubrant" and with the aid of a volunteer militia attacked colonial administrators in an attempt to gain the right to participate in colonial affairs (Madiou 1847). Their success in this battle—marked by the defeat of two white battalions—paved the way for upper Bel Air to become a strategic zone for the insurgency. During the revolutionary period of 1791 to 1803, the homes of blacks in upper Bel Air provided refuge to maroons and revolutionaries, as well as a locale from which to plan and mount attacks (Laguerre 1976).

The legacy of this history is apparent in what residents call the "little fire" (*ti difè*) that burns in the heart of Bel Air. The Haitian historian Jean-Jacques Stephen asserts that here, unlike any other popular quarter, there has developed an "intransigence and a dedication of these political men that prefer to die in beauty than act contrary to their conviction" (Stephen 1948:21). Attentiveness to the political staunchness of *moun bèlè* (Bel Air people) among politicians has lent it an uncanny importance in national affairs. In his history of the quarter, Hubert de Ronceray (1979) recounts the story of how, in 1891, President Hyppolite was informed of a

potential uprising against his government while attending Catholic mass. His immediate reaction was to ask an army general if the people of Bel Air were involved. When he learned they were not, he felt no cause for alarm. He exited the church and took a leisurely tour of the city. In a similar vein, I was often told how in 1956 the people of Bel Air nearly thwarted the election of François "Papa Doc" Duvalier with their riots in support of the opposition. And it was well known that the election of René Préval in 2007 depended on the cultivation of a base of support among those who had protested the 2004 *coup* against Aristide in Bel Air. It is no exaggeration to say that on countless occasions the people of Bel Air have taken to the streets, made their voices heard, and altered the course of Haitian history.

While they have done so in protests and riots, a key arena of their street politics has been the carnival street band and the Rara. Bel Air has a reputation for cultivating men of exceptional artistic, literary, and musical talent. When in the 1930s, under President Vincent, Carnival transformed from an upper-class parade to a popular festival, Bel Air became one of its urban hubs. Since then, the street band has been harnessed for political expression, patronage, and conflict. Here, as Stephen (1948) writes, one has long been able to find songwriters with an incredible talent to compose the popular lyrics that satirically chastise the government and the behavior of powerful personages. For this reason, Bel Air's music groups have also been utilized by politicians seeking popular consent. High-ranking members of François Duvalier's paramilitary founded the area's oldest street band, *Mini Minwi*. A key vehicle of support at the Papa Doc's Carnivals and *koudyay* festivals, it was also a key site of contestation during the era of Jean-Claude, his son and successor. Today, it is one of the many musical groups that claim to have shaken the foundations of Duvalierism and caused the dictatorship's demise in 1986. Though Duvalier also sponsored Rara groups, the democratic movement in the 1990s

inaugurated a new era in the patronage of Rara groups. Over the course of his political career, Aristide has directly supported several Rara in Bel Air and is responsible for the founding of the area's Raranaval. Like the street bands, these Rara groups have played a key role in fomenting a popular base of support and also in contesting the *coups* against Aristide.

People in Bel Air give much weight to their local culture in accounting for their actions and attitudes. Nevertheless, many of the political practices and social processes I examine in this dissertation have metropolitan and even national reach. While Bel Air once housed a middle class population that worked in the downtown political and commercial district, today it reflects the widespread "ghettoization" (Laguerre 1976) of the city. The population of Port-au-Prince began to explode during the U.S. occupation and has continued to grow since, as political and economic affairs were increasingly centralized in the capital and it became more difficult for peasants to make a living on the land. The change for Bel Air has been dramatic. In 1979, an estimated 7,500 inhabitants lived in 1,150 houses (de Ronceray 1979).[5] In 2007, an estimated 90,000 people lived in 20,000 dwellings.[6] Until the 1970s, the streets were lined with modest houses built of wood, a building material mandated by colonial decree after the earthquakes of 1751 and 1759 toppled the brick houses. Since then, most families have resided in one or two-room houses built of tin and plywood or the infamous concrete block that crumbled in the 2010 earthquake. Today, nearly all residents rent their homes, with the majority renting shacks located on small plots of dirt corridors while some better-off residents rent "apartments" along the paved streets. Unlike the city's slums (like Cité Soleil), which arose on land peripheral to the city, Bel

[5] Population figures are from Institut Haïtien de Statistique et d'Information.

[6] See Fernandez and Nascimento (2007).

Air is a short walk from the National Palace and the main commercial district. The area is therefore better understood as an urban "ghetto"—a name which residents have appropriated.

Yet despite its central location, its population is marginalized socially. According to 2007 census statistics,[7] less than twenty percent of the population is formally employed, though nearly seventy percent report being involved in some income-generating activity. Eighty-seven percent of families survive on less than eighty-seven dollars per month and half of these on less than forty-five dollars. Although most of the people I came to know had some relative living abroad, only about sixty percent reported receiving remittances on any reliable basis.[8]

Few in Bel Air have regular or adequate access to basic services, and those that are available are not orchestrated by the public sector but by the market or NGOs. Most have access to electricity, but it is supplied via an informal connection and is available for less than eight hours per day (mainly at night). All residents use latrines, and sixty percent share theirs with other families. The cost of maintaining a latrine is above what most can afford ($45 per cleaning), which causes about twenty percent to be full and unusable at any given time. Most residents take care of their trash by dumping it in the streets, ravines, or canals. This trash is then picked up or removed by fleets managed by the Brazilian NGO, Viva Rio. By global standards, residents pay an exorbitant price for their daily water needs, which is either bought on the private market, from the public pump on the two days of week that it is supplied, or from kiosks built by Viva Rio.[9] Residents fulfill their drinking needs by purchasing small plastic packets of water, and less than a third report having adequate access to drinking water. Hunger is a pervasive problem, with the

[7] The census was conducted by Viva Rio in conjunction with Quisqueya University. It is accessible on the organizational website (http://www.comunidadesegura.org).

[8] Based on household interviews conducted from June 2009 to August 2009.

[9] On average, residents pay five cents for a bucket of public water and twenty cents for a bucket of water on the private market.

vast majority surviving on one meal per day, such as a plate of poor quality, imported foods like pasta and ketchup or white rice, bean sauce, and hotdogs. There are two public primary schools and one public high school, which together serve less than ten percent of the school-age population. The city's only public professional school is in Bel Air, though it is rarely operational.[10] There is one public health center (open one day per week), a medical clinic run by MINUSTAH, and one by the Salvation Army. Most residents only seek emergency medical care, visiting the city's crowded general hospital when necessary. And though there is no police commissariat for Bel Air, a large MINUSTAH base towers over *Fort National*, the former military base bordering Bel Air. The high levels of poverty, cost of living, and lack of basic services have combined to solidify an everyday sense of "misery" (*mizè*) among Bel Air residents.

In the recent past, Bel Air has also been a site of violence and insecurity. A decidedly pro-Aristide sector, Bel Air was severely targeted by the paramilitaries of the de facto regime that ousted Aristide and claimed power from 1991-94. The area was likewise targeted by the UN peacekeeping mission MINUSTAH and the national police following the second *coup* against Aristide in 2004, when residents banded together in protest. In addition, over the past few decades Bel Air has become a center for armed, criminal gangs, which as elsewhere, are entrenched in political patronage networks, from the government to powerful NGOs.

The sloping hills, dense population, and haphazard construction of Bel Air made it one of the hardest hit areas of the 2010 earthquake. Many residents immediately fled to the countryside, but most soon returned to take shelter in the interstices of rubble or in the tent communities of the nearby plazas. In the wake of the earthquake, life became more insecure, as the levels of gang

[10] It was closed in 2004 and opened again in April 2010, before closing a few months later.

violence and the cost of living escalated dramatically. The earthquake was certainly a catastrophic event, but it did not radically change the situation in Bel Air. Rather, it intensified the processes of immiseration, insecurity, and a faltering public sector that had long been underway in the city and country as a whole. Hence, while I only briefly touch on the post-earthquake period, my analysis of the pre-earthquake politicized climate of misery and insecurity and of the way it was navigated, interpreted, and lived by cultural leaders in the zone remains relevant.

Research chronology and methods

Given this dynamic history, it is not surprising that people in Bel Air expressed a particularly contradictory sense of place and personhood in the city. At once centrally located and socially peripheral, they exhibited great pride in their neighborhood as well as an abiding sense of its volatility, insecurity, and misery, and its perception as such by more privileged outsiders. Residents and organized men in particular harnessed the political and cultural power of Bel Air as a resource for action. Yet they were also aware of the neighborhood's reputation as a shelter for violent criminals whose political and social power resided in capriciously wreaking disorder and havoc. The men with whom I worked were eager to share with me the creative and organizational work that provided them with a sense of respect, power, and dignity. They were also eager to document their grievances about their social and political world, as well as their visions for a better Haiti. They were, however, less open with outsiders about the struggles they faced to embody a valued life, and the less respectable alliances and activities they forged to get by. For this reason, my ability to do the kind of research I did largely hinged on the development of close relationships that can only come from extended periods of research. Over the course of

my fieldwork, which comprised two preliminary trips (summer 2006 and 2007), an eighteen-month stay (July 2008 to January 2010) and two month-long return visits (August 2010 and 2011), and ongoing follow-up work, I came to know and greet countless organized men in Bel Air and now consider several as friends, having even acquired a godfather and godchildren along the way.

I first traveled to Haiti in 2006 as a volunteer in the city of Léogâne. I visited Port-au-Prince only briefly on this trip. Though overwhelmed, I was immediately drawn to the excitement and commotion of the capital. When I returned on a preliminary research trip in 2007, I had already selected Bel Air as a site, and I spent most of my time at the *Faculté d'Ethnologie* and the *Biblioteque National* conducting archival research on the area and acquainting myself with several students, including Lysa Aide, who became my research assistant. This proved invaluable, as when I returned in 2008, Lysa and others took me on tours of Bel Air. They helped introduce me and my research to church, school, and organizational leaders, as well as situate me as someone "with people" of my own. After this period, Lysa and I spent the next month conducting initial interviews with the committees of carnival street bands and Rara groups. Based on these interviews, I established two sets of groups located in two different "bases" of the neighborhood as my core informants, while maintaining contact with several others. In these initial months, I also found two institutional homes, at Viva Rio and the community organization Korebel. At both locales, I taught English to mainly young adult male students. In total, I got to know sixty students and, largely through them, a wide range of families in Bel Air.

The bulk of my data comes from following the activities, interactions, and challenges of organized men at these two different bases. For safety concerns, I did not reside within Bel Air proper during the bulk of my fieldwork. Instead, I made the twenty-minute walk or took a quick

ride on a *taptap* from the nearby area called *Lalue,* arriving in Bel Air in the morning and leaving around dusk. I scheduled one or two formal conversations or "meetings" a day with band members, organizational leaders, or their friends and neighbors, but most of the day was spent socializing with people in and around the zone. During the performance seasons of Carnival and Rara, I participated with band members in their rehearsals, recording sessions, press conferences, protests for funding, federation meetings, and, of course, outings.[11] Alongside this observation in Bel Air, I also sat in on the organizing meetings of the city's Carnival Committee and the Bel Air-based Raranaval Committee. I also attended other events at the base, including beach days, soccer games, and street parties. In addition, I followed the work of the youth organizations where my research subjects were active. I attended their meetings and events and followed their efforts to secure funding for various social projects. Finally, I took note of the interactions my informants had with the network of armed actors at the base.

I supplemented this participant observation with interviews and oral histories. First, I performed twelve oral histories with elderly residents about the political and social history of Bel Air. Second, I conducted several semi-structured interviews about the 2004 *coup* period with those who took up arms and/or remain recognized as armed actors in Bel Air. Finally, I organized a survey of ninety-four households in Bel Air; sixty-three of which agreed to participate in a semi-structured interview about their perceptions of social services in Bel Air. For some of the all-night outings, I spent the night with friends in the area, which provided me additional insight into household organization and operation.

The structures of racism and classism that privilege my life in the United States also framed my experiences in Haiti, though in different ways. While in Haiti, I was continually

[11] While I conducted video recordings of these events, most of the footage was destroyed during the earthquake.

reminded of the several benefits I bear as a white, educated American woman. My outsider status provoked curiosity and also interest in me as a possible source of overseas contacts, resources, and opportunities. The promise of a foreign friend no doubt motivated as well as sustained many of my relationships. My status and race also lent me a degree of protection from the political and gang violence that people in Bel Air face on a daily basis. I was able to circulate widely and with diverse social circles. I found that my outsider status allowed me to violate gender expectations and navigate male social circles usually closed to Haitian women. My gender likewise seemed to undercut some of the more threatening aspects of my behavior (travel, recording, note-taking, etc.), and allowed me access to sensitive information, from financial debates to woman problems.

Most fundamentally, my situation protected me from the hunger and misery that shapes so much of life in Bel Air. In reminding me of this one day, my friend Kal underscored how my privilege sustained my outsider status. As the sun set in Bel Air and after a plate of cheap food, he told me with a frighteningly serious tone, "You understand the country. But you don't really understand our situations. And if you don't taste hunger (*grangou*) each day, *you won't ever understand!*" This was not a figure of speech. It was an honest account of the immense divide that separated our lives and hindered my access to an embodied way of knowing that was so central to his epistemology. The words shocked me then, as they do now. They are above my desk on a bright orange post-it note, reminding me of the limits of this account. But it is also Kal more than anyone who has kept me on task with this project and encouraged me to keep writing about Bel Air. Next to the orange note is a pink one bearing another of his truisms: *Pito ou mize nan wout la pou ou pote bon nouvèl*—"Better you take your time on the road, so that you bring good news." In what follows I have tried to heed this advice, exercising patience and humility in providing some honest news about life in Bel Air.

Vernacular sovereignty and the politics of respect

This dissertation offers an anthropology of the state. It does not, however, begin with the actions of governmental agents. The problematic equation of the state with government has been a topic of anthropological discussion for some time (Trouillot 2001), yet the terms are still used interchangeably in much writing. While this may not present a problem in high performing state administrations, this conflation is difficult to sustain in places like Haiti, as multiple actors—both within and beyond government—appear to *fè leta*, or make or perform the state. The notion of "making state" certainly entails the realm of metaphor. Yet like all metaphors, it helps push our conceptual boundaries. It suggests that the idea of the state is invoked less through a fixed structure of power than through the performance of relations of power, control, duty, and pleasure, which can occur on multiple scales. Put simply, it is about the performance of sovereignty. This dissertation thus joins recent anthropological work on the simultaneous enchantment and disenchantment of sovereign power (Aretxaga 2003; Comaroff and Comaroff 2000; Coronil 1997; Hansen and Stepputat 2005; Taussig 1997). Like many of these works, I am concerned with the way in which the liberalization of centralized forms of statehood has produced longings for a strong, forceful state as well as the invention of alternative, localized models of sovereignty. However, I do not wish, like many of these works (see Das and Poole 2004), to follow Agamben (1998) in reducing sovereignty to the power over death. Instead, I aim to extend its meaning to the responsibility to protect and enrich the lives of those living in a given purview. In this way, I hope to provide a framework for understanding street politics in Bel Air as both vernacular aspirations for and enactments of sovereign power. On the one hand, I analyze the performative projects to construct particular actors as localized authorities; and on

the other, I show how the state is conjured into being by performing "the people" (*pèp la*) as in need of an encompassing hierarchical authority.

In both instances, I suggest that performance, or embodied, public display, has become a privileged medium of political expression. Like many other places, Haiti has undergone a "democratic transition" in the past few decades. While Haiti has long "elected" its leaders, it was during this period that the country transitioned from being ruled by autocratic regimes premised on the continual show of centralized force to being governed by global assemblages of governance that are largely absent from view. Yet rather than produce an implicit and efficient disciplinary grid as a Foucauldian trajectory presumes, this transition has accentuated the dispersal and destabilization of state power (cf. Comaroff and Comaroff 2006a). This, in turn, has ignited a popular desire to concretize power in corporate, if not corporeal, entities on the national and local stage. In Bel Air, this desire manifested itself in two ways. It was present in the drama to stage localized authority through highly performative displays of force and power. And it was also present in the way entitlement claims were forged through the expressive medium of street politics as opposed to civil society (Chatterjee 2004). Rather than count on the norms or rights of citizenship to secure the basic conditions of life, let alone "the good life," men in Bel Air used mystical and moral force to display the *demos* as a means of demanding moral entitlements.

While the novel forms of politics I trace in this dissertation are localized formations, they do not necessarily reveal an aspiration for self-governance. Rather, they are quests to engage political influence nationally and internationally in localized power projects. In other words, though a limited network, the base does not (nor do its leaders desire it to) function as an isolated sphere of exchange tied off from other spheres. It is premised on the entanglement of various

scales of power and is better understood as a quest for *relative* autonomy. Moreover, as later chapters will show, the mobilizations of the band often involved describing the breakdown of the social contract through graphic articulations of misery. Through an inversion of Althusser's framework (1971), I show that rather than acts of simple defiance, these articulations were used as vehicles for *interpellating* powerful figures as responsible for the people. This interpretation moves us beyond longstanding understandings of state power and popular politics within the logic of domination and resistance (or even accommodation). It uncovers strategies for engagement, or the ways in which people "hail" those who govern into political dialogue and action by showing the plight and embodying the presence of the people. I therefore contend that the vibrancy of Haitian street politics is motivated by the desire not to contest so much as *engage* the state in localized quests for the opposite of misery, namely, respect.

More broadly, then, I argue that the valorization of state power in Haitian street politics forms part of an overarching political ethos rooted in the embodied feeling, gendered expectation, and social position of respect. Feelings of disrespect and longings for respect fundamentally motivated and shaped political criticism and activism among organized men in urban Haiti. This pattern fits with Peter Wilson's (1973) foundational framework for understanding value, gender, and class in the Caribbean. He suggested that struggles for respect or "reputation" are not only set against elite displays of respectability, but also operate within a *masculine* economy of value specific to racially and economically marginalized populations (cf. Abrahams 1983; Bourgois 1995). As I show, the highly expressive displays of political agency among men in Bel Air presupposed the desire for manly reputations. Their engagement in the base and band helped consolidate their role as players in a collective, masculine endeavor. This was most explicit in the way these endeavors centered on the cultivation of masculine pleasure, or "feeling" (*filing*),

in public, homosocial activity—an embodied state that boldly contradicted their everyday experiences of the inactive state of misery. Yet these men's quests for respect also indicated the valorization of existential dimensions beyond reputation. In her ethnography of organizing in rural Haiti, Jennie Smith (2001) argues that the principle of *respè* undergirds a particular conceptualization of the proper democratic life, which differs markedly from Western ideals. Having respect, as she argues, incorporates the values of interdependence and hierarchy. Building on this idea, I show that valorizations of respect affirm that hierarchical, embodied authority is a condition of possibility for the affirmation of shared humanity and dignity.[12] To put it more boldly, a political world grounded in respectful cultural relations entails power relations.

A final aim of this dissertation is to consider the role respect might play in shifting the emphasis on suffering in current scholarship and emancipatory projects. "The politics of pity," as Arendt (1965) called it, has gained renewed attention in studies of modern citizenship (Chakrabarty 2000; Foucault 1997; James 2004; Petryna 2002), national attachment (Berlant 1998; Wedeen 2008), and transnational politics (Allen 2009; Rieff 2003; Wilson 1997). While many of these scholars have condemned the reduction of politics to wounded bodies, victimization, and aid, there has been little suggestion of what might replace the compulsion to speak of suffering. I believe the socially engaged music of Bel Air street bands may point us in a new direction. Though their critiques revolved around the concept of misery, their rhetorical punch resided in constructing misery as a form of social disrespect rather than depersonalized

[12] The emphasis on respect as a form of human acknowledgment is not a novel point. It was at the heart of the pioneering work on the phenomenology of racism by scholars like Frantz Fanon, W.E.B. DuBois, and Angela Davis. Disrespect has also figured in scholarly analyses of contemporary identity politics more generally. Works based on Hegelian phenomenology (Markell 2003; Povinelli 2002; Taylor 1989; Williams 1997) as well as those grounded in communicative models (Habermas 2001; Honneth 2007; Hoy and McCarthy 1994) have touched on the significance of disrespect for inciting political engagement.

suffering. In this way, their notion of respect, as necessarily interactive and agentive, offers a novel and perhaps more constructive idiom for political engagement.

My ethnography depicts the way young male residents of a poor neighborhood were involved in quests for power and authority by amassing their "own people;" at the same time, they attempted to effect a sovereign power capable of protecting and providing for the category of "the people," in which they themselves were included. I argue that the valorization of individual autonomy and the stigmatization of state power—notions that remain central to Western social theory—do not adequately capture many of the political dynamics at stake in urban Haiti and the postcolonial world more generally. Although the ideology of civil society—a society of free and equal individuals checking state power—informed organized men's critiques of Haitian politics, their personal and collective desires for respect revealed the profound significance that displays of "street" power had for shaping their place as men, political subjects, and dignified persons. Rather than aiming to create a society based on individual rights and freedoms, they recognized the ways in which their senses of personhood, masculinity, and community were realized in public power struggles and linked to the presence of a strong, responsible state. This "respectful" model of political society has profound implications for how anthropologists conceive of the relation between the state and moral community, especially in what are perceived to be liberalizing political contexts.

Organization of the dissertation

The dissertation opens with an analysis of why people might perceive the absence of the state amid what I term *excessive governance*. A historical analysis of the unmaking of the Haitian state during the democratic transition provides the basis for an examination of how

residents of Bel Air "abduct" statelessness. I show that this stateless effect resulted from residents' inability to locate the conjuncture of sovereignty, or the embodiment of force and power, in various acts of disordered global governance. This, in turn, produced the generalized feeling of insecurity that shaped a desire for an embodied sovereign actor. Chapter one thus provides a historical, theoretical, and ethnographic framework for understanding the problem of statelessness and the constitutive role sovereignty plays in projects of statehood.

The next chapter examines the ways in which men in Bel Air attempted to construct moral authority against and within a history and geography of violence. Here we encounter Woody, the president of a prominent carnival street band in Bel Air, and follow him as he tried to distance himself from, while at the same time relying on, the criminal gang networks at the base. I show that his ritual, performative, and organizational work were ways of constructing himself as a moral "big man" by engaging licit force on several levels: mystical, social, and legal. While revealing the respected reputation and political entrées that come from this work, I also demonstrate how it inevitably provoked alliances with armed actors and questionable politicians, which undermined his claim to authority. Ultimately, I argue that his aspirations and struggles to "make the state" valorize a *nodal* model of statehood in which power emanates from a singular sovereign actor by way of a vast network of followers.

In chapter four, I reverse the perspective and examine how people in Bel Air attempt to summon the state through public, performative displays of "the people." We follow two *Sanba* (songwriters), Anton and David, as they attempted to effectuate and influence powerful interlocutors on the national and local stage by rallying a crowd through "enraged" music and a sensory poetics premised on the delivery of a moral critique and entitlement claims. Through a semiotic and performative analysis of the Sanbas' "misery songs," I show how "showing the

people," the title of this chapter, configures a political technology involving graphic spectacle, symbolic ritual, spatial conversion, and rhetorical incitement. Yet rather than understand this process as an exercise in resistance, I argue that it provided the means through which the state could be summoned as an audience and compelled into action. In a political world characterized by a diffuse network of global governance, performing the *demos* in the streets, as opposed to the liberal rhetoric of citizenship rights, was the privileged medium for pursuing entitlement claims.

The fifth chapter broadens the scope of the dissertation by offering an analysis of the relationship between pleasure and political power. Here we delve into the lives of five male members of a staff that among other activities were involved in ZapZap, a Rara group in Bel Air. I show how they embodied political power by acting as a source and locus of masculine pleasure, or "feeling" (*filing*), in the zone even as they struggled to perform manliness in their daily lives. Tracing the production of several feelingful events, including the street party, beach day, and soccer game, I argue that these men's enactment of "the man" for the zone was a means of embodying state-like power and influence. While not exactly eradicating everyday feelings of emasculation, their participation in and orchestration of *feeling* served to elide, and therefore, abate their struggles as unemployed, unproductive, and dependent men.

I return to these themes in the conclusion. Through an analysis of mourning and recovery after the earthquake, I offer an overarching framework for understanding the relations between performance and community in Haiti.

CHAPTER TWO

Unmaking the State in "Occupied" Haiti

> The fundamental deprivation of human rights is manifested first and above all in the deprivation of a place in the world which makes opinions significant and actions effective.
>
> Hannah Arendt, *Decline of Nation-State, End of Rights of Man*, 1951

The people are tired of citizenship	Pèp la bouke sitwayente
And democracy	Plis demokrasi
Go vote for nothing	Al vote pou gran mèsi
When we must take the street	Lè nou dwe pran lari

Protest chant, Port-au-Prince, 2008

150 candidates for one presidential spot	150 kandida pou yon plas prezidan
Haïti Cheri you are a woman out of luck	Ayiti cheri ou se yon fanm ki pa gen chans
Everyone profits from you	Tout moun ap pwofite w
Look, you are perishing	Gade w ap deperi

Groupe Baby Cool Band, "150 Kandida," Port-au-Prince, 2009

On April 19, 2009, the day when elections were held for twelve of thirty national senate seats, the normally impassable streets and sidewalks of Port-au-Prince were empty. The Provisional Electoral Council (in French, CEP) estimated a voter turnout of 10.3%, but this figure seemed charitable to anyone who cast their eyes on the deserted streets that Sunday. The city's vacancy on Election Day was not caused by fear of violence, which has historically halted numerous trips to the polls. Rather, residents of all backgrounds and persuasions were exceedingly discouraged to vote. The day after the elections I visited Bel Air and met with two

young men who were involved in a youth organization and the Rara group, ZapZap.[1] The two members, both men in their late twenties, in exchange for $12.50 (500 HTG) had served as informal election "monitors" for one of the several candidates.[2] They had observed the polls at *Lycée Pétion*, the capital's oldest public high school. This polling station served the greater Bel Air area, the first and most populous of three circumscriptions of Port-au-Prince. During the course of the day, they observed thirty-six people cast ballots—out of a population exceeding 300,000.

When I asked them why there was such a low turnout, one of the young men, Frantzy,[3] pulled out a now iconic photo of Jean-Bertrand Aristide, Haiti's first democratically elected president. The photo, taken circa 1994, showed him addressing the crowd that welcomed his return from three years of exile—an exile sparked by a military *coup d'état* in the fall of 1991, which ousted him from office eight months after his appointment. Because Bel Air spearheaded the protest movements against this and the latest *coup* in 2004 (also ousting Aristide), I anticipated Frantzy's reasoning and asked if he thought the low turnout was because of CEP's exclusion of Aristide's party, *Fanmi Lavalas*, from the election.[4] He brushed aside my comment and instead told me, "We used to have hope for democracy, but this died as well…Aristide began good but brought violence like everyone else. We could not breathe in Bel Air. All this happened in my lifetime. I am telling you there is no more democracy in this country." As he put the photo back in his empty wallet, he continued, "The state (*leta*) does nothing for us. Who would we be

[1] As I discuss later, ZapZap is difficult to define in terms of Haitian performance genres, since it performs for Rara and Carnival season, and also as a *chanpwèl* (see chapter four).

[2] In addition to international election observers, Haiti's elections are carefully supervised by youth who are hired by candidates to oversee proceedings at polling stations.

[3] All residents' proper names have been changed to preserve confidentiality.

[4] The CEP refused to register *Fanmi Lavalas* for the elections because, in their assessment, the party did not produce the documentation necessary to transfer responsibility for it from Aristide to an eligible citizen.

voting for anyway? There is no *chef* ("chief" or "boss") in the National Palace. The state is not the boss. There is no state!" Hitting the backs of his hands together in frustration, he continued, "There are too many bosses and there is nothing behind them. How can you have a state when so many other countries are acting like the state (*ap fè leta*)? They don't take responsibility. If maybe we have a state, it's not for me. I did not vote for this. I stood there all day, but me, I did not vote." His conclusion echoed sentiments I regularly heard in the neighborhood: "Everyone says Duvalier was bad, but he was a big 'boss' or 'bully' (*towo chèf*). He could make order."

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What could Frantzy have meant when he told me that *there was no state*? He certainly did not mean that he lacked citizenship status or national attachments; or that there were no governmental buildings or officers; or even that no one was "acting like the state." He went on to clarify the "many bosses" from "many countries" performing governance, citing, for example, the everyday presence of MINUSTAH peacekeeping troops in Bel Air; the major role played by the Brazilian nongovernmental organization *Viva Rio* in the areas of security, water, sanitation, and education; and the financing provided by foreign governments' aid agencies for NGOs, food aid, or other neighborhood "development" projects. Frantzy clearly yearned for a boss, telling me, "All of these directors have come with a project for the state. That's what keeps it active. But no one is in charge."

In Bel Air, the statement "There is no state!" is a popular refrain that punctuates everyday conversations about not merely the absence but moreover *the disordered presence*—that is, *excess*—of governance. Residents use it when walking over unprotected construction sites and piles of rotting garbage; when complaining about insecurity, unemployment, minimal educational opportunities, and hunger; or when lamenting the lack of affordable or dependable

water, electricity, sanitation, or health programs. It articulates, in this sense, the minimal presence of public services. Yet people also use this phrase when talking about the inordinate amount of governance projects in Bel Air. It serves to denounce the hodge-podge of both national and foreign agencies involved in administering services in the neighborhood, including picking up garbage, provisioning water, building canals, and paving dirt corridors. And it litters talk about the ambiguous relationship between the Haitian National Police (in French, PNH) and MINUSTAH peacekeepers. In these instances, residents are certainly commenting on the nominal presence of the Haitian government, as compared to "foreign" agents, in everyday governance. But they are also reflecting on their very real confusion—given all this disjointed governance—about who is actually in charge of "the people" (*pèp la*), that is, the impoverished majority. Ultimately, the notion of statelessness serves to express both the need for a normal "state" of public life, and the inability to locate a sovereign authority that is responsible for providing this life.

In this chapter, I explore what it means to perceive and experience "statelessness" in the presence of a government and amid exorbitant forms of governance. These embodied perceptions, often expressed as disorder, insecurity, or misery, provide the existential basis for imagining and desiring a kind of sovereign power that is centrally and concretely located in bodies. In particular, I focus on instances of conversation that illustrate the prosaic way in which residents perceived statelessness *in* governance. Many such instances dealt with the dynamics at play between those charged with the management of security—mainly MINUSTAH and PNH but also NGOs and local organizations engaged in the so-called project to stabilize Bel Air. The focus on MINUSTAH is not surprising, since the peacekeeping mission has become the prime

embodiment of the state's "occupation."[5] Importantly, with the term *occupation*, I aim to invoke more than the notion of foreign military intervention. Drawing on the association of "being occupied" with being "busy" and "unattainable," I aim to also suggest the incapacity and impotence that comes from being possessed by too much governance. Expressions of statelessness certainly have a critical valence. But what is not attempted here is a survey of residents' interpretations in order to evaluate the Haitian government, peacekeeping, or global liberal governance.[6] Rather, I am concerned with how statelessness indexes both the ordered practices, or "praxis" (Bourdieu 1977), thought to *fè leta* (to make or perform the state), and widespread longings to be the subject of a strong, responsible state. The structured grievance of statelessness forms, or so I argue, part of a normative, popular quest to produce political authority and social order under neoliberal conditions in which the social contract is rapidly changing and technologies of governance emanate from global assemblages. This quest, while challenging a host of scholarly and popular assumptions about the state as a necessary evil and the waning importance of sovereign power in an age of biopower and governmentality, has been increasingly salient in emergent democracies. Hence, my analysis of the ways in which people in Bel Air both intuit and denounce the nonexistence of the state aims to advance our understanding of the crucial role embodied practices of sovereign power continue to play in producing the structural "effect" (Mitchell 1991) and desirable "affect" (Berlant 1997; Brown 1995) of the state.

[5] Likewise, recent calls for reinstituting the military that was disbanded in 1994 (when the first major peacekeeping mission arrived) channel an array of desires for a strong state.

[6] For a recent evaluation of peacekeeping in Haiti, see Lindenmayor et al. (2009).

The lingering significance of sovereignty for statehood

Sovereignty is having an identity crisis in political thought today. At the same time that it is believed to be disappearing in a modern world, it is being reclaimed to address novel forms of violence and renewed quests for power (Aretxaga 2003). Still, most agree on one thing: sovereignty's longstanding association with the state is empirically at risk and analytically stifling (see Das and Poole 2004; Fassin and Pandolfi 2010). Those in Bel Air, however, lead me to suggest that where state power is under-pressure, so grows the significance of sovereignty in political imaginaries of statehood.

Those who insist on the "end of sovereignty" fall into two camps. On the one hand scholars who follow Michel Foucault (1979; 1991) argue that the notion of sovereignty—wedded, as it is, to the ideals of the *ancien régime* and the body of the king—has misled us into thinking that power is located in singular persons or institutions (Burchell, et al. 1991; Rose 1999). It is necessary, so the theory goes, to forgo the concept of sovereignty in order to account for the everyday forms of disembodied disciplinary power that characterize modern liberal democratic states. The other argument, taken up by social and political theorists of globalization (e.g., Camilleri and Falk 1992; Sassen 1996), suggests that the idea of sovereignty continues to be undermined by changes in the intensity and trajectories of global flows, the power of transnational corporations, and the extent of the development apparatus.[7] Both lines of thought pose interesting concerns, but neither accounts for the perception of statelessness in Haiti. Though the first argument reminds us to think broadly about the field of power in Haiti (a concern I share), the assumption of a disciplinary grid is overly biased toward high performing

[7] The extant literature on globalization is too vast to include in a footnote. However, for Haiti-specific works, see Dupuy (1997), Etienne (1996), Kristoff and Panarelli (2010), Richman (2005), Trouillot (2003), Schuller (2009).

states. In places like Haiti, it is rather the connection between palpable feelings of disorder and dispersed sources of power that incites calls for the immediate, embodied forms of authority that Foucault (1979) labeled "premodern" sovereignty (cf. Comaroff and Comaroff 2006a). And while the second argument does go far in characterizing the situation in Haiti—which is one of the world's most "open" economies—it does not tell us much about the role sovereignty plays in the popular political imagination. The fact that Haitians' inability to discern someone "in charge," provoking pronouncements of statelessness, attests to the continuing salience of sovereignty as a project of statehood. What has been remarkable in emergent liberal democracies—and indeed well remarked on (Aretxaga 2003; Comaroff and Comaroff 2000; Nagengast 1994)—is the persistence of the concept of the state on the one hand, and the salience of sovereignty as a category through which experiences of the state are organized on the other.

Much of the fallibility of arguments proclaiming sovereignty's end results from viewing sovereignty as a property rather than an ongoing project (Clapham 1998; Das and Poole 2004; Markell 2003; Murphy 1996). Political scientists, for example, have argued that sovereignty as a legal status can be separated from effective governance or control, and in extreme versions, that a nation-state can be sovereign even when it has lost the capacity for ordering and regulating people and things (e.g., Krasner 1999; Wendt 1999). While this distinction may describe "the law" to an extent, it is practically unsustainable (Agnew 2008; Crawford 2006; Philpott 1997). Insofar as the state is a social construct, it depends as much on its putative subjects as on other states to recognize its sovereignty. Hence the cases of unrecognized states (such as Haiti from 1804-1862)[8] maintaining the power to rule (cf. McConnell 2009). Further, when the governed are called on to attribute sovereignty, they take into account if and to what extent sovereign

[8] While France recognized Haiti in 1809, it was the U.S recognition in 1862 that established Haiti's international recognition.

authority is being exercised. Put differently, whereas the legal status of state sovereignty confers certain *powers*, the display of effective, legitimate *force* also confers authority. This is, of course, not a novel observation. Articulating these relationships was exactly what Thomas Hobbes (1968) was after when he defined sovereignty as a form of *potestas*, a kind of moral force, which is different from (though related to) might. Such an idea was also at work in Max Weber's (1946a) definition of the state as that which holds a monopoly on legitimate domination. In emphasizing effective authority, however, I do not mean to suggest that the legal title of sovereignty or its recognition by external actors is irrelevant. Rather, I am suggesting that we need a more pragmatic concept of sovereignty in order to account for why people in Bel Air would still search for authority in an ostensibly sovereign state.

Two recent lines of thought are helpful. First, Cynthia Weber (1995) has convincingly argued that intervention, or more precisely, framing actions as interventions, is crucial to defining sovereignty. Just as justifications of intervention participate in configuring a community of sovereign states, I contend that the perception of governance as emanating from all over helps frame the political community as without state. In other words, whereas the everyday relations and mundane practices of ordered governance produce the effect of the state (cf. Mitchell 1991; Painter 2006; Trouillot 2001), the disordered governance of multiple interventions produces the effect of statelessness. This, in turn, allows us to see how the problem of non-sovereignty in Haiti is not reducible to (though certainly related to) the weakness or insufficiency of the Government of Haiti.[9] As in other emergent democracies, the problem is better framed in terms of an *excessive* ensemble of governance where the government is situated "horizontally" among several authorities (Comaroff and Comaroff 2006b; Sidaway 2003). This has critical implications

[9] This point has been noted in several similar cases, from Latin America (Coronil 1997; Koonings and Kruijt 2004) to the Middle East (Wedeen 2008).

for failed state theory. To the extent that the label "failed state" performatively constructs the policy conditions under which global interventions are justified (Beckett 2010; Jeffrey 2009), it may also participate in precluding "uptake" of the state.

The second current my analysis builds on involves the conversation occasioned by anthropological interest in the notion of sovereignty as the power over life and death (see Das and Poole 2004; Hansen and Stepputat 2005). Inspired by the writings of Carl Schmitt, this scholarship has located sovereignty in the exercise of violence over bodies that have been "excepted" from the polity (Agamben 2005; Mbembé 2001). By embedding sovereignty in embodied action, this view has facilitated the possibility of viewing sovereignty as a performative project rather than a property of territories, a critical step in my own approach (cf. Agnew 2008; Ferguson and Gupta 2002). However, the focus on acts of violent exclusion—on *death*—has obscured the role that the everyday management of life plays in establishing sovereign authority (Comaroff and Comaroff 2006b). Consequently, it leaves unexplained why sovereignty (and statehood) would be a project pursued by those who aspire toward domination as well as by those who seek to attribute responsibilities to those in power. If a disordered political field presents the common problem of statelessness, then might not sovereignty emerge as a popular quest to create a consequential dialogue with certain actors, a site for engagement and contestation? From this perspective, the homology between the state and government becomes less obvious.

The conflation of the state and government has, in fact, never attained the level of naturalization in Haiti that it has in Western polities and political discourse. The Haitian Creole term for the state, *leta* as Trouillot (1990:81) points out, has long been used by the people of Haiti as a label for "powerful individuals" irrespective of their actual ties to the governmental

apparatus. The term *leta*, for example, often refers at once to the network of government officials as well as the class of commercial and professional elites who have benefited from political power (Dupuy 1989, Smith 2001, Trouillot 1990). This usage, however, does not articulate their harmonious relations so much as the fragile alliances that they have continuously forged in order to exploit public resources and maintain power as a "prebendary" regime (Weber 1968, cited in Dupuy 1997, 2007).[10] The fusing of these groups through the idiom of the state, therefore, reveals an attempt among the poor majority to acknowledge all those who play a role in running the country and to establish the conditions for political critique. Likewise, the more idiomatic phrase *fè leta* (to make or perform the state) is used to refer to the genre of action associated with political power (or the act of constructing political power) rather than the actual actions of government actors. Any agent, organization, or institution can be said to "make the state" insofar as they attempt to position themselves as more powerful than, in control of, or responsible for "the people." This genre of action nonetheless takes its inspiration from how powerful actors or state agents have acted as well as how people presume they ought to act. Spanning malevolent and benevolent incarnations, this genre at times articulates the social role of the bully or tyrant, and at others, God or the godparent, and it can be enacted by the local big man as much as by the president. Of significance is that an orientation toward action means that it makes sense to say, as people in Bel Air often do, that the government does not necessarily "make the state." It also configures a vocabulary for speaking about the diverse agents that act like the state without the authority or legitimacy to fully embody the state.

In residents' expressions of statelessness, the notion of sovereignty articulated the performance of state-like action. In turn, the projection of sovereignty designated a project to

[10] For additional discussions of the prebendary or "predatory" state see Evans (1989) and Fatton (2002).

construct an *embodied authority*, which was pursued by the subjects of a disordered political field even more than by those who govern. It was a project, in other words, to embed the contingent and diverse performances of governance within structured relations of duty and responsibility, and in so doing, to embed the body politic into a corporate (if not corporeal) body (Kantorowicz 1957). Indeed, those who governed were seen to benefit from never fully inhabiting the force and power necessary to make the state—at the expense of "the people" they governed.

Longing for order after dictatorship

It is telling of historical shifts that longings for a strong, centralized state—for *more* force and order—are so salient in Bel Air. After all, this is the neighborhood where the Duvalier dictatorship laid the groundwork for its unprecedented legacy of severe repression and pervasive fear. During the 1957 electoral campaign, the Duvalierist army attacked a fervent opposition in Bel Air—killing several hundred people—to secure François "Papa Doc" Duvalier's "election" at the polls (Pierre-Charles 1973; Trouillot 1990). Residents often reminded me that whereas Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier, who took over the regime from 1971 to 1986, did not "*bati*, (build) anything for Bel Air," Papa Doc "*bat* (hit) Bel Air a lot." It was widely believed that Papa Doc never trusted the area and that it was an area heavily targeted (and eventually infiltrated by) the paramilitary agents popularly known as *tonton makout*, or "uncle sack," the name for the Haitian bogeyman who carries unruly children away in his straw sack.

The idea of the state as a bullish leader (*towo bann*), or simply, a bully (*towo*) is certainly tied to a legacy of repressive, autocratic rule that dates from colonial times (Smucker 1982; Trouillot 1990). Yet the Duvalier regime manifested this role to an unprecedented degree. Those

who could demonstrate a direct link to the president held the power to "bully people around," or both intimidate them and engage in all forms of extortion. And these everyday encounters acted as metonymic representations of the Duvalierist state writ large. Every aspect of the regime was oriented toward the display of the force and reach of the centralized regime, and the consolidation of wealth in governmental coffers. While Duvalier eradicated all forms of civilian organizations, from boy scouts to professional associations, he also busily cultivated a network of popular associations in the urban slums and countryside. In Bel Air, like elsewhere, the *makout* often formed the core leadership of spiritual societies, work cooperatives, and Rara and carnival groups (Laguerre 1983). These associations were then mobilized to empower the regime through public performance. Indeed, the formalized organization of *makout*, *Volontaires de la Securité Nationale,*[11] was perhaps the first nation-wide civilian organization incorporating peasants and the urban poor.[12] Their most fundamental responsibility, as Trouillot (1990) notes, was to wear the uniform, with the second being to march to military music through the capital and attend the grand carnivals and *koudyay*, or street parties, sponsored by the regime. In these public displays, the regime performed popular consent by displaying, on the one hand, "how far the arms of the state could reach" (Trouillot 1990:191), and on the other, large, joyous crowds in the central plazas of the capital and provincial towns.

On February 7, 1986, in the wake of countrywide demonstrations sparked by the rising price of food, fuel, and housing, Jean-Claude Duvalier and his wife boarded a U.S.-chartered jet

[11] It is important to note that it was possible to distinguish between simple *makout* and *makout* who were also *milisyen*. The former signaled membership in an informal, but not undercover, band of middle-class professionals and businessmen that arrested and tortured members of the opposition. The *milisyen*, in contrast, were members of an officially recognized, nation-wide organization, the *Voluntaires de Securite Nationale* (Volunteers for National Security). This militia incorporated some but not all *makout*.

[12] Trouillot (1990:190-91) notes how many among the rural and urban poor joined the ranks not only for the meager stipends but also because, for the first time, their citizenship was being acknowledged.

and left Haiti with their families, belongings, and riches, thereby ending the thirty-year dictatorship begun by his father.[13] Bel Air was at the center of this upheaval as well as the subsequent "popular movement" to *dechouke*, or "uproot," Duvalierism and radically change Haitian society (Dupuy 1997; Fatton 2002; Pierre-Charles 1988). This popular movement did not have the goal of instituting democratic procedures, of elections and decisions, so much as effecting a democratic form of association and representation, a "substantive" democracy (Pitkin 1967). Put differently, its advocates argued less for a change in governmental organization than for "a new kind of relationship between the state and the people" (Pierre-Charles 1988:71). Many still desired a singular strong leader, but they envisioned empowering one who would be continually responsive and accountable to the people's demands and would provide the social, economic, and political conditions necessary for their participation in public life. This movement for what people in Bel Air have called a democracy "with respect" (cf. Smith 2001) ultimately united under Aristide, a Catholic priest and follower of liberation theology whose parish borders Bel Air. Aristide's populist rhetoric and divine-like charisma appealed to Haiti's poor majority, and in December 1990, he was elected with 67.5% of the vote. Even more remarkable was the voter turnout, estimated at seventy-five percent of eligible voters. In Haiti's long history of political and social turmoil, this was an extraordinary moment filled with democratic hope and celebration. It was, as such, a very different occasion than the parliamentary election noted above, and perhaps more importantly, than the twenty-percent turnout rate of the latest presidential election.[14]

[13] The departure of Jean-Claude Duvalier and the collapse of the regime remains a subject of much controversy. It is, however, indisputable that the events of early 1986 were, as Trouillot (1990:226) puts is, a "high-level *coup d'état* executed with international connivance."

[14] The CEP estimated a turnout of twenty-two percent.

So, what happened? The intricate history, filled with *coups*, de facto regimes, and foreign interventions, is too vast to recount here. But it is nonetheless possible to indicate some key trends, all of which point to the loss of a "centered" political world and relations of accountability. First, most Bel Air residents, too young to recall dictatorial violence, associate the democratic transition with the intensified "misery" (*mizè*) of a rising cost of living (DeWind and Kinley 1988; McGowan 1997; McGuigan 2006) and the "insecurity" (*ensekerite*) of *coup* periods and gang violence (Beckett 2008; James 2010). As a base of support for Aristide, Bel Air has been subjected to politicized violence following the *coups* against Aristide, first by Duvalierist militants and loyal members of the army (from 1991-94) and then by the UN peacekeepers and police, which I discuss below. Additionally, the past two decades have been marked by the reign of violent, criminal gangs in Bel Air and other urban slums. Fueled by a transnational drug market as well as by their nebulous yet entrenched political ties, these gangs have, at times, placed entire zones under their control and have engaged in *makout*-like forms of extortion and terror. But more habitually these gangs have reflected and contributed to an unpredictable and unruly structure of force at all levels and to entrenched insecurity.

Second, the democratic transition has also yielded the opposite of the robust welfare state envisioned by the popular movement. It has instead inaugurated a fundamental weakening of governmental capacity. In Haiti, as elsewhere, the U.S. and its allies—what is often called the "international community" in Haiti—promoted a transition from a totalitarian regime to a liberal democratic state, grounded in individual rights, a free market, and limited governmental powers (Dupuy 2007; Fatton 2002; Smith 2001). As reflected in Haiti's 1987 constitution, this model drastically restricted executive power through an expansion of checks and balances at the level of political parties, parliament, the prime minister, the courts, and military. While this liberal

democracy has effectively blocked another dictatorship, it has also made it exceedingly difficult for any elected president to implement fundamental reforms or otherwise interfere in the workings of the increasingly globalized market and civil society. The actually existing democracy has produced, as Fatton (2002:70) writes, "a stultifying immobilism that [has] favored the status quo of the dominant classes." It is for this reason that people in Bel Air are suspicious of the "freedom" that this form of government promises, a suspicion that often manifested as a desire for a powerful (though not autocratic) leader capable of controlling the dominant classes and providing for the people.

Third, the liberalization of the state in Haiti (again, as elsewhere) has coincided with the growing irrelevance of the government in everyday forms of governance and the drastic escalation of global-governance institutions and processes. This is especially true in places like Bel Air, where everyday services like trash collection, water access, and education are in the hands of select NGOs, which are financed by an assemblage of donor governments, transnational financial institutions, and the UN. This absence, moreover, is not counteracted by the pervasive presence of the state in the arena of security, as might be expected. The Haitian army was disbanded in 1995, and in its place entered the first major UN peacekeeping mission, whose primary objective was the establishment of PNH, the first comprehensive civilian police force.[15] Several subsequent missions followed, with the current mission MINUSTAH being deployed after the 2004 *coup* against Aristide's second government. In a country shaped by a militant history of racialized liberation, the "globalization" of basic services and especially the military has challenged the existence of, and shaped longings for, the state.

[15] While Haiti has long had people that engage in policing, PNH is the first comprehensive civilian police force not tied to the Haitian military.

Mark Duffield (2001) argues that of all the permutations of global-governance, peacekeeping most radically embodies its constitutive dialectic of security and development (cf. Kelly, et al. 2010). This is because while peacekeeping missions are ostensibly aimed at building governmental capacity, they tend to unfold as projects to create the conflict-free environment that will enable interested actors to get on with the task of instituting an open economy free of governmental interference. Peacekeeping, in other words, contributes to the constellation of development practices that Ferguson (1994) has called an "anti-politics machine." The missions are not only practically removed from popular mandates, they also end up reshaping political issues as technical problems best solved by foreign experts or the market. Beyond indirect de-politicization, however, the missions can also stifle popular movements aimed at democratic empowerment in order to construct this stable political economy.[16]

This has certainly been the case in Haiti, where peacekeeping has primarily focused on controlling certain volatile urban spaces with a tendency for political demonstration. Identified as a site and source of conflict—a "red zone"[17]—since 1991, Bel Air has been a target of peacekeeping generally and of MINUSTAH in particular. Initially, MINUSTAH pursued a violent operation aimed at the quick and decisive demise of a pro-Aristide movement being waged by an amalgamation of Aristide supporters and rival gangs in Bel Air and other red zones. During the peak of this operation, from September to January 2004, a series of violent raids, known locally as "Baghdad,"[18] were conducted, which left four hundred people dead and caused

[16] For example, policy reports on the mission (e.g., Lindenmayor, et al. 2009) emphasize moderate increases of foreign investment in light assembly jobs, where low wages and poor work conditions have recently led them to be a site of intense political protest.

[17] In practice, the designation of red zone means that foreign, diplomatic, or development personnel are only permitted to enter under military escort.

[18] The term *Baghdad* is difficult to trace. Many considered its current usage an appropriation of its use by the interim regime to stigmatize the pro-Aristide protests.

the near total evacuation of Bel Air.[19] Though continuing to use nonlethal force to suppress protests or riots, MINUSTAH has engaged in few violent operations since. Today, MINUSTAH is composed of a civilian and military component of about ten thousand personnel. It is linked to the UN's Development Program (UNDP), the Government of Haiti, PNH, and numerous aid agencies. The official goal of the mission is to "build state capacity" by "maintain[ing] a stable and secure environment" (UN Security Council 2004).[20] In Bel Air, MINUSTAH has pursued this mission through disarmament of residents, stabilization of political conflicts, and development projects. In so doing, they have worked with not only PNH and the National Commission of Disarmament, Demobilization, and Integration (CNDDR) but also NGOs—in particular, Viva Rio. Since 2006, Viva Rio has partnered with MINUSTAH and orchestrated, alongside development projects, a community-based violence reduction program that integrates former "Baghdad" "soldiers" as "community leaders." Given this complex assemblage, it is not surprising that the peacekeepers have been variously understood in Bel Air as an occupying army, a police force, and a development agency (cf. Beckett 2010). Moreover, few, if any, residents understand how these various agencies fit together or what their respective responsibilities are. Echoing the corporeal metaphors common to political imaginaries (Ferguson and Gupta 2002; Stallybrass and White 1986), people often referred to this political order as "headless" (*tèt anba*). To say the least, peacekeeping has had a mixed impact on *ensekerite* (insecurity) (Higate and Henry 2009; Muggah and Krause 2008) and especially on the expansive, embodied condition that this term designates in Haiti (James 2004). While residents admit that MINUSTAH has

[19] Several studies have convincingly demonstrated that MINUSTAH engaged in human rights abuses during the raids on pro-Aristide neighborhoods. See, for example, Council on Hemispheric Affairs (2006), Kolbe and Hutson (2006), and Schuller (2008a).

[20] Despite changes to the mission (such as its augmentation to around 13,000 in 2010, following the earthquake), this mandate has not changed. The 2010 mandate, for instance, officially instructs MINUSTAH to adopt "a particular focus on *building the capacity* of the Haitian National Police" (UN Security Council 2010).

curbed gang violence, they also indicate that in obscuring who's in charge, it has manifested a sense of political disorder and abandonment.

Insecurity at the crossroads of force and power

On a typical, blazingly hot July day in 2009, I arrived at the top of Bel Air's soaring hilltop exhausted, and much too early. I had planned a meeting with Frantzy to discuss the upcoming public education seminar on setting up and using email that his staff, or male social clique, was planning under the auspices of his two youth organizations. Commenting on the heat, his mother, Carol, offered me a Coke and a seat on the stoop in front of her one-room, cement house where she ran a small tailoring operation. Not yet school uniform season, she had little work. We passed the hours chatting and gazing at the slow foot traffic and occasional vehicles moving through the block. Like most days, the only major traffic at this intersection of two side streets consisted of MINUSTAH vehicles, which passed in regular twenty-five minute intervals.

As they drove by, some of the children waved to the ten or so armed soldiers seated in the open truck bed and a few men quietly mocked the intentions of the soldiers, calling them *touristah,* or mere "tourists;" accusing them of being *volè kabrit*, or "goat thieves" (a double entendre which also implies "stealing women");[21] or sarcastically thanking them for "Baghdad." Most people, however, did not pay them any attention. MINUSTAH vehicles were a regular and dominating presence in Bel Air. They patrolled the neighborhood, supervised nightly checkpoints, oversaw neighborhood festivals, escorted diplomats or development personnel to project sites, or returned soldiers to their neighborhood base at *Fort National* (the former military

[21] The idiom "goat thieves" rose to popularity in 2007 following its use in a series of Carnival songs by street bands as well as popular music groups (one of which, *Demele*, won first prize for their entry). *Volè kabrit* had the potential to speak to a wide array of abuses or offenses by MINUSTAH, including sexual promiscuity and abuse.

barracks and penitentiary). Beyond their vehicle surveillance, the soldiers—most of whom were deployed from the Brazilian army for a nine-month tour of duty—also regularly conducted foot patrols of the vast dirt corridors nestled between paved streets where most residents live. The national police were not so present. When they were in the neighborhood, it was typically to accompany MINUSTAH soldiers in their operations. Hence, despite their mandate to *assist* the operations of the national police, MINUSTAH was, in many ways, the face of the security apparatus in Bel Air.

While Carol and I continued to watch MINUSTAH vehicles pass by that day, I asked her if she thought MINUSTAH was "making the state," as I had heard other people claim when highlighting the mission's pervasive presence in the area. Although she alluded to their control of the zone, she corrected me, replying that they don't have any "*dwa*" nor "*devwa*"—meaning right and duty; legitimacy and responsibility—to make the state. Carol, like most people in Bel Air, insisted that MINUSTAH had brought order to the zone since 2004, letting me know that at that time I could not have entered the neighborhood, nor could I have enjoyed chatting with her in the street. But like most residents, she told me that she felt that the soldiers could not fulfill her longings for security since she was uncertain how much she could, as she put it, "count on them." While she maintained that they were the only ones capable of responding to major (or even minor) disasters, she complained that when she had recently visited the base to report flooding in her and her neighbors' houses, she was turned away and sent to the police. "No one," she lamented, "really takes control here [so] we remain in insecurity."

Returning to the question of state making, she clarified, "I don't see that [MINUSTAH does that]. In Bel Air, people say a lot of things about them. They have a lot of nicknames." Gesturing toward the men who earlier made comments, she went on, "They [i.e., people in Bel

Air] call them 'mercenaries,' 'thieves,' '*ti blan*.' " Literally "petty whites," the term *ti blan* is a colonial idiom that opposes the white colonists who took on menial jobs in the colony to the wealthy, powerful "whites" (*blan*) who earned a profit from slave labor. Like the term *mercenary*, it referenced the idea that the soldiers, though tied to "foreign" sources of power, were not direct instantiations of any one powerful state (as, for example, the U.S. troops were during the 1914-34 U.S. occupation). It reflected, moreover, the widespread perception that the soldiers were in Haiti to merely do a "little job" to help themselves. Carol concluded her point by telling me in a firm voice, "They say they only show off without doing anything really, all things. It means they only act like [the] police. They are a military force but without any power. That means that they can't really do anything for us. To me myself, they lack the force of the state even though they have all the weaponry."

In describing MINUSTAH, Carol here crafted an image of inhibited authority, compromised power, enervated force, and limited legitimacy. This was the case despite the elaborate "show" of might that was regularly put on display by way of the sheer quantity of soldiers and arms; the sophisticated and numerous military vehicles; the armored military base; and even, as residents often satirized, the rugged boots of their uniforms.[22] Yet Carol also hinted at the fact that MINUSTAH did not have the power to use this might. This was, in part, because the mission was restricted by the structural protocols of peacekeeping, which prohibit soldiers from using lethal force except to defend themselves or civilians, or else when given specific

[22] For example, in 2009, it was estimated that there were roughly four times as many peacekeeping soldiers than policemen in the city, and moreover, there were two vehicles for every thirty policemen and eight vehicles for every fifteen MINUSTAH soldiers (personal conversation, Viva Rio leadership, July 28, 2009). The "boots" of MINUSTAH uniforms were, in Bel Air, often the satirical trope that metonymically indexed their superior military capacity.

authorization by the UN and Haitian government, as in the 2004 raids of Bel Air. But it was also due to her contention that MINUSTAH could not command the "force of the state."

What motivated Carol's critique, then, was the belief that performing the state depended, at least in part, on the display of *both* the force and power—or, force *as* power—that would signal the sovereign authority (*dwa*) of those responsible for law and order. While the Haitian Creole terms *pouvwa* (power) and *fòs* (force) are often used interchangeably, they are not synonyms. The term *pouvwa*, for example, most often refers to the "powers" that are bestowed on someone as a result of holding a particular civic post or office, echoing, in this way, everyday uses of the term *authority* to indicate *permission* or *legitimate* authority in Western bureaucratic discourse (Herzfeld 1993). But, it also suggests a broader idea of authorized responsibility, which depends, in turn, on the capacity for force. The term *fòs*, in fact, has a much broader frame of reference. In Bel Air, it was usually employed to indicate the negation of energy or vitality. The common grumble that followed salutations, "I don't have my force today," suggested the ongoing hunger and fatigue that rendered people inactive and unable to complete their daily activities. Because of the intimate associations between hunger and mood, lacking force also reflected a sense of discouragement. Having force, in contrast, articulated the overall well-being needed to have an active and consequential presence in the world. These sentiments also extended beyond individual personhood to articulate what might be called the "moral force" of a community. More than numbers per se, the idea of moral force implied the potency of social attachments, which transformed a group into a political community capable of exerting influence on others and accomplishing shared goals. So goes the inscription on the Haitian flag, *l'union fait la force*—the union makes the force—which refers to the union that brought together the former slaves and the free men of color (*affranchis*) to defeat Napoleon's army and win Haiti's

independence in 1804. Made evident by this revolutionary context is, of course, the idea of force as an indication of militant capacity, or might. Yet it also indicates the way in which all these indexes of force manifest the capacity to claim a kind of Hobbesian *potestas*, or the authority to effect social change.

When looked at this way, Carol's comments suggest that the mandate of MINUSTAH to "build capacity" was deterred at the level of what might be called the performative ontology of sovereignty, and by extension, statehood. These acts of governance, in other words, lacked the basic features that would allow the peacekeeper (or the policeman) to continue beyond the event as an authoritative agent. On the one hand, MINUSTAH's superior military capacity belied the fact that they lacked not only the "power" to use force but also the "moral force" that would make it legitimate. And on the other hand, the show of governing capacity by MINUSTAH—which was meant, recall, to actualize the capacity of the police and the state—resulted in producing a simulacrum of their incapacity. Both structural consequences were well-illustrated in a common trope that compared the police to the "match" that allowed the "fire" of MINUSTAH to burn.

A friend and neighbor of Carol's, also a mother of two, echoed this trope when she offered her opinion on the discussion. Focusing on the problems posed by the simultaneous policing of MINUSTAH and PNH, she told us:

> MINUSTAH is not for us, but they are the ones who would be able to do something. The police are for us, this is true, but they are weak and we can't put too much confidence in them…I ask myself, 'who controls the zone?' I think it is MINUSTAH who controls it, so they should take it completely.

While she exhorted MINUSTAH to make good on their already latent displays of controlling the area, she acknowledged their lack of attachment or accountability to the people in this red zone and elsewhere in Haiti. Furthermore, even though the police could be positioned as "for us," that

belief was compromised by their perceived weakness, and in turn, residents' mistrust of them. This lack of trust certainly entailed accusations of corruption, also present in the Carol's earlier reference to MINUSTAH as "thieves." But moreover, it indicated a lack of *confidence* that the police would be able to carry out their responsibilities to the public. In effect, such confidence would necessitate adequate force, that is, the ability to "prove" one's authority by demonstrating what Weber called "the *welfare* of the governed" (Weber 1946b:296). It was this, Weber (1978) argued, that gives form to the "belief" in legitimacy that is constitutive of legitimate domination—the belief that those who govern are capable of realizing and are responsible for all aspects of collective wellbeing.[23] While able to occasionally dissipate "crisis" situations, the logics of peacekeeping seemed to instead give rise to a *generalized* sense of insecurity. Thus the query for order: "Who controls the zone?" she asked, echoing the questions—Who's in charge? Who runs the country? Who is there for us?—that reverberated among the public witnessing various acts of governance in Bel Air.

Staging governance

One memorable "act" of governance further illustrates how these impressions of disorder and insecurity emerge and are substantiated. It occurred on Easter weekend, during the street festival Raranaval in which local Rara groups parade through neighborhood streets. On the eve of Easter, just as the processions of local street bands were coming to a close, MINUSTAH and PNH conducted a "joint" operation to arrest "Bingo," a leader of one of the two most violent

[23] Weber argues that all forms of authorized domination imply a "belief" in legitimacy. "Every genuine form of domination implies a minimum of *voluntary* compliance, that is, an interest (based on ulterior motives or genuine acceptance) in obedience" (1978:212). Moreover, in his analysis of charismatic rule, this belief indexes the idea of political duty. He writes, the "source of these beliefs is the 'proving' of the charismatic quality through miracles, through victories and other successes, that is, through the *welfare* of the governed" (1946b:296).

staff or "gangs" in Bel Air. During the *coup* years from 1991-94, when the paramilitary and covert bandits of the de facto regime targeted pro-Aristide poor zones like Bel Air, several groups or "staff" of young men formed themselves into civilian defense "corps" (*kò*) or "brigades" (*brigad vigilans*),[24] which protected the neighborhood by guarding the streets and fighting the army and lingering *makout*. But as people in Bel Air readily admit, these armed groups often took on a role and a form remarkably similar to *makout*, even recycling the same personnel.[25] They transformed neighborhood zones into the militant, politicized, commercial zones that scholars working in several Caribbean and postcolonial contexts, have called "garrisons" (Beckett 2008; Roitman 2004; Stone 1986). Known as *baz*, or "bases," in Haiti, these armed staff and their zones were feared and reviled by outsiders and residents alike for their protection rackets based on exaction, rape, and terror. It was also during this time that the pro-Aristide factions (and these *baz*) began to be associated with an occult band of malevolent perpetrators that engaged in mainly robbery and kidnapping but also politically motivated attacks. Called *chimè* (chimera), after the fire-breathing, hybrid creature in Greek mythology, the *chimè* drew on the forms of "necropolitics" (Mbembé 2003) laid by previous paramilitaries. Yet their impulsive and covert maneuverings contrasted sharply with the public displays of Duvalier's militia. These forces emanated from nodes in a political and economic network that was loosely woven, socially masked, and often replete with conflict. For example, Bingo, who was referred to as a *chimè*, was known by all residents and most could recognize him, but he was rarely seen

[24] There are many phrases with which people refer to neighborhood watch groups, including *brigad vigilans*, *kò*, and *gwoupman katye*. While the latter dates to the earlier popular movement, the first two rose to prominence later.

[25] In particular, in Bel Air some *vodou* priests have made the transition from working as *makout* to working as part of a politicized gang network.

during daylight, and he appeared at Raranaval as usual, masked in all-black, a cap bent low over his eyes, and flanked by a crowd of young men.

Bingo came to Raranaval in support of his staff, which had been charged with organizing the festival. He likely felt protected from any arrest, since the Ministry of Culture and the president approved his staff as the organizers, channeling funds and other resources through them. Yet at roughly one o'clock in the morning, MINUSTAH soldiers scattered the crowd with gunshots, mounted the street stand where the suspect had been observing the festivities, and apprehended him. Bel Air residents were extremely distressed by the operation. It spoiled one of few annual celebrations and it risked the safety of many civilians, including a young boy who was grazed by a bullet as he watched from a rooftop.

The next day I was invited by my friend Nadine to eat an Easter meal with her family, who with the earnings from the mother's sales of used clothing and the father's odd construction jobs, could afford to feed their four daughters and two guests a plate of well-seasoned chicken, rice, beans, and salad. A handsome, friendly, and fashionable twenty-three-year old, Nadine was the lead vocalist in ZapZap. Along with her family and a close friend, Nadine and I sat in the outdoor kitchen, a small room adjacent to their one-room home on the second floor of a two-story concrete building, whose haphazard construction prefigured its collapse in the following year's earthquake. Seated on overturned buckets, we ate our food in a hurry and then conversed about what was on everyone's mind: MINUSTAH's apprehension of Bingo. As Nadine and her friend rehashed the details of the event, they also debated—given the circumstances—who authorized the arrest. Was it MINUSTAH who used the opportunity to apprehend Bingo against the wishes of the government? Or was it the government who set up Bingo? Or were they both

working together in a conspiracy? At one point in the questioning, Nadine interjected, "We don't have anyone that can call themselves the state [here]." Then, turning to me to explain,

> It's like they are the same thing. They say that. MINUSTAH/PNH. But that's not true. We are only supposed to have police. But here we have no state. You see what I am saying. We just have lots of people who act like they are arresting people.

Reflecting on the MINUSTAH-PNH dynamic, her friend soon replied:

> But who can arrest people? It's not everyone! That's why they [MINUSTAH] need the police. They use them to give them their force.

When I then suggested that perhaps the police could have apprehended Bingo, Nadine reminded me that they don't have any "power" to act alone, which here suggested that MINUSTAH had initiated this apprehension as part of their ongoing disarmament campaign. Nadine's friend then interjected, telling us:

> Yes, but it's like *peyi blan* ["white countries," meaning *superpowers*, also referred to as *gwo peyi*, or "big countries"] *back up* MINUSTAH who *backs up* the police. Without MINUSTAH, we have no police. But without the police, MINUSTAH just stands on the street. It's upside down.

Finally, Nadine told us, discouragingly: "And they will let him go, you see. They [the state] can't take him." This prediction was based, as she later clarified, on her assumption that "the state, [President] Préval needs him." It was widely believed in Bel Air that Préval's presidency was maintained by his signing of "peace accords" with rival gangs in 2007. These accords promised impunity and economic incentives if gang leaders disarmed and refrained from violence.[26] With this in place, gang leaders wielded a high degree of influence and control over the government.

This proved to be the case. Following the apprehension, I spoke with Woody, the leader of another street band in Bel Air, whose base was near where Bingo was said to oversee a small market of street drugs. He told me of others' plans to fix Bingo's release by "making disorder;"

[26] For more on the peace accords, which played a key role in Préval's election, see Muggah and Moestue (2009).

that is, by overturning dumpsters and disrupting traffic.[27] As a powerful gang leader in the area, Bingo posed a threat to other local leaders and organizations, but he also provided a degree of protection. For this reason, Woody claimed that no one would curtail the plans to disrupt traffic. Within a few days, two large trash dumpsters were overturned at Bingo's base, at a busy intersection in the heart of Bel Air. The garbage piles grew as pedestrians and residents added rubbish to them, effectively barricading the street from passersby and all vehicles except motorcycles. The signal had been sent.

Though there was no way to confirm that the barricade was the precipitating factor, three days later, and a week after his apprehension, Bingo was released.

The basis for Nadine's successful premonition, in fact, was already supplied in the guesswork—what Peirce (1938-53) would call "abduction"—that occurred in our conversation over Easter dinner. In the course of this conversation, Nadine and her friend attempted to retroactively locate someone in charge. They singled out several governing forces—PNH, MINUSTAH, superpowers, the government—as the possible agent behind the operation. But, nonetheless this "staging" of governance only seemed to confirm the absence of sovereign agency. To begin with, Nadine asserted her belief that though the national police were supposed to act single-handedly, they lacked both the power and military force to do so. And whereas MINUSTAH was perceived as capable of executing the operation, they were (for all practical purposes) impotent in the absence of the police. Thus Nadine's insistence on the never-ending "back-up;" the superpowers "backed up" MINUSTAH who "backed up" the police. But, at the same time, the police were also "backing up" MINUSTAH. The chain of reference, in other words, did not proceed along a singular hierarchy but rather endlessly shifted between

[27] The politics of using garbage to create order or disorder is complex. For a fuller discussion see Kivland (forthcoming).

compromised authorities. What Nadine seemed to be saying, then, was that the accomplishment of the arrest required that the security agent be able to clearly refer to an encompassing hierarchy *in* the act of policing. The active presence of a larger power *at the end of the line*—that is, the state—would "empower" these activities as a matter of right and duty.

The week following Bingo's release, I met up with both Nadine and Frantzy, and in separate conversations, asked them about Bingo's release. Both were concerned to tell me that the real problem with the outcome of the overturned dumpsters was that it reconfirmed that the only way to get things done was to produce more disorder, which only made for more insecurity. As Nadine put it, "You can't have order when you don't have a 'bullish' leader. We don't even know who's in charge. What we have is disorder every day. It's not normal." While Frantzy agreed, he put the matter somewhat differently, stressing instead what this problem meant for his organizational activities. When I asked him why people always blamed the absent state for life in Bel Air, he told me: "We don't know in whom we should believe. We make friends with *bandi* (literally *bandits*, meaning *thugs*) but they kill people. They can't make *marenn* (godmothers) for us. You ask me why we only look to the state? Well, it's because that is the only thing that can regroup us all, and give us a response [to our demands]. But, here, there is no state. What we have is a lot of people that have come to Bel Air, looking for wealth in a lot of little projects. With all that, you cannot make a claim to anything."

Organized young men like Frantzy would often characterize their appeals for funding for their various activities as a quest to locate among all those who govern a godparent-like personage capable of supporting them. Searching for a godmother (or less often godfather) was how they referred to their efforts to find an embodied, accountable *agent* within these agencies who would provide the necessary, lifetime "support" (*ankadreman*) required to realize their

requests. With this idiom, they envisioned someone more powerful than the people who could be incorporated into a social contract. Usually employed in relation to national or local political figures, this phrase could also be used to conceptualize the possibility of foreign aid acting as a responsible steward.

In such usage people drew on the role of the godmother as a "second mother" who assists the birth mother by acting as the patron and protector of her child. While his use of the female gender had to do with my presence, it was also informed by the fact that it is usually (though not necessarily) the godmother rather than godfather who assumes the most active role. In addition to bestowing gifts at birthdays and Christmas, the primary responsibility of the godparent in Haiti, like elsewhere in Latin America and the Caribbean, is to *sponsor* and *protect* the child. This includes paying costs associated with church rites and school fees, as well as caring for the child should something happen to the parents. For these reasons, Bel Air residents usually restricted the choice of a godmother not to a family member but to someone who would help the child lead a full and valued life.[28] Of special significance is that the godmother's help was viewed as a way of assisting (*ede*) people for life rather than simply furnishing temporary aid (*pote ed*) for them. Also significant is that the figure of the godmother designates a particular relationship between an adult woman and a child that is established through participation in a Catholic baptismal rite, or more commonly for those in Bel Air, the acceptance of a personal request made by the mother or father. It is not viewed as a "natural" bond but one that must be

[28] The "functional" motivations behind godparent choice is well-discussed in the immense literature on Latin American godparenthood (see Mintz and Wolf 1950). The central debate centered on whether people chose to foster bonds among status equals in order to promote solidarity or to create links with higher status persons that might enable social advancement (Deshon 1963, Foster 1969, Ingham 1970, Thompson 1973). I am not concerned to enter into this debate. But I do wish to note that scholars have observed in either case an emphasis on selecting godparents that are capable of providing for the godchild.

legitimated through a church or socially-sanctioned agreement (Mintz and Wolf 1950).[29] Further, in this dialogue agency is presumed to reside not in the one asked but in the one who asks, since it is socially unacceptable to decline the request. The inability to attain durable, legitimate, and full support in a "godparent" was often a cause for organized men to complain about the absence of a strong public sector. Yet at the same time, the attainment of support did not necessarily promise stability, but could invite instances of insecurity, as I detail in the next section.

Looking for the master amid many chiefs

On October 10, 2009, I had planned to meet with Frantzy early in the morning to observe the street sweeping project of his organization OJREB (Youth Organization for the Renaissance of Bel Air) that they had recently begun. I was expecting to find the fifteen members of the organization collecting garbage in the street, piling it in wheelbarrows, and carrying it to the crossroads. Instead I found Frantzy sitting outside his one-room house looking glum and smoking a cigarette. I asked him what was wrong, and he pointed to his room, a ten-by-ten foot hot box with aluminum walls and a yellow-carpeted concrete floor. I saw his belongings thrown about, his boom box broken apart, and the screen of his prized television smashed. Some members of the organization were gathered around and they began to recount what happened. His friend Michel told me that it was jealousy that provoked the attack. Two young men on the block had seen OJREB painting the waste buckets and curbs to mark off the zone for sweeping and became upset, presumably because they were not involved in the project. Another friend

[29] Godparenthood has been addressed as a form of "fictive" or "ritual" kinship that is distinguished from "natural" or "biological" kinship. It is by now generally acknowledged that this distinction is untenable, since, as Schneider (1984:111) famously noted, "biological kinship is everywhere a set of cultural conceptions." I do not wish to contest this debate. Rather, I aim to highlight how Haitian ideologies surrounding the fictive-biological distinction contribute to metaphorical usages of the godmother figure. It is, in other words, this role's perceived need for ritual or social validation that enables it to speak to notions of polity and the social contract.

suggested organizational competition, saying, “These men wanted to form their own organization, but it’s not something that occurs in one day.” Frantzy told me that he had no appetite and asked if I would buy him some alcohol.

I went to purchase a small bottle of rum from a local boutique where I had befriended the woman who worked the front window. She invited me in for a brief chat. After exchanging pleasantries, I asked her about the occurrence by passively asserting that I had “heard talk about something.” She told me,

> Two men attacked (*aji sou*, “acted on”) Frantzy. They came in the zone when he was at his mother’s house, this morning. They had knives and a *baton* and they crushed in the door. They make disorder. Crush the television. Everyone knows who they are [told me names]. What do we do? Call *“Help!”* that’s all. Fito [her husband] he can’t do anything. They ran fast.

I quickly learned that there was a long history of conflict and accusations between Frantzy and these individuals. It had previously erupted in a conflict over funds for a Christmas gift distribution that the organization had planned in 2007. The brothers had accused Frantzy of not using some of the money designated for the distribution, and instead, “putting it in his pocket.” Fito suspected the same had happened with this project. Such accusations were a common feature of social and organizational life in this environment of scarcity and widespread engagement (James 2010). Both triggering internal conflict and influencing residents’ interpretations of the merit of organizing, these charges often led to the demise of the organization. Indeed, this situation was no different, as it not only ended the street sweeping project but also Frantzy’s full involvement in this organization. He took a break from his involvement in OJREB, and became more involved in another organization to which he also belonged (OJMOTEEB, see chapter five).

After getting the news from Fito and his wife, I purchased the alcohol and carried it back to Frantzy's. He thanked me and then asked his friends for some privacy. After a long silence he told me, echoing his neighbors' interpretations:

> This is what happens when you organize in Bel Air. Those who did this were in OJREB and now they want their own organization. I ask myself, why? This little project, it's nothing. A little activity, but people are jealous. They think we put money in our pocket. It's for this reason that we need more support. The state is supposed (*sipoze*) to do this [street sweep]. I'm supposed to have a job. We get a check from the minister to do this, but the state needs to organize this. It does not make sense. I organize and now I have no security.

Echoing sentiments I heard often among organized men in Bel Air, he went on to tell me that while the organization might have a lot of force in the zone, they still need someone to "back them up." He complained, "Those people have 'leaders' that do 'back up' (*fè back up*) for them." The word *leaders* was a reference to the community leaders of Viva Rio, and it raised the specter of gang violence, and in turn, undermined their claims to authority. When I asked him about what he would do, he shrugged his shoulders and shook his head. "Where will I find a *mèt* (master) among all these *chèf* (chiefs)?" I pressed the issue and told him that we should go to the police. He seemed perplexed at the possibility and told me that they would not do anything. "Don't forget. The state is not the state," he told me. He mentioned that the last time this happened was when he had returned to his mother's house after the raids in 2004. The house had been totally ransacked. (Like many in Bel Air, it still bore the spray-painted mark of inspection five years later.) He told me he went to the police at this time and they told him to set up a neighborhood watch (*brigad vigilans*). This confused him, since he thought that this was what MINUSTAH was supposed to do. "No one wants to take control of this zone. We have to make the state for ourselves. I'm *bouke* (tired/fed up)!" he said as he kicked a rock near his foot.

Despite his apprehensions, however, he would set up a brigade in the coming days. Using the money for the street sweeping project, which was readily disbanded, he employed those who would have been street sweepers to patrol his block and the area around his house at night (putting the rest of the money aside for a new television). As Erica James (2010) has documented, localized assemblages of security and insecurity have flourished during the so-called democratic transition. The absence of an encompassing, accountable, and capable state has not only fostered forms of gang, paramilitary, and retributive violence in popular quarters but also informal, neighborhood-based forms of policing (Beckett 2008; Schuller 2008b). The two formations have not only often been indistinguishable, but moreover, mutually constitutive. The police and the government, as Frantzy noted, have often advocated and endorsed these forms of policing, a move that recognized their inability to curb gang violence while simultaneously deferring their responsibility onto residents.[30] Another organization called "Alive" in Bel Air, for example, had recently set up a brigade in the wake of a spree of retributive murders. Some of those killed were accused of adultery and others of theft. This brigade was a somewhat formal team of eight men who watched the corridor where they lived in rotating shifts for a few weeks. Expressing the need for the brigade, its leader, Daniel, told me, "If you were hungry and you had no food on the table, you would have to leave the house to get food. It's the same thing. There is a lack and we have to take responsibility." But he alluded to the cycle of violence and vigilantism when he then told me:

> The problem in this zone is [the] problem of "call little thieves" (*rele ti volè*), "call slut" (*rele bouzin*). I don't say there are not people who would steal. But the problem is once you call someone a thief you can kill them. You cry out 'thief' and, now, you turn into the state."[31]

[30] For example, the Haitian Ministry of Justice in November 1988 asked citizens to form brigades as a means of curbing violence and controlling delinquent youth (James 2010).

[31] Conversation with Daniel, June 2009.

Like Daniel's brigade, Frantzy's was a semi-formal assemblage of young men who agreed to *voye je* (send eyes over) the "hot area." The five core members of the brigade were also members of a *chanpwèl* secret society that was affiliated with the Rara ZapZap. Members of secret societies in Haiti are associated with an array of special powers, especially the ability to shape-shift and wander the streets at night as invincible figures embodied in bestial form. The members of this *chanpwèl*, which included Frantzy, were often referred to by others, only somewhat jokingly, as *lougawou*—the label for a creature that *wete po, mete po*, or changes skins, at night and preys on the souls, force, and blood of children and other weak persons (Dayan 1995; Métraux 1972). Usually reserved for women, men who incarnate *lougawou*, I was told, are capable of taking on stronger prey. While Frantzy never mentioned the service the *chanpwèl* (or *lougawou*) might provide the brigade, it was clear that their claim to mystical power conveyed power and commanded respect within the neighborhood (see chapter five). Frantzy also visited his friend Berman who was known as a local *vodou* healer and had him fashion a *gad*, or protective charm,[32] which he set next to the doorway of his house. As a final (perhaps unintentional) measure of protection, his friend Yves ZapZap, a former soldier of "Baghdad," visited his house and displayed his disapproval at the incident with an enraged denouncement in the street. Frantzy was overcome with anxiety and depression, and he told me that he hoped if he "put our force (*fòs*) outside, then it'll protect us, it'll protect others."[33]

Despite his preparations, he confessed to me a few days later that they were not doing the brigade anymore. The brigade no longer seemed necessary since the attackers (who were brothers) had fled to a place in the countryside. It is likely that Yves's show of disapproval had

[32] An empty rum bottle with a white-and-red cloth containing a fine powder placed inside.

[33] October 13, 2009.

an impact on their decision to flee. Yet I was told that they had fallen ill of mystical spells and were unable to speak about the situation—or in fact at all—and that they had fled to seek traditional care from a traditional healer. With its object of surveillance absent, the brigade could no longer fulfill a function of defense, or for the matter, intimidation. Most of the brigades in Bel Air were short-lived shows of force, which did not outlast the threat that spurred their existence. In this way, the more significant reason for the brigade's demise was that Frantzy saw little long-term utility in it. He felt that the attack was the inevitable consequence of organizing in light of a plethora of organizations in the zone competing for power, funds, and work. He complained that they have to defend their interests against the "big" NGOs that come to develop the area—for example, by acquiring a street sweeping project funded through a UNDP program in partnership with the Ministry of Public Works—but that this made them vulnerable to jealousy. He stressed that he did not want to become like a "*kò*." In an angry, heated tone, he told me:

> We are here to defend the zone. I think a lot of people say they are here for that. MINUSTAH. *Blan yo* (the whites, a reference to NGOs). But they have other objectives. We need the police to defend us with force. We, ourselves, we defend without violence. I am against violence. I suffered a lot in Baghdad. And, now, insecurity runs through my blood (*mache nan san m*) just like in Baghdad.
> […]
> What I know is I can find *protection* in Yves. That blocks me, that's true. To me, everyone is *sou blof* (in a bluff), everyone that comes in Bel Air to make peace, it's *bloffè* (liars) that they are. I need a big chief on my back. I give you a speech, now. It's not me it's all the people. [34]

Like the voices of those above, Frantzy complained about the presence of several foreign agents when he longed for the police to be able to take on that role. And he also reiterated the way in which this absence deepens feelings of insecurity, especially in light of the incident. Yet his comment also raises a more critical point. This situation, he asserted, incited longings for an

[34] Conversation, October 2009.

embodied, transparent sovereign in the figure of the gang leader, which carried its own set of problems. While Yves could "protect" him to a degree, he also "blocked him." Yves did so by not only impeding Frantzy's power project in the zone with a show of hierarchy, but also by adulterating this project with gang violence. Protection, as Charles Tilly (Tilly 1985) observed, plays a key role in imaginaries and technologies of statehood. On the one hand, the idea of protection "calls up images of the shelter against danger provided by a powerful friend, a large insurance policy, or a sturdy roof" (ibid.). On the other hand, it connotes the state as mafia, or the "racket in which a local strong man forces merchants to pay tribute in order to avoid damage—damage the strong man himself threatens to deliver" (ibid.). Configuring the Government of Haiti as well as the global assemblages of governance in Haiti as a kind of profiteering mob has become something of a critical commonplace,[35] and it needs no repeating here. What I am more concerned with is how the opposition between the two forms of protection is not only a matter of degree, as Tilly insisted, but it is also one in which the forms are dialectically related (Comaroff and Comaroff 2006b; Wedeen 2008). The structured absence of political authority and duty leads people like Frantzy to long for protection in what Tilly called its "comforting tone"—the one that connotes the "shielding from both local racketeers and outside marauders" (171). Yet the inability to find such comfort also leads him to rely on local strong men. However, what Frantzy teaches us is that this dialectic extends beyond questions of state and criminal violence in Haiti. It also inflects the question of political engagement surrounding employment and social services. It was Frantzy's reliance on an aid apparatus to acquire income, work, and a cleaner street that provoked the conundrum of protection in the first place. One might say that in attempting to

[35] On this reading of the Haitian state, past and present, see Dupuy (2007), Fatton (Fatton 2002), Smucker (Smucker 1982), Trouillot (1990). On the aid agencies and aid-based governance, see, among others, James (James 2010), Schuller (2009), Schwartz (2008).

perform the work of the state Frantzy realized the need for a sovereign that embodies not only might but also moral authority and could thereby reinforce his project of civic engagement.

Conclusions

The idea of "statelessness" bundles several structured absences: the lack of regulated and effective public services; of hierarchical "national" institutions; and of disciplinary and ordering capacities among the *many* who govern. It is thus more radical than scholarly debates about weak or failed states since it focuses questions of capacity not on "government" alone but on the localization of authority and duty within a field of governance. This talk attaches the existence of statehood to the ability to produce subjects who recognize a degree of authority in a corporate entity engaged in the maintenance of social order.

The notion of authority as performatively constructed has been a staple of anthropological analysis (Kelly and Kaplan 1990), and the production of authority as essentially political has, since Aristotle, shaped understandings of the state. Indeed, the lack of demonstrated centralized authority was the basis on which early political anthropology defined stateless societies (Fortes and Evans-Pritchard 1940). Yet the analytical *separation* of the demonstration of governing authority from the concept of state sovereignty has also been a staple of contemporary political theory, guiding much of the scholarship on globalization and neoliberalism. In this work, it is often suggested that the sovereign identity of the state can be separated from the public and efficacious performance of an authority to govern. Insofar as "making state" is a claim to inhabit a sovereign role, it is certainly always unstable and only ever aspirational—as are all identities (Bakhtin 1981; Goffman 1983; Mead 1934). What this case reminds us, however, is that at some point challenges to the perception and representation of

sovereign authority preclude "uptake" of the very idea of the state. For those in Bel Air, the inability to locate legitimate authority in acts of governance violated their basic assumptions of polity and politics, which were rooted in a legacy of authoritarian rule as well as an awareness of the problems of "headless" global governance. This, in turn, not only rendered people confused and insecure in what seemed an ever more disordered world, but also provoked in them shared longings for a "forceful" state. Thus the irony of young men in Bel Air, like Frantzy, who in longing for what Dewey (1927) called a democratic "way of life," free of misery and full of mutual respect, find themselves calling for *more* order and force in the guise of dictatorship. In the post-Aristide era, "democratic" expectations are being reframed in terms of a clear nexus of sovereign authority toward which people can act politically, directing both their criticisms and desires.

Perhaps this is to be expected. The idea of statelessness as it has developed in urban Haiti amid what Erica James (2010) has coined "democratic insecurities" concerns violations of political duty and ethical norms. The talk of statelessness is, therefore, also a discourse of responsibility. And in this discourse, *the state* takes shape not as the edifice of government, but as an ideational artifact that marks the social role with reference to which citizens orient claims on the terms of the social contract. "The state," in other words, marks a performative achievement—one that is understood to occur in the repeatable practices that presuppose and entail a relationally defined role vis-à-vis the public. When looked at this way, it is clear that the talk of statelessness does not serve to critique the state per se, though it certainly does criticize the form of global liberal governance that has emerged during the democratic transition. Instead, as Hannah Arendt (1968) long ago argued, it reflects an aspiration to effect sovereign authority and duty. The absence of the state among Bel Air residents has been so lamented precisely

because it is a condition of possibility for making entitlement claims—that which makes it possible to tell, as Frantzy did, those who govern to "take responsibility."

With this in mind, the next chapter shifts the focus from critiques of statelessness to the social practices through which people in Bel Air envision themselves to be engaged in state making. One central concern and practice was, not surprisingly, the structuration of moral authority within the disordered field of power and geography of violence in Bel Air.

CHAPTER THREE

"Masters of the Concrete": Staging Moral Force within a Geography of Violence

By noon the air in the *perestil,* or *vodou* temple,[1] was so cloudy with dust that the light from outside hung like a white sheet in the doorway, never penetrating the dirt-floored room where ten or so musicians had gathered from Laloz Band to await their first outing for Carnival 2009. The perestil was nestled into the back edge of Bel Air's central peak, its doorway a big step down from a busy corridor tucked behind the neighborhood's main plaza, *Platon Bèlè*. I passed the time chatting with the musicians and my friend Lesley, who agreed to help take pictures that day. We were happy to rest inside the faded pink and green wooden walls, shielded from the sun of an unseasonably humid Sunday in January. Lesley, a forty-year old painter who identifies with a *rasin*, or "roots" style, had been wary that his long salt-and-pepper dreadlocks would be read as a sign of deviance in this neighborhood. But his slow gait, hushed voice, and unmatched respect for all quickly put everyone at ease. His indefatigable spirit, in fact, would soon prove a perfect match for our never-ending chase after the band.

It was a series of rapid knocks on the perestil's front wall around two o'clock that sent us scurrying to our feet. As we climbed out the tiny doorway and up to the dirt path, we found Mannie, the *oungan,* or *vodou* priest charged with spiritually leading the band, standing perfectly upright and with a look of grave intent, like a soldier ready for battle. He was pointing the long rod of a palm-leaf broom down the narrow dirt corridor and toward the plaza. We all followed

[1] The *perestil* is a square building, usually comprising wooden walls, dirt floors, and a tin or thatched roof supported by a central pedestal, the *poto mitan*. It is a ritual space where "dances" and other *vodou* ceremonies are held.

the cue and made our way to the *kalfou*, or crossroads, that delimited this band's zone. Once there, the musicians hung by the side of the road, filling up the tiny courtyard where they regularly gathered to play cards and socialize. On one side of the band's "home base" was a large mural painted in green and yellow, the band's colors. Framed by pictures of instruments and a typical roots musician, the mural announced, "*Quartier General Laloz Band: Ya degaje yo*. *Tout moun ka twip san vyolans.* (They'll Get By. Everyone can enjoy without violence)." Hung directly over the entrance to the corridor was this year's carnival "flag," a tricolor cotton banner spray-painted with the band's name in large, bubble letters, encircled by a few, catchy, upbeat slogans. One reminded fans, "You must be one who can 'chill' to enjoy!" These peaceful messages contradicted the graffiti that remained on several houses lining the base: the memorial portraits of the fallen "soldiers of Baghdad." As the musicians circled around a big rock said to contain spiritual force, Mannie prompted me to follow him to a small pile of wood in the center of the intersection.

He soon began the ceremony that he called the "heating up" (*chofe*) and "disembarking" (*debake*) of the band. On the concrete, he sprinkled cornmeal into lines that formed the *vèvè* for the *lwa*, or spirit, *Mèt Kalfou.* Asking the "Master of the Crossroads," as Mannie put it, "for passage," the *vèvè* depicted an elaborate three-pointed crossroads. The symbol reflected the contours of the base on which it rested, a three-way intersection that curved alongside the hilltop. When finished, he began taking strips of scrap wood from the pile next to me, placing them over the *vèvè.* He carefully arranged each piece in a crisscross pattern, like a log cabin, until he had built a pyramid with a tiny opening at the top. He slowly took a few steps away from the pile and then crouched down. He kept a firm stare ahead, his eyes focused on the tiny opening in the woodpile. He did not acknowledge the rings of energized residents around him. But neither did

they him. Their attention was far from the ceremony whose effects on the band they nonetheless anticipated: children guided large, steel hoops through the intersection; teenage boys on roller skates raced around the children; groups of young adults, dressed in bright tops, blue jeans, and shiny sneakers, exchanged gossip and flirtations; and women busily set up food to sell on the edges of the plaza.

Figure 5. Laloz mural. Author Photo, 2009.

Figure 6. Disembarking ceremony in the crossroads. Author Photo, 2009.

Figure 7. Band warming up in perestil. Author Photo, 2009

Figure 8. Woody and *houngan* looking at fire. Author Photo.

I busily chatted with acquaintances until, after fifteen minutes or so, Mannie again drew my attention toward him. He had begun to "sweep the crossroads." With exaggerated grace and flair, he brushed a broom across the street, paying special attention to the two intersections that marked off this band's base. The broom gingerly graced the ground, lifting into the air only dust and a light, wispy sound that sat on top of the chatter and commotion of the crowds. But every now and again Mannie made the broom "*work*," sweeping up a few wrappers and bottle tops. He put this debris in a red handkerchief before tying it to the broom. Sometime later, he explained to me that by sweeping this "the base," he is "cleaning up, taking force, and making [the] passage." "Gathering up the garbage," he claimed, "is to gather the force."[2]

Once he collected all the artifacts he needed, he led me to the woodpile, telling me to look inside, where I would find two hot peppers and a pile of sugar. He took a handful of *gwo sèl,* (big salt) from his pocket and placed it between the sugar and peppers. He whispered: "One makes the band hot, another makes them play sweetly, and the last brings good taste and honesty." He soon lit the wood on fire, using a book of wooden matches, scraps of paper, and pours of sugarcane liquor as kindling. He then poured small amounts of the *kleren* in the four cardinal directions, letting the drops stoke the fire even more. As he finished, the band began to play louder, dropping into a jumpy *raboday* rhythm around the fire, eventually circling it, counter-clockwise, with one musician following the other in a hurried jaunt.[3] The 4-4 beat was interspersed with loud shrieks of a metal whistle and the jolting cracks of a three-yard-long leather whip, expertly wielded at the hands of one of the band's "delegates" (*delega*), now in the performance role of its *colonel* (*kolonèl*). I ducked down, shielding my eyes, as several fireworks

[2] Personal conversation, January 24, 2009.

[3] As noted in the introduction, the *raboday* rhythm is played in a 4/4 meter and is characteristic of carnival. Even more than *maskawon*, it is associated with mardi gras bands like Laloz.

exploded in the dense crowd. Spiraling out from the fire, the musicians began to trace a figure eight of sorts, marching first to the nearest intersection to the left of the fire, then coming back to the fire, and then out to the other intersection to the right before returning to the fire yet again. As they circled around the fire for a final time, Woody, the president of the band, and Gregory, the vice president, hurriedly approached Lesley and me. Woody held a baton painted in the colors of the band in his right hand, crossing it diagonally over his body. His march and his serious gaze cut right through the festive air on the plaza, startling me. "It is now," he said, "that the 'battle' can begin. We heat up the army, and we show that it is us who is the *master of this concrete* (*mèt beton nan la*)." Soon the flag was handed to the *pòt drapo*, or "flag bearer," a young boy who charged ahead scouting the territory for friends and enemies while announcing the band's presence with brisk waves of a flag that far outsized his tiny frame.

As I stood captivated and more than a bit confused by all the "signifying practice" (Comaroff 1985) I had witnessed (and to which I will return in the following pages), Lesley appeared troubled, given his usually cool demeanor. Slapping the backs of his hands together, he seemed to express disappointment in what he had seen. I asked him if he was "in good shape" and had enough energy to begin the long run after the band. He nodded, but then told me, in a grim tone: "Sometimes I cannot tell if the *staff* (or male social cliques) in Bel Air want to make a *bann* or *baz*"—a band or an armed staff. This comment opened a long lecture, sustained during a brisk walk, on what I had often heard about the street bands in Bel Air. For Lesley, the boundaries between bands and violent staff (also called "hard lines" [*lin di*]) had become indistinct in the past years. For one, the geographical zone of the band's home compound corresponded with those delimiting the zones occupied by armed staff. But moreover, the bands were dependent on sponsorship and protection from "those people who kill people," as it was

often put to me. Rara and carnival street bands in Bel Air have long been integrated into patronage networks, but unlike the politicians or "notables" who openly sponsor them, *those people* signaled the covert and ominous leaders of armed staff. More recently, this sponsorship has been reflected in the violent "turf wars" between armed staff that often coincide with the militant competitions that bands wage through music, dance, mysticism, and the crowd during their street processions. Seven people were killed, for example, during a Rara procession in March 2007, when the affiliates of a band from a neighboring zone opened fire during a procession through Bel Air, presumably to avenge the recent death of a member of "their" armed staff.[4] During the 2008 Carnival season, from January to early March, four people died in gun violence linked to clashes between rival staff.[5] And in the season that was about to begin that day, another three people would be killed in Bel Air, punctuating what had been a relatively peaceful year.[6]

It is thus not surprising that Lesley was unsettled by the semblance of band-making and *baz*-making—by the band's display of force and territorial command and the area's ongoing demarcation into separate militant bases that encompass criminality, organizing, and political patronage. Lesley was not, moreover, alone in his feelings. In Bel Air, most band members, not to mention most residents, shared his discontent. Band members were constantly negotiating the challenges of depending on illicit sponsors, competing among an array of fractions, and surviving in a neighborhood plagued by insecurity. Promoting their own authority involved ritual

[4] I heard conflicting explanations of this incident. However, what is accepted is that a Rara group—intimately tied to an influential leader of an armed staff located in Delmas 2—acted as the cover for an armed attack against rival armed actors in central Bel Air.

[5] These figures were reported in the annual report of Viva Rio and are based on their meetings with MINUSTAH, PNH, CNDDR, and community leaders.

[6] Again, these figures were reported in the annual report of Viva Rio.

performances and ritualized presentations of self. These acts were always fraught with danger, not only as concerns the risk of failure inherent in ritual, but also in the consequences that result from positioning oneself as an authority. In this way, these acts reflected the hazards of performativity, by which, following Keane (1997), I mean the uncertain semiotic chain of mediation through which organized men in Bel Air translated desires for social respect and agency into public stagings of authority. As is perhaps already apparent, these stagings articulated a political project—though different meanings of the political were constantly colliding in it. As Woody once told his committee in a meeting, "There are some times when the army [the band] has to do a little politics (*fè ti politik*) if it wants make a good state." Whereas here "doing politics" suggested using—or drawing on those who use—violence, dishonesty, or manipulation to advance personal wealth or power; "making the state" brings to mind the construction of moral authority and localized zones of command. "Without respect for everyone in the zone, even for people who 'do politics over dead bodies' (*fè politik sou moun*)," he went on, "we can't become big men (*gwo nèg*) that are solid, what we call *masters of the concrete*."[7]

Building on last chapter's analysis of the relationship between discourses of statelessness in Bel Air and residents' inability to pinpoint an embodied authority behind fragmented "shows" of governance, this chapter traces the highly performative practices through which one youthful, middle-aged man in Bel Air—Woody—uses a street band to imagine and enact a model of statehood by establishing himself as a locus of respectable authority. In particular, I explore the ritual and organizational work that goes into presenting and making him an urban "big man," or what people in Bel Air call "master of the concrete." This name is, of course, multi-referential. Like *Mèt Kalfou*, it invokes an authority that presides over the charged, risky, and exciting zone

[7] Noted in meeting held on January 11, 2010.

of the *street,* and in particular, over an urban "base." It also echoes the many meanings that Lévi-Strauss (1966) bestowed on the *concreteness* of mythical thought. That is, mastering the concrete suggests the visible, tangible, and sensible performance of authority.

My focus on authority construction in relation to Haitian vernacular music and performance genres follows the work of scholars like Elizabeth McAlister (2002) and Gage Averill and David Yih (2003). Like Averill, Yih, and McAlister, I view these genres as key arenas in which Haitians' political imaginaries are modeled and produced. And in accord with their views, I am concerned with how the organizing principles of big-manism and militarism promote a hierarchical, *nodal* model of power in which a singular leader, or group of leaders, acts as the node in a vast network of *his* people, which is set against others. However, instead of focusing on the modularity of these genres to fit autocratic regimes, as do Averill and Yih, I hope to pick up on McAlister's intimation that they are sites where distinct guises of "democracy" find expression.[8] In particular, I shall examine the ritual and organizational presentations of the Laloz Band as attempts by Woody and his core affiliates to navigate the contradictory forces of violent patronage and respectful leadership that have equally marked Haiti's democratic transition. In a political world characterized by ambiguous power, on the one hand, and marginalization and insecurity, on the other, genres of militant street performance contribute to a political ethos based on localized, transparent, and embodied (in a word: *concrete*) manifestations of force and responsibility. In the actual production of these manifestations, however, the presidents of bands find themselves navigating the geographies of violence and graft that have long worked against

[8] Specifically, McAlister suggests that Rara groups are the forerunners of the popular organizations of the democratic movement (2002:136,157), and she also intimates that, at least in the city, they have become entangled in the "dark side" of popular politics, affiliating with and engaging in forms of political violence (2002:162). In aligning these trends, I aim to indicate that they have emerged not only simultaneously but have also dialectically reinforced each other, a phenomenon which has been noted in emergent democracies worldwide (Caldeira 2000; Chatterjee 2004; Comaroff and Comaroff 2006c; Koonings and Kruijt 2004).

their visions of a proper political world. In turn, they expend much effort to sanitize if not disguise this politicking so as to manage their reputations as respectful leaders in the zone.

The Base: The evolution of a sociopolitical formation

It is useful to begin with a brief genealogy of "the base," the key unit in the political geography of impoverished Port-au-Prince. Bel Air, like other popular quarters, is locally differentiated into several zones, each of which cluster together several households and neighborly associations. These zones tend to delimit a single block, or the space between the crossings of two major streets, and include those living in the concrete houses that line the street as well as the tin shacks that fill the "corridors" behind and between these houses. Residents (most of whom have roots in the countryside) are quick to point out that these zones are not synonymous with the traditional, rural living arrangements known as "*lakou*." Denoting a group of interrelated conjugal families that live together under the authority of a male head, the *lakou* implies collective agricultural labor and common spiritual rites (Larose 1975). The term *lakou*, literally "the yard," reflects the common space in which each conjugal family builds a house and where the whole familial unit gathers for meals, social events, and spiritual rites. While urban zones are neither replicas of the peasant *lakou,* nor of the few *lakou urbain*,[9] residents nonetheless indicated to me that these zones share many features with *lakou*. In particular, the street takes on the role of a common yard set against unfamiliar and dangerous "outside"

[9] Bel Air is famous for its *lakou* and its *lakou*-like households. In his 1975 study of living arrangements in Bel Air, Michel Laguerre (Laguerre 1976) identifies three types of "open" living arrangements that resemble *lakou*: the multi-household; a "religious brotherhood" consisting of individual families ritually connected to an *oungan*; and the *lakou*. He notes that this latter arrangement differs from rural, traditional *lakou* in that meals are not cooked communally and the members do not constitute an agricultural work unit. However, it shares many features with its rural antecedent: members live together in a common yard, tend to share meals, loan and borrow money collectively, share resources and good fortune (e.g., dreams indicating lucky lottery numbers), and engage in shared ritual work. For an analysis of a *lakou* in Bel Air, and perhaps the most famous *lakou* in the city, see Ulrick Jean's (1978) "L'entraide Sociale dans un Lakou Urbain "Lakou Blain."

territory. Most residents are extremely leery of other zones and only leave their zone for specific errands or obligations. They are not, however, reclusive. Spending too much time inside or alone can invite accusations of stinginess, animosity, or sorcery. Passing the day in the house is, therefore, reserved to periods of illness or, conversely, intense caretaking. Hence, it is also more common and accepted for women than men. No matter what time of day, most male residents, lacking steady jobs, can be found congregating on the street among neighbors. Huddled in small groups of five or six, they relax into dilapidated chairs, ledges, or makeshift seats and pass the day among friends conversing, playing dominos, or watching the street. Beyond this masculine camaraderie, both male and female residents have also highlighted to me how it is their neighbors, as opposed to only immediate family, on whom they count for daily support and assistance. Neighbors habitually share with each other the food or snacks they purchased from women (also neighbors) who vend in the street. They also regularly pool money for funerals, school tuition, and other exigencies, both formally (as small, collective lending groups called *sòl* or *sang*) and for special circumstances (by hosting a *kolèk*, or collection). New arrivals in the neighborhood find it hard to maintain a "closed" household for very long and tend to rapidly integrate into neighborly relations. Finally, nearly all forms of association to which people belong are borne of and oriented toward neighborly ties. The "staff" that I came to know, for example, were formed from neighborhood-based friendships. These staff almost always constituted the primordial ties out of which street bands (as well as other organizations) were founded. It is thus not surprising that residents would capture the unique character of such urban communities with a word that recalls the centered topography of the *lakou*: "the base."

While street bands consider an entire community to be their *base*, they also designate a meeting place within the zone as their specific home "base." These bases tend to consist of a

seating area, usually a small bench, as in the case of Laloz, but sometimes a larger plaza, where members meet to socialize and conduct their affairs. As is perhaps already apparent, the base of Laloz is entangled in a network of bases that represent the prominent "staff" within the zone. Next to Laloz's base is the base of the popular music group Rara M, which in line with their national and international popularity, is a relatively large plaza. On the other side is the tiny base of Alive*,* Daniel's youth organization that runs a children's carnival, soccer tournament, and nightly patrols. A bit down one side-street is the base of another youth organization called PiFò*,* which had recently organized a trash collection and was founded by members of Laloz. Just before the *perestil* is the drug market of the armed staff run by Bingo, the (former) *chimè* and gang leader I introduced previously. Across the crossroads is the base of the "foundation" with which he is affiliated, Fondasyon Gran Black (Great Black Foundation), which was often (and is still occasionally) charged with distributing food aid in the neighborhood. The foundation, which shares a name with the armed staff, is by now the only active contingency in the popular organization called Sektè Popilè Bèlè (Popular Sector of Bel Air), whose office is located on a neighboring street. In a more specific sense, then, "the base" has referred to this network of "bases." The diverse leaders within this networked base have been uniquely connected to wider political, economic, artistic, and criminal circuits and have held varying degrees of legitimacy and authority. They have often been in a position to either singularly or collectively "defend" the zone and its interests. The tendency for this nexus of leaders to become subsumed under the control of the criminal, violent faction explains the current usage of the term *base* as a stigmatized label for an armed staff, as well as its translation in much policy discourse as "*gang.*"[10]

[10] As early as 1969, Bernard Cohen (1969) pointed out that the tendency to use *gang* as a general category

The semantic complexity of *the base* is telling. It reveals two seemingly contradictory yet increasingly correlated trends of the democratic transition in Haiti, as in other societies emerging from either colonial or totalitarian regimes: the proliferation of grassroots civic associations, on the one hand, and the rise of localized armed actors, on the other (Beckett 2008).[11] The term *baz*, in fact, derives from its usage in the late 1980s by the Haitian variant of Latin American liberation theology, known as the *ti kominote legliz* (little community church) movement. In liberation theology, the *base* designated a small community of parishioners who met (often outside the church) to discuss biblical teachings alongside, and in relation to, a vision of social justice. This practice began to flourish among impoverished Haitians during the final years of the dictatorship. By the mid-1980s, the *base* represented a node in the network of parishes that were preaching and advancing a progressive, countrywide agenda for political and social change. After the fall of the dictatorship and under the leadership of priests like Fathers Jean Bertrand Aristide and Jean Marie Vincent, these bases launched the grassroots democratic movement. They began to organize openly, staking out a public presence as various forms of localized popular organizations (*òganizasyon popilè*)—as, for example, *gwoupman peyizan* (peasant groupings) in the countryside and *komite katye* (block committees) in the city. Though initially marginalized by the declining Duvalier dictatorship, these organizations eventually united under

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has long oversimplified the complexity of groupings to which it refers. This is even more problematic in Haiti. The term *gang* carries with it a host of assumptions and characteristics specific to the North American context, which tend to obscure rather than illuminate the dynamic groupings at work in places like Bel Air (Muggah and Moestue 2009). As I have shown, young men in Bel Air frequently identify with informal groups, *staff*, and these groups are often connected to a broader domain of the "base." While these groupings may, and have, come to resemble "gangs," labeling all groupings gangs locks young men into a category incapable of grasping the diverse, changing, and often positive nature of their association and influence in the neighborhood.

[11] The convergence of armed actors and civil society organizations has been explored in many parts of the world, and I cannot do justice to this literature in a footnote. My own analysis is indebted to the analysis of Greg Beckett, and like his, is inspired by the writings of Koonings and Kruijit (2004), Comaroff and Comaroff (2006d), Mbembé (2001), Chatterjee (2004).

the leadership of Aristide in 1990. They constituted the popular "base" that elected him President in 1991, with overwhelming loyalty, and again in 2001, with compromised support.

The notion of *the base*, as used in Bel Air today, reflects this legacy, maintaining an association with both the democratic movement and the pro-Aristide sector. Yet it also reflects the forms of political and violent patronage used by Aristide and others to establish localized areas of support and control in poor neighborhoods with a history of activism. Various forms of handouts, including governmental jobs, payments, and even weapons, were channeled through the organized groups in urban slum areas. This patronage was not organized through a particular associational form, but rather, as Bel Air residents say, "with each crossroads." In other words, favors were channeled through the diverse groupings coalescing in specific "bases." As a political tactic, or perhaps an expected (if unintended) consequence of this patronage, the different factions of each base became consolidated. On the one hand, staff like Bingo's, which were involved in drug dealing and kidnapping, worked under the cover of social service organizations. As noted, these organizations were often charged with distributing food rations, school scholarships, or other forms of aid in the neighborhood. On the other hand, those involved in youth organizations and street bands had to affiliate with these armed, criminal gangs, as a source of protection, sponsorship, and political ties. With the intensified armament of the base during the later part of Aristide's second term, the various, nonviolent groups at a base became virtually indistinguishable from the armed factions. The "base" had effectively become a violent gang, a formation of several groups dominated by the armed staff.

When in February 2004 Aristide was ousted from government for a second time, the bases in Bel Air and other slums initially united in opposition to the *coup* and the interim government that was installed. Following the violent suppression of a protest held on September

30, the anniversary of the first *coup* against Aristide, they waged the violent standoff against peacekeepers and police that became known as "Baghdad." But if it began as a *war* against a clearly defined enemy, the violence soon morphed into a disjointed battle for territorial control among different bases in and beyond Bel Air. The extreme levels of disjointed violence and pervasive insecurity forced nearly forty percent of residents, including most of the young men involved in organized groups,[12] to flee to relatives' households elsewhere in Port-au-Prince or the countryside (Fernandez and Nascimento 2007).

By 2006, however, the majority of those who fled Bel Air had returned. The socially engaged men among them came with a new vision for the neighborhood and the role of the base. The area's street bands were soon reconstituted as "organizations," and alongside them a series of youth organizations were founded with inspirational, bureaucratic names like "Organization of Progressive Youth of Bel Air," which Woody founded in 2007. These titles indicated an engagement in social affairs as well as a desire to model the civil society discourses of governmental agencies and NGOs. As leaders of bands/organizations, men in Bel Air sought to position themselves as key brokers for the political attention and aid being focused on pacifying and rehabilitating Bel Air after the conflict.

Most notably, in 2006, the Brazilian NGO Viva Rio—with funding from the aid agencies of Brazil, Norway, and Canada, as well as MINUSTAH and UNDP—launched a comprehensive stabilization program in Bel Air. Using an integrated approach to security and development, Viva Rio intervened in the problem areas of violence, water shortage, and waste and sanitation. The program was called "Honor and Respect for Bel Air," a name that drew on the customary

[12] In my interviews with fifty organized groups, including cultural and social organizations, I noted that more than sixty percent of young men affiliated with a *staff* or *base* left Bel Air during the height of the violence, from October, 2004 to spring 2005.

salutations exchanged when visiting Haitian households (the guest says, "*onè*," and the host responds, "*respè*").[13] The structure of bases in Bel Air formed the organizational model of the program, and the cornerstone project, called "*Tambou Lapè*," or the peace drum, was centered on pacifying the nexus of street bands, armed cliques, and organizations in what was identified as the fourteen most hostile bases in Bel Air and its surrounding environs. The project, which I briefly described in the last chapter, centered on the signing of peace accords in May 2007 and again in May 2008 with former gang leaders (now named "community leaders") and the leadership of Viva Rio, MINUSTAH, and the National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (CNDDR).[14] In these accords, the "community leaders" agreed to promote nonviolence in the neighborhood by disarming and also reporting violence in monthly meetings with the national police, Viva Rio, and MINUSTAH (including the Brazilian battalion and central staff).[15] Their participation was rewarded with personal incentives, like a motorcycle or computer, and also communitarian awards. If no killings occurred for a month or two, the base was granted three scholarships for school children and professional school classes for an affiliate of a Rara group[16]—all selected by lottery. In addition, Viva Rio would host a bimonthly public concert in alternating zones, showcasing neighborhood musical groups

[13] Residents interpreted the name of this program in various ways. Many saw it as a way of reframing the "foreign" guest as a respectful visitor and as one capable of bestowing honor on the neighborhood. Others felt the name reflected that the visit from the NGO would be of a temporary and provisional nature, like that of a guest.

[14] This project was pursued in tandem with the UNDP's Community Violence Reduction Program, which likewise relied on local leaders to report violence, mediate conflict, and promote resolutions at public forums. However, these leaders, called "Focal Points" (*pwen fokal*), were chosen from local *notab*, such as business, church, or educational authorities.

[15] For a more detailed account of the terms of the peace accords see Bercovitch (2007).

[16] While this lottery was organized around Rara groups, the musicians tended to play in both the Rara group and a local Mardi Gras group. Moreover, the scholarships were, at times, transferred to someone affiliated with the Rara, rather than a participating musician.

(including the genres of Rara, carnival, rap, roots, and "jazz") as well as samba and *capoeira* demonstrations by youth enrolled in Viva Rio's classes.

While I do not wish to criticize this program—indeed I can think of several whom it helped to abandon a life based on violent crime—it was clear from my interactions with male youth in Bel Air that the emphasis on reintegrating former "bandits" as local leaders mainly tended to reinforce the leadership of the armed staff at the base. In addition to feeling penalized for having refrained from violence, people like Woody felt obliged to continue to negotiate partnerships with those tied to violence and the dark side of politics. I say *continue* because this obligation, to be sure, reflected a longer history. Without touching on the patronage of Duvalier, the past two decades have been filled with band presidents who engage in illegal or violent activity and also with leaders of armed staff who have exploited the competitive, territorial ethos of street bands. Further, even in lieu of such direct relationships, band members have usually accepted and appreciated the acts of sponsorship provided by armed staff. Especially following the violence of 2004, street bands and other youth organizations were key sites for debt forgiveness (Mauss 1954). Sponsorship could help fashion respectable persons and relationships not only by redeeming past offenses but also transforming illicit profits into "legitimate" sources of activity and pleasure for the zone. Moreover, these ties were crucial sources of protection, as the last chapter illustrated. Yet, despite such utility, Woody, like most band presidents, viewed his relations with "bandits" as a stigmatized and often dangerous form of politicking that was required of him under conditions of scarcity and insecurity. These ties were generally kept secret, neither recognized through customary salutes during street parades nor through a high post on the band's organizing committee. Hence, while gang violence and bands' militant competitions could reinforce each other, the ethos of gang violence was often what was being contested

through bands' efforts to perform another kind of force in the zone. "Making a 'base' without *baz"* (*fè yon baz san baz*) was how Woody aptly characterized the project. It revolved around presenting the band's leadership, and principally him, the president, as possessing spiritual and moral rather than armed force.

Making another kind of big man: Spiritual force

One day in late May, 2009, Woody appeared to answer Lesley's question: Does the *staff* want to make a *bann* or *baz*? "You can heat the zone in two ways," Woody began. "There are two weapons. Both are hot. Both make the force. But they are not same."[17] With these words, he indicated that he did not fear the armed staff in the zone who possessed firearms because he controlled another set of tools to heat things up and build force. He was referring to what may be called his *spiritual* force*,* or the control of a magical realm of warfare, as well as to his *moral* force, or the possession of an extra-familial social network, alternatively called "my people" (*moun pa m*) or "my staff" (*staff pa m*). Both kinds of force were not without social threat and danger. Like armed violence, they contributed to marking his collective, the base, and the entire zone as militantly "hot." Yet Woody, like other presidents, often stressed that the heat of a *"real*" band was qualitatively different from gang violence. Not only did it depend on spiritual weaponry, or "magic," rather than firearms, but it also attached this weaponry to the display of the band's social power. That is, the force of magic was effective to the degree that it revealed the strength of the group *in performance*. Also of significance is that this magic was oriented toward the defense of the localized yet expansive social unit that Woody headed. Such defense is, to be sure, ethically complex. "Working with magic" concerns checking or controlling others,

[17] Personal conversation, May 25, 2009.

and for this reason, it is morally ambiguous (Brown 2003). How it is interpreted largely depends on perspective, on *whom* it is empowering. For Woody, ritual work was a core component of his state-like project to command territory and consolidate a political community in opposition to other communities. At its core, this "work" involved manufacturing force by heating up matter, persons, and collectivities.

Heat is at the center of *vodou* ritualizing (Brown 1991; McAlister 2002). Indeed, the hot-cold dichotomy is a defining feature of an encompassing cosmology.[18] Persons and moods, illnesses and treatments, places and action, spirits and rites can all be ordered along an axis of hot and cold. Heat signals that which is aggressive, energized, mobile, outgoing, empowered, militant, and hostile; whereas coldness signals that which is passive, weak, blocked, closed, discouraged, fragile, and reserved. Furthermore, the act of heating defines the transformative process at the center of the ritual process; it is what transforms the everyday into the spectacular and enables people and situations to shift.[19] Heating things up emboldens force, loosens tensions, and clears obstacles in the path, allowing social change to occur (Brown 1991). The disembarking ceremony that opened this chapter served to both "heat up" the group for its outing and to categorize this outing and the group as "hot" (*cho*) within a social and spiritual cosmology.

Echoing Rara, the genre from which carnival street bands take their inspiration, the disembarking rite orchestrated by Mannie fell within what those in the city designated as the "hot" or "militant" branch of *vodou* cosmology. Commonly called *petwo*, this branch is opposed

[18] This cosmology has been reported in work on Haitian healing and medicine (Farmer 1992; Weiss 1971), diet and nutrition (Alvarez and Murray 1981), and ritual practice (Brown 1991; Deren 1953).

[19] Following the anthropology of Victor Turner, performance theorist Richard Schechner (1985) has argued that ritual, like all performance, follows a multi-tiered sequence, the crucial stages of which include the triplet of warm-up, performance, and cool-down. The choice of words is telling. I believe it reflects the tendency, shared by many cultures, to categorize intensified, intentional action—such as performance—as "hot," and to situate "heat" as the agent capable of activating the spectacular.

to the "cool" and "calm" *rada* branch. The vast symbolic repertoire of *petwo* rites reflects a "science of the concrete," making this heat, as Lévi-Strauss (1966) put it, "sensible in sensible terms." In the disembarking ceremony, for example, the hot peppers and fire embodied the heat they employed to summon into being. The fireworks, bullwhip, and whistle called to mind the violence and militancy that they sought to provoke. And the jumpy drumbeat echoed the rhythm of a racing heart and hurried jaunt, which ensured we were soaked with sweat in seconds.

The spirit most centrally invoked in the disembarking ceremony and throughout the procession of Laloz as well as other bands in Bel Air[20] is that of *Mèt Kalfou*. A *petwo* spirit, *Mèt Kalfou* is not identified by or personified through physical traits or visual iconography. One who is possessed by *Kalfou* does not put on special attire and the spirit is not connected to an image of a Catholic saint, as are many spirits. *Kalfou*'s presence is felt through his *vèvè* of the cross/crossroads and his militant, forceful, and often enraged persona. He is, however, made most palpable through the presence of crossroads. He presides over passageways—from the household threshold to intersections with foreign territory—and also the conjuncture of worlds. The first spirit to be saluted in *petwo* rites, he marks the transformation from everyday life to the charged scene of ritual. He also inhabits the boundary before the cemetery, and therefore, the transition from life to death (McAlister 2002). Like all of these crossroads, he emulates the mastery and command of the inside and familiar, as well as the risk, change, and judgment of the outside or foreign. In asking for his passage, Woody, through Mannie, was asking for his

[20] In my observations of Rara and Mardi Gras bands in Bel Air, I have found that *Mèt Kalfou* is the most commonly invoked spirit in the disembarking rites and throughout the procession. However, as McAlister (2002) has reported, some Rara bands also have other *petwo* spirits walk with them, including *Ti-Jean Petwo* and *Simbi Makaya*. It is also the case that the playful, sexual, and comical "feeling" of carnival and Rara, as well as the political commentary invoked in these spaces, captures the spirit of *Gede*. He is a trickster spirit, which straddles both *rada* and *petwo* rites in his embrace of the forces of life: sexuality and death. One prominent mardi gras band in Port-au-Prince walked with and under the name of Gran Brigit, the wife of *Gede*.

stewardship and protection in navigating strange territory. And he was also asking for the force to secure and control the home compound. Employing the idiom of statecraft, which is a common trope for organizing the spirits, Woody referred to the role of *Mèt Kalfou* in the band, as the "Minister of Interior."[21]

Bands are so concerned with mastering the crossroads because crossroads are the locales in which they engage in campaigns of spiritual and musical warfare. A central feature of the ritual work performed by Mannie was the "sweeping" of the crossroads and the collection of the spiritual force contained in the "garbage." As I learned, the disembarking ceremony was principally concerned with ensuring the performative success of the band by not only "charging" them with fiery force but also protecting them from attacks from other bands. Beyond *Mèt Kalfou*, this protection was also provided by ritually cleansing the home base. Mannie's ceremonial sweeping was intended to enervate by absorbing the spiritual energy contained in mystical "traps" (*pyèj*) set at the crossroads.[22] As Woody once explained, "You have to clean up the base before you go out. It shows other things are no longer in the zone and that we are ready. You must look if there are *pyèj*. Take away everything that has been left. When you clear away the traps, you are ready."[23] The traps to which he referred here involved the spiritually charged "poison" or "powders" left at the crossroads by other groups, and also the negative aura attached

[21] Michael Laguerre (1989), among others (McAlister 2002; Yih 1985), have demonstrated how the *lwa* are often emplaced in a "politico-military structure that operates on a spiritual and human level" (quoted in McAlister 2002:139). Within this structure, the *lwa* not only take on militaristic and defensive roles; they are also charged with functions in relation to a state bureaucracy, so that, for example, *Azaka*, the spirit associated with cultivation, is positioned as a Minister of Agriculture.

[22] In one of the only accounts of ritual sweeping in Haiti, McAlister (2002:101-102) compares the practice to the *palo* rites in Afro-Cuban spirituality. Quoting David Brown (1989), she notes how the practitioners defend and control territory through a process of taking and leaving matter that has (or will become) charged with spiritual force contained in a ritual vessel, the *prenda*. This vessel harnesses the spirit of a recently dead person, which accounts for its force-giving properties (see also Palmié 2002:185).

[23] Personal conversation, January 10, 2010.

to the debris of strangers who have passed through the zone. The act of sweeping up these traps is often framed as a defensive move aimed at thwarting the *konplo*, or conspiracies, which others have mounted against the group. However, it also concerns manufacturing force. Beyond incorporating the power contained in the traps, sweeping is meant to collect and charge inert matter with spiritual power. The "garbage" that was collected by street bands played a key role in actively securing the base. Once seized and activated by spiritual force, it served as a "guard" (*gad*) capable of watching out for the band and the base, but also instilling in the band the power of the home crossroads. In a vivid excerpt from her research on Rara, McAlister (2002:100) reports how an *oungan* leading a Rara—in Bel Air no less—swept up garbage on the procession route in order to produce a controlling witness: "the broom chases away bad spirits, and just the same way, it adopts bad spirits. The garbage—that's a witness. That is to say, when we gather up the garbage in the crossroads, the crossroads can do work for us forever." Another *oungan* who was responsible for disembarking both a Rara and carnival street band in Bel Air echoed this statement when I asked him about ceremonial sweeping. "I carry the garbage on me when the band goes out," he said, "because it can hold on to the force of the primary crossroads."[24]

The disembarking rite is, in many ways, oriented toward the transformation of individuals engaged in a collective project as at once vulnerable and powerful, attacked and resistant. "The structure of performance," writes Keane (1997:27), "seems to induce participants to imagine a number of alternatives and risks, one effect of which is to portray social interaction as a fundamentally risk-laden undertaking and a great achievement." In contrast to the game-ritual divide famously posed by Lévi-Strauss (1966), Keane suggests, and I agree, that the predictability of ritual is not necessarily desirable. This is especially clear in rituals (like the

[24] Personal conversation, July 22, 2011.

disembarking rite) that are embedded in a competition premised on the embodiment of force. The dramatization of uncertainty—of risks and risk-taking—displayed in Laloz's acts of mystical aggression involved the valorization of this group's and this leader's performative and political agency. Further, Woody's statements about the centrality of defense in aggression, suggests that the aspiration to demonstrate risk-competent agency was linked to a larger project of defining a moral community set against abusive, corrupt others. As I will show in the next section, in many ways Woody's claim to moral authority was most apparent when his force and social reach were challenged in competitive performance.

Making another kind of big man: Moral force

> "Nothing can be made without two. And when you make one, you make two. The world is organized into two. Every big power is in a conflict with another. In football, you'll see Brazil and Argentina. With the (economic) crisis, now they say it's the U.S. against China. You don't see that, See-see [my nickname]?" I agreed. "Maybe Haiti's problem is it fights nothing. Without a "polemik," who will run behind you? You'll sound off without an army. When we had an enemy—oh oh!—behold a people that has force."
>
> Woody, 2010

The everyday power struggles of poor people in Haiti reflect an aspiration for leadership and community. This aspiration, however, often breeds competition and divisiveness. The two most common themes explored in the proverbs that pepper everyday political talk as well as the rhetoric of social movements concern the need for unity and the problem of divisiveness. Cries for hands, heads, and shoulders together reverberate with those lamenting uncontrollable fragmentation: *tout moun vle chèf* (everyone wants to be a leader or chief) and—echoing characterizations of "crab antics" (Wilson 1973) shared throughout the Afro-Atlantic—*nou*

tankou krab nan boukit (we're like crabs in a bucket).[25] Almost all new groupings in Bel Air are traceable to the rising reputation or power of a subordinate member or clique, though this conflict usually finds expression in a battle over resources or a personal feud. Against this maelstrom of jealousy, antagonism, and factionalism, the dyadic rivalry that Woody vividly captured emerges as a valorized form of political organization. The absence of a "polemik," as he often reminded me, explained both the pitfalls of totalitarianism and multiparty democracy in national politics as well as how these dynamics played out locally. In terms of the street politics of bands, rivalry was what rallied "the army" because it placed the band in the frame of a consequential dialogue between two parties. The rivalry, in other words, best mobilized a politics of the base, allowing both territorially defined parties to construct a degree of influence through their followers, and in turn, provided followers with the privileges that come with being linked to powerful people. Insofar as the excitement of the rivalry helped amass more "people for him," it was what enabled band presidents like Woody to cultivate the persona of a "big man." The ritualized, multimodal performance of alliance and rivalry among street bands reflected a political imaginary premised on a nodal model of power, where politicking entailed affiliating with local men of influence who were linked with more powerful people, all the way to the head of state or the leader of the opposition (Averill 1997:9).

While this is true of all performance and musical genres in Haiti, street bands provide its most graphic expression. The performance event, called the *sòti*, or the "outing," of bands echoes an infantry marching in honor and defense of a president and his committee. Further, the entire outing is oriented around the polemical rivalry between two competing bands (and their

[25] It has been commonplace in much anthropological scholarship on Haiti to use proverbs to express the overarching ethos, or guiding principles, of Haitian social life. Several have, in fact, entitled dissertations and books. In particular, I am indebted to the documenting and analysis of proverbs provided by Gage Averill (1997) and Karen Richman (1990).

leadership) in which the objective is to "crash" (*kraze*) the other band while "raising" (*leve*) yours. These rivalries are organized territorially, with the most intense battle occurring between bands of neighboring zones. Laloz Band has long been in a polemic with the group Samba The Best,[26] which is located a block away, at the foot of the mountain on which Laloz is based—"between the same crossroads but on different streets," as Woody put it. Waged through mystical warfare but also through several, interrelated aspects of performance, the competitions between these bands revealed a battle over moral authority as much as musical prowess.

Great pleasure was taken in outright boasting about the band.[27] In Bel Air (and I suspect elsewhere), these boasts often centered on a band's ability to produce "feeling," an existential quality set against the "misery" and "insecurity" in which many feel entrapped. The term *feeling*, as I will explore in chapter five, denotes moments of joy in shared pleasure. It is linked to eroticism and drunkenness, but cannot be reduced to either, since it is best expressed among many. *Feeling* is made manifest through the rhythm and intensity of the beat; the cleverness, complexity, and wit of songs; and the vibrancy, loudness, and excitement of the atmosphere. Feeling is evident, however, not in the presence of these aspects alone, but in their ability to compel bodily expression, to inspire people to "enter the band" and "dance," "holding them" all the way through the procession. In 2008, the musicians and fans of Laloz Band followed their main carnival song by bragging:

[26] I have maintained the unique spelling of this band's name, which transliterates the Creole world *Sanba*, which means songwriter, as Samba.

[27] For an analysis of boasting in Rara songs see McAlister (2002:145-148).

Lay Laloz on the concrete.	Lage Laloz sou beton
So we can dance!	Pou nou ka danse
If we are not there	Si nou pa la
How would I be able to dance?	Koman m ta fè danse
It's Laloz I like a lot.	Se Laloz m renmen
In Laloz there's feeling.	Nan Laloz gen filing

Echoing this statement, Samba in 2009 concluded their song with a similar boast, jokingly referring to the sexual appeal of others:

There's a feeling.	Gen yon filing.
In Samba there's feeling.	Nan Samba gen filing.
If you don't smell good don't enter.	Si w pa santi bon pa antre
If you aren't "hip" don't enter.	Si w pa jenjan pa rantre
We must call Samba.	Fò nou rele Samba.
We must cry Samba.	Fò nou kriye Samba.
We must sing Samba.	Fò nou chante Samba.

Beyond these boasts, the musicians and fanatics of rival bands also enjoyed the exchange of caustic aspersions encoded in song—called "point songs" (*chante pwen*). Common to both spiritual and sacred contexts, point songs use verbal art to pointedly but indirectly narrate conflictive situations between persons, spirits, and collectivities.[28] In *vodou* songs as well as in the carnival songs of street bands, "the point" pierces though layers of polyvalent meaning to evoke a compact reading of a complex situation. The sought-after reading is often a moral indictment, an accusation of wrongdoing. The exchanges between Laloz and Samba, for example, centered on charges of favoritism, dishonesty, and conspiracy—especially as concerns relations with armed staff. These accusations were framed in phrasings capable of referring at once to the rival band mired in illicit patronage and the larger, "corrupt" political field of the country. In this way, the inter-group accusations could parade as general political denunciations lacking any specific target. In 2008 and 2009, Woody was intent on finding language to point out that

[28] *Pwen* have been the subject of many anthropologists' work. While I further develop the idea of "points" and "point songs" in chapter four, please also see the work of Karen Richman (2005), Karen McCarthy Brown (1976; 1991), Elizabeth McAlister (2002), and Gage Averill (1997).

Samba's greater wealth (as evidenced, among other things, by elaborate costumes and a bigger meeting place) was due to their entanglement in gang violence. This was, to an extent, public knowledge, as one of Samba's committee members had been a key figure in "Baghdad" and was now a "community leader" with Viva Rio. In 2008, Laloz included the following stanza in their carnival song:

The people are not in a game with them.	Pèp la pa nan betiz avèk yo
Laloz Band is not in cahoots this year…	Laloz Band pa nan tete lang[29] ane sa a
This people is not joking with them	Pèp sa pa nan betiz avèk yo

In 2009, they followed up on this point, with the lines:

If you take a glance	Si ou voye je nou gade
Behind you'll see the force they use	Dèyè n a va wè fòs yo itilize
So their personal interests can rise	Pou pwòp entere pèsonèl yo ka ogmante
They think we won't discover the secret [repeats]	Yo panse nou pa t ap dekouvri sekre a

Both of these messages could be read as denouncing the illicit profits garnered by powerful agents and agencies through conspiracies and plots against the people. Yet they also spoke to the local accumulation of wealth through gang violence. Samba reportedly "picked up this point" and returned the attack on its compulsory stop before the base of Laloz. Fondly reflecting on their worthy "war in music," as opposed to arms, Woody told me that when Samba passed by, they "sent" their point into an empty street (since all were behind the band). Nonetheless, they got word of the message: "Look at the directors (*dirijan*, which is the deferential way to address band leaders) in this country! When you're with us you are good friends. When you are on the concrete you say we smell like Clorox. Well yes, if you don't smell good, you can't enter Samba."[30] Here Samba appropriated the language used in 2008 to denounce the high food prices, which had provoked a countrywide famine so intense that it was compared to ingesting Clorox

[29] Literally *tete lang* means "suck tongues," and refers to open-mouthed kissing. It is, as such, a vulgar accusation of corruption.

[30] Reported by Woody in personal conversation, February 19, 2009, and confirmed by neighbors.

bleach. In this pun, they reclaimed the accusation by Laloz that they were embroiled in *Clorox* (i.e., illicit profits) by shifting the meaning of *Clorox* to refer to cleanliness.

Beyond these verbal contests, the groups also competed at the level of expression. Linked to the ritual work of the disembarking ceremony, they competed in their ability to play with the force to saturate the soundscape, rally the biggest crowd, and ignite the most feeling by inciting collective movement and dance. There was a formal competition among bands during the fourth week of Carnival in which the Carnival Committee selected the top fifteen bands to perform for the final three days of Carnival. Yet it was evidence of the shifting patronage networks that the rivalry between bands was most heightened not at this selection but rather, as people say, "at the crossroads." The coveted climax, in other words, was the crossing of two rival bands in the street. The official parade route of Laloz in 2009 listed four stops, three of which were to sing an *ochan,* or honorary salute, to two sponsors (a restaurant and the federation of bands) and an affiliation (the base of PiFò). The fourth was the base of Samba. While it was possible—and at times anticipated—for a confrontation to occur at this stop, this was not the case in my outings with Laloz. Instead, when they did stop before the more elaborate base of Samba, they offered an *ochan* to those who remained, acknowledging their respectful competition. The heated confrontation occurred when the bands crossed during the procession.

When any two bands, but especially rival bands, "cross" or "pass" each other, the complete arsenal of weapons is let loose. It can quickly turn the playful, pleasurable "feeling" of the outing into an aggressive and "deadly serious" (McAlister 2002:152) contest of territory. I only witnessed one such crossing between Laloz and Samba. Early in the outing on January 18, 2009, Laloz was attempting to descend the main plaza in Bel Air at the same time that Samba was attempting to mount it. We could already hear a band approaching when the flag bearer, who

runs a crossroad ahead, scouted the competition and reported back, through another young boy, that it was Samba that was mounting. The band delegate and acting "colonel" of the band, snapped the whip and forcefully screeched his whistle. He turned around once, before continuing to march, whistling and snapping the whip without interruption. Woody, who had been walking ahead of musicians, singers, and dancers with other members of the band's committee, circled behind the band. Seeing Lesley and I, he told us to exit the street and watch from inside a house. He presumably feared that the scene might escalate to an actual battle. He and others had long warned me that such an encounter could provoke people to throw rocks, instigate a collective *gagann* or shoving match,[31] or engage in more destructive violence. With less than ten feet separating the bands, the whistle sounded and both jumped into playing the standard *raboday* rhythm as loud as seemed possible. With drums pounding and trumpets blaring, fanatics fervently struck their *tcha-tchas* and joined the dancers and musicians in stomping their feet. Many spectators joined in on the noisemaking, sending out a *bat tenèb*, or blanket of sound, in support of Laloz. Two teenagers struck a metal, kindling tool against the iron bars of the balcony where I stood, and the street-side food venders clanked spoons against their aluminum pots. It was only a few minutes before it was clear that Laloz had won this acoustic battle. To mark their win, they switched the beat to an *ochan,* again signaling appreciation for the rival band. Laloz then proceeded to pass Samba, hurrying along the right side of the street with the chant, *Bay bann laloz pase*, "Let Laloz band pass." This respectful gesture, however, was quickly reversed. As Woody, Lesley, and I approached the empty road beyond, we spotted a jeep and two motorcycles that had been carrying the core leadership of Samba. It was not uncommon for the

[31] The practice of *gangann* is well-established at Carnival. It consists of two men attempting to knock one another over by hitting their chests together. McAlister (2002:155) notes that this practice can escalate to *wozèt*, or strangling. I have seen it escalate on more than one occasion to outright brawling. Like all violence at Carnival, these fights usually arise from preexisting social conflicts and tensions.

presidents of bands to seek protection by trailing the procession or even to take cover from "the battle," as Woody had just done. But this display of wealth and protection was unusual and it provoked suspicion. Motorcycles, recall, had been a reward for reintegration, and the jeep—a rare commodity in this neighborhood—indicated ties to illicit wealth earned from violent, criminal activities. This was precisely how Woody read the scene. Turning it around to his advantage, he told Gregory, his vice president, and Lesley and me, "You don't see how the force of the people blocks traffic, crashes evil. How do we make masters of the concrete? We put a 'beautiful band' outside, with all our force, and give everyone feeling."[32]

It is tempting to read these comments as evidence of Woody's social distance from the entrenched geography of violence, criminality, and political patronage in Bel Air. But his shaming of others' reliance on "bandits" and "disorder" for force in fact suggests his own entanglement in this geography. Tales of crashing evil pointed not to a definitive break from illicit personages or means as much as the management of a reputation as a "big man" amid widespread anxieties over the reliability and trustworthiness of men with power in Bel Air. What was at stake in the competition with Samba was his reputation as someone capable of publicly performing a degree of militant agency *and* moral support, which was not reducible to, even if dependent on, the wealth or protection of armed actors. At many points Woody, like others, referred to his project as an effort to enact a model of statehood based on the public display of the people as an army. As we will see in the next section, this project was capable of incorporating the support of illicit sponsorship. Still, the emphasis remained on the transformation of this sponsorship into a means for publicly displaying an army capable of defending the base, through staunch militancy, popular support, and also respectful diplomacy.

[32] As noted in my field notes: *"Ou pa t wè jan fòs pèp la bloke machine, kraze mechanste, koman nou fè mèt beton? Nou mete bèl bann deyo, ak tout fòs nou,... bay tout moun filing."*

Peaceful armies and the good state

Few arenas figure more centrally or more complexly in Haitians' imaginaries of the state than the army. And few areas of Haiti bear as problematic a relationship with militarism as Bel Air: a maroon colony in colonial times; a central outpost of the occupying U.S. marines from 1914-34; the heart of a violent campaign that nearly thwarted Duvalier's election in 1957; a base of the militant, pro-Aristide sector since the 90s; a target of several peacekeeping missions; and a key node in the capital's network of armed, criminal gangs. Bel Air has both embraced militarism as a key modality of defense and contested militant force as a corrupt, ineffective form of politics. The salience of the former can be traced to the revolutionary war, which put an end to both slavery and colonialism in Haiti. In the wake of the war, the army not only became the core institution of the state, but also its symbolic repertoire—from the titles and dress of the rank and file to the musical and performance codes of the infantry. It also provided the cultural "script" for performing moral and political community. Today's deep skepticism surrounding militant force results from the tendency of the army to undermine the interests and values of "the people." Such torsion is certainly evidenced by the long history of military (or militarized) *coups d'état*, from 1806 to 1991. But, as Trouillot notes, it is most boldly apparent in the fact that the *Garde,* the army built by the U.S. marines in the 1930s, had until its disbandment by Aristide and the UN in 1995 "never fought anyone *but* Haitians" (Trouillot 1990:106). The same, however, can also be said of the current military force in Haiti, the UN peacekeepers. Despite, or perhaps because of this fraught history, the idea of the army perseveres among Bel Air residents as an essential (and thus longed for) element of statehood, and militancy is a key genre for enacting political authority, control, and community.

For street bands, an ethos of militarism pervades all aspects of the performance scene (Averill and Yih 2003; McAlister 2002). As we have seen, an army at war is invoked not only in the mystical aggression of the disembarking rites, but also in the performative grammar of the street processions, which echo the music, gestures, and roles of a marching infantry. The other face of this aggression, as we have also seen, is the use of the army to engage in diplomacy. What I would now like to explore is how the institution of the army, especially as it relates to imaginaries of the state, is present in the organizational composition and presentation of bands' core leadership as "defenders" of the people in the zone.

The emphasis on organizing the committee as a state-like hierarchy that possesses the duties and responsibilities of an army was made clear to me in my first official meeting with Woody and Laloz Band. It was October 7, 2008, a couple of months before the outing that began this chapter and a month after we had met. Woody began our meeting, which was held in the cool of the *perestil*, by providing the founding date of the band, December 5, 1997, and the address, a corner store near their base. He then listed the eleven members of the organizing committee, all of whom had been elected (or "selected") through the annual "discussion" held in December, prior to carnival season. The names and rank of the members coincided with the hierarchical structure of a sovereign state. Modeling a republican bureaucracy,[33] the posts included:

Presidan	President
Premye Minis	Prime Minister
Sekretè Jeneryal	General Secretary
Sekretè Adjwen	Assistant Secretary
Kòdinatè	Coordinator
De Deliga	Two Delegates
Pòt Pawòl	Press Secretary

[33] See McAlister (2002) for a comparison of bureaucratic titles and organizational structures used in Rara more generally.

Trèsorye	Treasurer
Trèsorye Adjwen	Assistant Treasurer
Konseye	Adviser
Kèk Mamb	Some Members
Lame	Army (all, plus musicians, dancers, fans)

When he finished listing the names and titles, he offered insight into the political community symbolized in this hierarchy. "Every member," he said, "is part of a kind of army. With the musicians and fans we are a big army, not the same as other groups." This not only pointed to the conception of the group as an imagined state set against other groups; it also indicated the compulsory duties of members. He continued, "We are supposed to be available for it. If there is an emergency in the band, we are expected to stop what we are doing to help the band. Every member must be there for the band to work well. With this badge I become someone responsible." He held out to me his "badge," a small plastic card modeled after a state-issued ID, which was hanging around his neck, along with several other badges from his other affiliations. Listed on the badge were the band's name and logo, his "good name" (as opposed to the nickname by which he, like others, is called), as well as his title in the band and his state identification number.

It was clear that the badge was a source of pride for Woody, as it was for others. Amid near total joblessness among men, it signaled participation in a socially relevant, and even potentially income-generating, activity. Moreover, it signaled the prestige and honor of holding an active role in a collective endeavor, and for committee members, of being a recognized leader of this endeavor (see McAlister 2002:137). In this way, the badges, as markers of "titles," served to publically orient a mass of members and fans in relation to the committee, and most significantly, the singular President. As Woody put it, "You see, the badge tells you I am a director. I am responsible for all 'my people.' for the people in the band, in the zone."

Additionally, as a transparent sign that linked persons with licit endeavors, the badge helped display its holders as engaged in (and responsible for) socially upright and politically honest activity. The presidential badge reiterated the respected status that Woody meant to display in the performance scene. Most believed that the success of any group depended on the moral authority of the president. Even more than lack of funds, it was the presence of a strong, caring, and respectful *chèf* that determined how people evaluated the force of the group. Echoing the corporeal metaphors that orient Bel Air residents' imaginaries of "the state" (see chapter two), people would likewise affirm that the "body" of a staff or band would be "discouraged" (or both physically and spiritually *weak*) if it lacked a "head" capable of cultivating and directing its collective force and will.

At one meeting of Laloz's organizing committee in early January, Woody began the discussion with a reflection on the need to build an army capable of defending the zone, what he mainly called his "peaceful army" (*lame lapè*) but also "home army" (*lame lakay*). This latter characterization grasped that more than the absence of violence it was the act of defending the moral community that defined "peace." The meeting was held at the local public school, and Woody, as usual, addressed from the head of a classroom nine grown men and myself, all jammed into three school benches. After the opening prayer, he began by reminding us of the name of the band. The name *Laloz*, he told us, derives from the dance that they popularized in 2001, along with Rara M. He mimicked the dance, slowly twirling his hips in a tight figure-eight, with arms loosely swaying overhead. He then stepped forward on a diagonal, snaking his torso, as he joined his back foot to his front, ending with a twirl of the hips. As he approached the benches, he had a serious look in his eyes that seemed to contradict the flirty, relaxed dance. When he stopped at the front of the room, he let out an anxious laugh. "Everything you do that's

beautiful, that's *laloz*. It is a word of peace. You can't make *laloz* if you are not dancing with everyone. Because it's a street dance. You can't dance *laloz* with those who are never with the people," he told us. He was clearly "sending a point" to his committee. On the one hand, he was expressing disapproval of armed staff, and particularly Bingo and his partners, who rarely ventured into the street undisguised, and only then at night, shrouded by darkness. And, on this account, he was again shaming Samba. Earlier, when complaining about the meager funding Laloz had to stage this year's outings, he echoed the accusation that he had (and would again) cast in song and told me that he suspected Samba was entangled in "disorder." He not only noted that a committee member had been named a "community leader," but also that, beyond these earnings, the band was being sponsored by Bingo. It was clear that he was scornful of such patronage since it threatened violence at Carnival. But he also felt that this sponsorship should go to Laloz instead. They shared the same base, for one. But more importantly, he felt that his band would provide a better site for transforming these funds into a benevolent force. This was made clear in the story that followed. He told us of the band's founding, which like most bands, was borne of tensions or fissures within social groups. We all knew it well, as he often repeated it, but in light of this "point," it carried special weight:

> There was an epoch when our *staff* had a football team, and it walked with the band *Samba*. One time, we had a meeting, and when the directors came, they came with knives and picks. We knew, then, that it was not a meeting that was to be had. It was a thing of war. We preferred to remove ourselves from the band, and judged it necessary to make another band. We said, 'Let's make *laloz*!'

With this final phrase, he began to dance again, a gesture that helped communicate its meaning. Naming the group *Laloz* signaled a decisive break from this other group, while simultaneously acting as an olive branch meant to assuage fears about the division and potential conflict. It conveyed that this separation was not a threat but a peaceful parting. He continued, "We knew

we would find even more *force* to make this band, Laloz. Because we are a 'peaceful army.'" Careful to explain his meaning, he told us that this meant they were "the people of the zone." "Not like the 'goat stealers' [i.e., the peacekeepers], we take to the street to bring feeling to the zone." Holding up his badge, he continued, "We are something serious!" Then echoing the previous year's song lyrics: "We are not into *tete lang* (corruption). We are a force. Public. Open. There are no secrets. Everyone knows us. We are *fran Ginen*. We are not into divisions. No one can buy us." Aware of my note-taking, he looked at me, still extending his badge, and said, "*Madam* Chelsey, the anthropologist, you listening to me? We are used to working with mystical things (*bagay mistik*), that's true, but we don't make wickedness (*mechanste*). It's a dance of peace, *laloz*, that we are supposed to make. I respect everyone. And everyone's there for us."

Woody here made a distinction between an in and out group by drawing on a moral hierarchy within *vodou* cosmology that positions those who practice *fran Ginen*, "real" Ginea (or "Africa"), above those who use *Maji,* Magic (Brown 1991; Richman 2005). This distinction relies on simplifying the complex "value space" (Palmié 2002:195) on which persons and rites are differentially mapped in *vodou* into two qualitatively distinct spiritual forces. Hence, although admitting to working with magic (*mistik*) in a general sense (and thus, revealing the relative and spontaneous nature of any mapping), Woody nonetheless invoked a steadfast and stigmatizing binary. By this logic, people involved in *Ginea* serve inherited familial spirits to the benefit of the family or moral community, whereas people involved in *Maji* are believed to be pursuing purely individualistic goals with power derived from *pwen*, purchased magical points, or *zonbi*, captured spirits. Both of these "magical" entities are connected to the unruly yet

powerful force contained in the "wandering souls" of the recently dead or improperly buried.[34] Apropos of individualism, working with these entities is associated with secrecy, seclusion, and concealment. It carries with it great risk and danger, but it is also highly efficient and powerful. Woody would never consider abandoning the ceremonial "magic" that marked his band's disembarking rites. But the term *maji*, as Woody here used it, signaled something different. It was tantamount to a witchcraft accusation; it acted, as Douglas (1966) long ago noted, as a social stigma capable of delegitimizing and challenging the power of outsiders.

Given the lethal gang violence in Bel Air, Woody's reference to another band's traffic in Magic was highly charged. It not only suggested their use of illicit power, but moreover that this power was entangled in killings in the zone. With the valence of "magic," this power signaled an attack. Further, its potency derived from (or at least having benefited from) the proliferation of corpses in the zone. Of significance, however, is that even this illicit power had the potential to be put right, so long as it was incorporated into his upstanding group. This sentiment was captured in Woody's final words to the origin story: "You can make war in music, in costume, in dance. But you don't have the right to hit another person. To make him suffer 'in the dark' (*nan fè nwa*) with insecurity. We must make our army in another way. Each person suffers for another, each band for another."

Woody, like others, often reminded me of the importance of displaying power and influence publicly and openly, and of the illicitness of those who conspire in obscurity or secrecy.

[34] In Haitian ritual practice, as in other Afro-Atlantic spiritual cosmologies, "the realm of the dead," as Palmié (2002:195) writes, "is literally a wilderness, a kind of primeval preserve into which people venture to domesticate or colonize its denizens." The rites of the dead concern removing the spiritual guardian (*lwa mèt tèt*) and freeing the soul (*ti bon anj*) to return, under the water, to *Ginen*, before being called back to maintain a moral dialogue with the living. There is always the risk that the dead may be hailed to perform mystical "work" on behalf of the living. While this usually implies sorcery, working with the spirits of the dead is not always morally corrupt (McAlister 2002). More often than not *zonbi* and *pwen achte* are called on to help those in need rather than attack others.

He was, in these instances, reinforcing what Sanders and West (2003) have identified as the preoccupation with *transparency* in contemporary political discourse; what is transparent, they argue, has become nearly synonymous with what is modern, democratic, and good. He was, however, also expressing a profound distrust of the "magical" machinations that he saw as central to how democracy has taken shape in Haiti. He was deeply suspicious of the key role covert forms of street violence in Bel Air have played in maintaining political power. And he was also suspicious of the "unfamiliar" and "foreign" forces that estranged the workings of state power and challenged leadership structures on the streets in Bel Air. For him, it was the visible and tangible signs of familiarity and peacefulness that valorized his command of this group of men and his reputation in the zone more generally. The vision he promoted of the good state and the peaceful army did not negate the fact that power operates in ambiguous ways, nor that it involves competition and contestation—that it often concerns commanding or controlling others. But it did highlight the importance he placed on connecting the occult aspects of manufacturing force to public personifications of power and control. Alongside "making *laloz*" in the streets at Carnival, publicizing the group as an "organization" through badges and other signs of order was another key arena for asserting this connection.

Cultivating civility as legibility

The badge and its referent, the organization, were also indicative of bands' recent enlistment in the larger global governance project of transforming Haiti into a liberal democracy identified by periodic, competitive elections in which outcomes are uncertain and results accepted (Przeworski 2000; Wedeen 2008). In particular, it symbolized their adoption of the technologies that make the procedures of liberal democracy possible. Scott (1998) aptly

subsumes these technologies under what he calls the governance project of "legibility" (see also Das and Poole 2004; Trouillot 2001). Beyond classifying and regulating persons and collectivities, as Scott suggests, this project also marks the means by which Haiti was to become legible to the world as a *liberal* democracy. The legibility project, as pursued in Haiti, has not only involved making people into countable, electoral subjects. It has also included transforming customary models of authority and associational life into what Chatterjee (2004) has described as the "modular forms of bourgeois civil society," the second hallmark—some might say "fetish"—of liberalism (Comaroff and Comaroff 2006b; Comaroff and Comaroff 1999a). Though less celebratory meanings exist,[35] the recent fetishizing of civil society draws on its esteemed place in liberal political theory. Here it has long been hailed as the mode or "sphere" in which citizens negotiate the terms of the social contract, either by checking, judging, amending, or evading state power.[36] However, as many anthropologists have shown, civil society is better understood not (only) as an arena to contest "the state" so much as a contested genre of political action. Put differently, the idea of civil society circumscribes the idioms, styles, and practices—the *praxis* (Bourdieu 1977)—through which "legitimate" political participation is to be forged.[37] Such is the case in contemporary Haiti. Insofar as the dominant praxis, "the organization," constitutes a strategy for political action, it also polices the boundaries of political exclusion.

[35] I am referring here to writers that follow a Marxian tradition of thinking the state and civil society together—such as Nicolas Poulantza's (1975) notion of the "*relative* autonomy" of the state and Antonio Gramsci's (1971) definition of civil society as the means by which states exercise "hegemony."

[36] Under this large umbrella, I am, of course, grouping together a rather diverse array of scholars. These include theorists of the social contract theorists (like Rousseau and Locke), of civic life and virtue (like Tocqueville), and of the public sphere (like Habermas). See Comarofff and Comaroff (1999b) for an anthropological genealogy of "civil society" (see also Keane 1988).

[37] See Comaroff and Comaroff (1999b), especially the essays by Elizabeth Garland (1999) and Mikael Karlström (1999). See also Chatterjee (2000; 2004) for an analysis of the way civil society excludes other forms of democratic political action.

In his attempt to make the good state, Woody felt it necessary to perform "civilized" society not only by enacting a *peaceful* army but also by developing a socially sanctioned, modern "organization." He often reminded me that he directed the band as an "organization." His band was, for him, an organization because to become a member of the committee one had to "pass" a series of procedures that demonstrated one's moral character and social standing. Ironically, these procedures echoed the bureaucratic maze that has long discouraged, if not outright excluded, people like him from participating in "civil society." However, insofar as Woody was inspired by this bureaucracy, he was also intent on modifying it. At the October meeting in which I met Laloz, Woody, after he finished relaying members' administrative titles, emphasized the difficult process of earning a title and the coveted badge of his committee. "If you want to be a member in the band," he explained, "it's like you become [a] citizen. We make a state that doesn't make disorder. You have to have something like a *Certificat de Bonne Vie et Moeurs.*" This is the state-issued Certificate of Good Conduct, which attests to the absence of a criminal record. It is obtained for a cost of 100 *goud* ($2.50) from the *Tribunal de Paix*. In lieu of the official certificate, Woody deferred to an arena he considered more capable of verifying good conduct: consensus in the zone. He explained, "We ask if everyone can count on you, and we see if you are into disorder. Before everything you have to be a *person* (*moun*) for us. We can ask you to bring witnesses who can tell us that you have *bon jan*." The phrase, *bon jan,* knits together the notions of good manners, pleasant demeanor, and commonsense. Being a "person" with *bon jan* means not only refraining from "disorderly conduct" but also being respected by and respectful of others. The process of detecting *bon jan* was also about ascertaining the level of respect people had for this individual as a *person*, as well as the respect he held for and would bring to the group. Woody emphasized this point by interjecting, as he was prone to do, a few

lines from a song. He chose this year's Carnival song, aptly entitled "We are not animals!" The lines drew on the fact that powerful actors ("they") treat the common people like animals even though they are a part of the household. In this context, the lines reiterated Woody's quest to define the band and its followers as persons with moral character.

In the yard of the house	*Nan lakou lakay*
They take us for animals	*Yo pran nou pou bèt*
Like little dogs, little cats, little donkeys	*Kon ti chen, kon ti chat, kon ti bourik*

When he finished, I asked how they carried out this "research" (*ankèt*). Picking up on my use of *ankèt*, an act associated with people like me, he told me this was not like the "censuses" conducted by NGOs. Rather than visit households, an act he considered too "closed," he told me he preferred to hold an open forum. "We have a big meeting, and we *diskite* (discuss/argue), and we see if people are in accord, if they "choose" you to become a member. If you can *mache* ('fit' and 'walk') with us." As I would learn, these meetings usually gathered people associated with the band, as well as interested parties, into a nearby public spaces, like the elementary school. The meeting began not by "voting" on possible members but by announcing the new member of the committee. It is the discussion that followed that constituted the conferral of consent. These discussions rarely addressed the merits of the specific candidate. Instead people debated the meanings and intentions of the band, and in so doing, indirectly commented on how the candidate fits with the ethos of the band. An intensely hostile verbal argument characterized the debate, with "fitness" decided not by the absence but by the "bigness" of the discussion. The approval of the candidate, which almost always occurs, was usually conferred not once everyone agreed, but once everyone had their say and the discussion died down.

While Woody's power is evident throughout this process, the closure to this debate emphasized his central role. "At end," he told me, "I meet with the committee and I make a

decision. And if all are in accord, you [the new member] pay me thirty Haitian dollars [the cost, about four dollars, of fabricating a badge at a local cyber café] and I have Emerson [Secretary General], make a badge. And then, now, you can go see Viva Rio with us. We are an organization too."[38]

To be sure, this process of deliberation and decision-making significantly differed from the procedural forms of liberal democracy. Nevertheless, it was what enabled Woody to proclaim an identity as an *organization*. By excluding undesirable, disorderly members and marking this exclusion with the badge, this process did not exactly align his group with NGOs. But it did make the group more desirable to these legitimate sponsors, as well as governmental ministries. After all, if they are an organization too, then they can enter into dialogue with NGOs like Viva Rio.

Indeed, it is difficult to understand Woody's emphasis on vetting without taking into account the recent efforts of Bel Air bands to create an umbrella organization capable of negotiating adequate funds for Carnival performances. Most presidents, including Woody, had already begun to demand the actual Certificate of Good Conduct from the *Tribunal de Paix* as well as a state identity card for all of the members of the organizing committee. In March 2008, a small group of street band presidents in Bel Air founded the "Federation of Street Bands for the Metropolitan Area" (*Fédération des Bands à Pieds Réguliers de la Zone Métropolitaine*, or FEBBARZM) to "bring the bands more respect" in the political arena, as it was often put to me. Despite this encompassing name, the vast majority of member bands were from Bel Air and its surrounding environs. Part of the work of the federation was to promote the seriousness and legitimacy of street bands in Bel Air by acting as a gate-keeping organization that excluded

[38] Noted from meeting October 7, 2008.

"profiteering" or "fake" bands, popularly known as *bann abòlotcho*. This designation included groups of young men who formed bands solely for economic benefit as well as those who used a band as a cover for illicit activities. Not surprisingly, in their initial attempts to negotiate as a "federation" with governmental and mayoral agencies they were required to pursue the "legalization" of not only the federation, but of all forty-eight member bands. As for other associations, legalization would entail registering the band as an "organization" with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor (in French: MAST), and obtaining the "attestation" (*attestasyon*) of its registration. With this attestation, individual bands, as well as FEBARZM, were to become "legitimate" organizations in the eyes of official sponsors. In theory, they would then be able to appeal for funding from governmental as well as nongovernmental agencies and private businesses. Conversely, these agencies would also be able to use legalization and membership in the federation as an obligatory condition of sponsorship, denying monies to nonregistered bands. (This, in turn, sparked the birth of a federation of small bands and Rara groups in Bel Air, as well as two federations in another metropolitan zone.)

At the time we met, Woody had already begun to pursue legalization. He was eager to share this information with me and also to ask if I might help him "follow up" with MAST. After Woody stressed his particular method for policing the boundaries of his own group, he went on to inform me of the group's efforts to obtain legalization. He excused himself to go and gather the dossier he had submitted to MAST for legalization on September 13, 2008. I waited as he returned to "his room." It took him over thirty minutes to scour through three, large suitcases piled on a cement block and draped in plastic in his ten-by-six foot concrete house. Barely protected from the rain that routinely snuck through the cracks of a tin ceiling, these suitcases held all the important documents of his extended family and of his band and his social

organization. When he returned, he proudly displayed a copy of the dossier that the only fully literate member of the committee, Emerson, had prepared.

"With this," he said, "I have the right to write anyone, because we are an organization. Me, I'm filled with organizations!"[39] This expression not only indicated Woody's involvement in several organizations (he also was president of a youth organization and a member of *Sektè Popilè*), but it also confirmed the promise of political inclusion that resided in "being filled with organizations." The papers varied little from those I had seen for social organizations, as well as those required of nonprofits or local branches of NGOs. After the one-line cover letter, which requested legalization, the first page simply listed the band's name, founding date, address, political orientation ("progressive democratic"), logo, and colors. The second page listed the names of the organizing committee and a list of about fifty musicians and fans. This was followed by copies of the conduct certificates and electoral cards for all of the members. The last series of documents involved an aged and newly formalized copy of the bands' rules and regulations, known as *chat la*, the charter. Woody explained that for legalization they had to "arrange" the *chat*, which basically meant typing up the hand-written (and memorized) disciplinary code that "ordered" the band since its founding. This code included ongoing duties (e.g., weekly meetings, annual elections, and rehearsal time), procedures for joining the band (e.g., residency, good conduct, and support of the band), and expectations of good conduct (e.g., promptness, sobriety, and respectfulness).

After showing the dossier, Woody was quick to add that he hoped "all this effort would bring something good" for the group. The costs, in time and money, of preparing the paperwork in a nearby cybercafé had been a huge burden for the committee. In addition, they had to muster

[39] Noted in meeting October 7, 2008.

almost one hundred Haitian dollars for the registration fee (fifteen dollars) as well as the larger fee (seventy five dollars) to open a bank account as a registered organization with the state tax office. This was an insurmountable amount for Woody, who often lacked the five *goud,* or twelve cents, to buy the two cigarettes he smoked in the late afternoon. Without, as Woody explained, "*dyspora*" (that is, the "diasporic" networks common to more prominent "major" bands), he had relied on a member of his committee to obtain what he called a "gift" from the armed staff/foundation Gran Black. It was thus hard not to catch the irony when, as he closed the folder, he told me: "If we become something 'legal,' they'll look at us like people. Not like bandits. It's people we are, not animals."

Conclusions: Leading amid "Difficulty"

While Woody did not doubt his capacity to make good on this stigmatized gift—to make it serve a political quest for personhood and respect—we should be careful not to overlook the social entanglements that resulted from it or even motivated it. Indeed, since Mauss (1954) pointed to the obligation of reciprocity as the *modus operandi* of the gift economy, it has been difficult to view an act of gifting without conjuring a chain of exchanges stretching far beyond the foreseeable horizon. In the process of securing the gift, for example, he named a local *houngan* affiliated with Gran Black as a delegate for the band, no doubt hoping to secure an ongoing chain of funds. I close, then, with a story which captures the persistent difficulties that befall those who aspire toward moral authority and leadership in Bel Air, and which helps explain why ambiguities of alliance and affiliation are fostered to negotiate them.

In light of the anti-violence rhetoric that characterized Woody's weekly meetings and the tense battle between Laloz and Samba at Carnival, I was quite surprised when in April, 2009

Samba and Laloz mounted a joint street stand at Raranaval, the annual Rara festival held in Bel Air. Equally divided, each half of the wooden street-side platform was decorated with the signature writing of the band's name. An artfully depicted handshake joined the two sides, though a center post divided the row of seating. It was not the amity between band members that struck me, as both groups relished their rivalry and were friendly with each other off the concrete. It was more the controversy that surrounded the festival. In 1990s and early 2000s, Raranaval was organized by two brothers who were once key leaders of a pioneering and expansive popular organization. While these brothers remain widely respected in the zone, they were, at this point, largely inactive in its social or political life. Nonetheless, it was expected that they would run the festival. It was representative of shifting political alliances when the funds for 2009's festival were channeled from governmental agencies to Gran Black. As I detailed in the last chapter, this festival was interrupted by a MINUSTAH raid in which Bingo was apprehended (and released within weeks). But even before the raid, it was evident that this festival was mired in the violence-backed, political patronage that wreaked havoc in the early 2000s. This actuality was in fact already hinted at in a chilling message painted on Samba's part of the stage: "*Aranje w, n ap dekreta w!*" The phrase might translate as the disciplinary threat, "Straighten up or we'll punish you!" Yet its usage as a form of "trash talk" between bands suggests that a better translation here would be: "Mystically protect yourself or we'll crush you!" In this zone, it had an even harsher meaning. The phrase was attached to the *Sanba* or songwriter who composed songs for Rara M and was a core member of Gran Black. In this way, it went beyond trash talk to proclaim this group's violence-backed control of the area. It was this Sanba's stand that Bingo mounted to watch the festivities before he was apprehended. With all these signs of "disorder," I wondered

why Woody would stake out a public presence at the festival, and especially with this show of solidarity.

Figure 9. Raranaval Stand. Author Photo, 2009.

Shortly after the festival, Woody invited me to his house to view some old photos of Samba (when he had "walked with" them) and Laloz, which he had found when searching for "evidence of the band's existence," a new stipulation for legalization. When I arrived, he told me he wanted to get out of this "disorder" (i.e., the drug market) and led me across the intersection to the edge of a concrete stage, which had been built at the request of his organization with the labor of those in the zone and the funds of an NGO. The stage, built into the back of *L'Eglise Perpetuel*, the principal church in Bel Air, was a centerpiece of the zone. As we began to walk across the crossroads, he instructed me to look at the back of the stage. As usual, a MINUSTAH truck was parked in front. But as we neared the stage the mural came into full view. On its

backdrop was painted a memorial portrait of "Dread Mackenzy," a prominent figure who had taken up arms in 2004 against the *coup* and the counterinsurgency orchestrated by MINUSTAH. Surrounded by a mane of dreadlocks, a rainbow of "African" colors, and a bed of tropical greenery was the sorrowful, pleading face of the late man. The homage read "Papa Revolution 2004" on one side and "For a peaceful Haiti" on the other, with a note underneath: "Dread Mackenzy, 5 December, 2004. We won't ever forget you." Below this was a painting of wings with a crown in the middle and the reference to a bible verse (2 R 6:16), "Don't be afraid. Those who are with us are more than those who are with them."

Woody did not say anything about the painting. He simply motioned for me to sit in a small patch of shade cast by the stage's concrete overhang. I passed him some pictures I had taken of Laloz's recent outings, and he handed me a handful of wallet-sized shots capturing his long love affair with Carnival. Despite his vast efforts to protect these keepsakes, the images were barely visible behind the creases and blotches of mold, the inevitable effects of his porous house and the wet and muddy, dry and dusty days of Bel Air. Once we had looked everything over, Woody began to tell me about his difficulties being a president. Amid his greetings to nearly all passersby, most of whom he knew well enough to follow up on pertinent family events, I learned of his disillusionment over organizing and doing politics in Bel Air.

Figure 10. View from across crossroads. UNPol parked. Author Photo, 2009

Figure 11. Memorial to Dread Mackenzy. Author Photo, 2009.

Unlike the rural roots of many in Bel Air, *lavil* and the *gèto* (the city and the ghetto) had always been home to Woody. Since he was a young boy in the 1980s, he had been involved in Carnival, participating as a fanatic in the then raucous and radical group, *Mini Minwi,* still located a block away from Laloz. He pointed out that *Mini Minwi* was unique in that it had outlived its founder. But its very humble existence, he told me, was evidence that its lack of leadership made it "discouraged." "Every little house needs a big chief." He then told me that he always wanted his own band, not to make money, he insisted, but because for him it was a "good activity" and the only way to make himself "a known person" (*moun rekonnèt*) in the zone. "After you make a band, and it works well, you can go a long way. The federation is working well. One day, the president of the federation may even run (*poze kanida*) for mayor."

He had great faith in the social value of running a street band. While it was one of his many activities, he echoed others when he said it was important because it was "the force" behind his other organizing. "The first thing is to bring everyone together, then you can do serious things. But, oh oh, it's something that's difficult!" He complained to me that once you make a band people accuse you of putting money in your pockets. It was hard to earn people's trust and respect, he said, because the desperate needs of those in "the ghetto" fuels the creation of smaller and smaller staff, all in search of profits in some activity and all subject to the jealousy of neighbors. He told me that he often wondered who is the director of Bel Air because every little street has its directors. "There are so many groups in Bel Air. The foreigners say they've come to develop the zone and the youth say they defend it. But they both don't see that you can't do anything with too many directors. You know who's in charge?" he asked before answering himself. "It is the person who's the master of the concrete. It's the man who can organize the

most people, and put them out on the concrete, before everyone. Make a state with an army not a *baz* that hides." But this, he knew, was also an ideal far beyond his grasp. Our backs against the homage to Dread Mackenzy, he told me, "In this zone, I have to 'carry respect' for everyone without looking behind. Madam *See-see*, let me tell you, that's something that's difficult. Without looking behind."

CHAPTER FOUR

Showing The People:
Misery, Crowds, and the Sensory Poetics of the Street Band

When you arrive in your ghetto
Ask what's up for the people in the ghetto
It's holding on they're holding on
Arrive in Cite Soleil…in Bel Air…in Martissant…
Say for them nothing is happening, say it's the Clorox that stirs it up
The people are perishing

Mr. President, it's you who gave us a meeting
When we were protesting against the expensive life
For us to stop by and get you, but when the day came
You went and hid and told us you don't have tennis shoes
You say you don't have tennis shoes?
You should tell MINUSTAH to loan you a pair of boots to go protest

***

Lè w rive nan gèto w
Mande sa k pase moun nan gèto a
Se kenbe y ap kenbe
Rive Site Soley…Bèlè…Matisan
Di pou yo anyen p ap mache, di klowòks la ap boulvèse l
Pèp la ap deperi

Monsieur le President, se ou k ba nou randevou
Lè n ap manifeste kont lavi chè
Pou n pase pran w, men lè jou a rive
Ou al kache ou voye di ou pa gen tenis
Ou di w pa gen tenis?
Ou ta di MINUSTAH pou li prete ou yon bot pou al manifeste

Soro Band, Port-au-Prince, 2009

In late October, Kal, the *Pòt Pawòl* (press secretary) and bambou player of *ZapZap,* rang my cell phone at the crack of dawn to tell me that he would be near my house later that day. The band would be playing in a protest against Teleco, the state-owned telephone company that

would be privatized the next year. *Fanmi Lavalas*, the political party formerly united under Aristide,[1] had hired them "to accompany" recently laid off employees in a protest for severance compensation.[2] This protest would be one of a series held since July 2007, when the government began "modernizing" government bureaucracies in order to make them attractive to international buyers. Thousands of employees lost their jobs at enterprises managing the port, electricity, and sanitation, among others. Teleco, however, took the brunt of the lay-offs. An estimated two thousand people lost their jobs before it was acquired by the Vietnamese company Viettel.

Scholars and development "experts" have long targeted Teleco as an exemplar of the inefficiency and "clientelism" at work in Haiti's political system (Dupuy 1997; 2007). Most recently, under Aristide, Teleco was known for granting nominal jobs and minimal, irregular pay to organized men in impoverished neighborhoods like Bel Air. In fact, the participation of ZapZap in the protest was driven by the fact that Teleco employed Kal and five other members of the band, including Frantzy, from 2001-2004. Kal had insisted in one of my first meetings with the band that the members show me their Teleco badges as proof that Aristide had cared more than anyone else for Bel Air and for this staff. Yet Kal was also less than enthusiastic about the job, telling me that his crew had never received the technical training they had been promised. The job was another form of social appeasement and not "a job with responsibility." Indeed, the reason for the protest, he said, was to demand the government give people in Bel Air more professional training. Instilling this moral valence, he told me, "We will not be making disorder, we're coming to *revandike* (reclaim or redress) something."

[1] Following the 2004 *coup* and Aristide's exile, the party *Fanmi Lavalas* had difficulty uniting under a new leader. By 2008, the party was split into various factions. This divisiveness was complicated by the fact that the CEP would not legitimate any of the claims of those asserting party leadership.

[2] This was a dispute that incorporated many separate claims. Some employees claimed that they had been paid twelve months of severance but were owed thirty-six, while others claimed they had not been given any severance.

The first stop on the protest route was the Teleco headquarters. Located in the reserved, middle-class area of the capital called *Bois Verna*, *Teleco Pont Morin* was the tallest building in the capital until 2008, when the Irish cellular giant Digicel built its high-rise. Though Kal could not give me an exact time, he told me that I would hear the protest outside my house. He was right. At around noon, a blanket of noise, music, song, and chanting fell over the entire zone. My housemate and I went down to the corner, and we soon spotted three men carrying a black banner that announced the Association of Victimized Employees of Teleco (*AEVT*) with their demand spelled out in white capital letters. Expertly wielding the irreverence and figuration characteristic of protest discourse, the demand read, "*AEVT* demands *gouvenman tiblès la* and *direktè pèpè* give us our compensation."[3] *Gouvenman tiblès la*, or "tube-less tire government," accused the government of ruling without the people by drawing on the metaphor of a tire [the government] without an air chamber [the people]. Similarly, *direktè pèpè* used the word for the cheap, imported, second-hand clothes, *pèpè,* that have decimated the tailoring market to assert that illegitimate foreigners were manipulating the "directors" of the country. Trailing behind this banner was a small crowd of about fifty men (and a few women) swaying to the beat of a "little Rara" composed of about ten ZapZap members. The protesters waved above their heads foliage-covered tree branches they had yanked from trees along the way. Echoing the palm leaf tributes of Palm Sunday processions, the branches symbolized triumph and rebirth, while the rustling leaves expanded the reach of the music. Voices filled the air as the protesters transformed the demand on the banner into an infectious chant, interlacing it with other rhythmic protest calls.[4]

[3] In Creole, "AEVT *demande gouvenman tiblès la ak direktè pèpè ban n lajan dedomajman nou."*

[4] I could not make out all of the calls. Here are two more: (i) *N ap revandike, Fò k nou revandike, Kounye a e pou tou tan* (We're reclaiming, We must reclaim, Now and for always); (ii) *Aba plan neolibèyal, Mizè m ap monte, Anba leta tiblès* (Away with Neoliberalism, My misery is mounting, Under the "tubeless-tire" (i.e., people-less) government).

"The people are tired of citizenship [i.e., civil society]! And also democracy. Go and vote for nothing? When we must take to the streets!" (*Pèp la bouke sitwayente*, *Plis demokrasi, Al vote pou gran mèsi, Lè nou dwe pran lari*).

An hour later, the group began to prepare for their next stop, the Prime Minister's complex. Before leaving, Kal came over to greet me. He was disappointed that no one from Teleco came out to talk to the protesters. "I hope the band can make the Prime Minister appear," he said. "The band makes the people appear. And the people make the state appear."[5]

"Showing the People," the title of this chapter, refers on one level to an understanding of political action as dependent on unveiling the social category of the lowly, destitute, and miserable sector of the population. The act of showing the people, as Kal made clear, was a necessary step in the process of summoning into existence a power capable of redressing the people's shared demands; that is, "the state." Many organized men in Bel Air often reminded me that they could manipulate the government by simply making the people *appear* in the street. However, as my opening description suggests, this was not always so simple. Appearance necessitated a carefully crafted *performance* of the people. In particular, this involved presenting the people on the one hand as mired in suffering, and on the other, as deserving and capable of claiming "respect." In short, "showing the people" signifies the enactment of the social contract. "Showing the people," however, also refers to the revelatory idiom through which people understood their engagement in this project. Vocabulary such as "revealing," "uncovering," "showing," "unveiling," "making feel," or "putting before eyes" were frequently mobilized to

[5] I would later learn that an aide would venture outside at the PM's office and, from between the gates separating him from the protesters, tell the leaders of AEVT that they would be granted a short meeting with officials in the coming days. Though the meeting occurred, the former employees would not see their demand realized. As a signal of growing unrest, in the following days tires were lit and left to burn in front of Teleco, a longstanding portend of unrest and violence.

situate this project as about manipulating presentation and perception. The task, in other words, was to effect "the people" by creatively and persuasively displaying their plight and desires—and their embodied selves most importantly—to themselves and those in power.

This chapter, then, extends my notion of how vernacular enactments of sovereignty are strategically employed in order to claim respect (both politically and socially) in the face of ongoing state disenfranchisement and disappearance. These strategies extend beyond the staging of localized authority; as this chapter will show, they also involve performing the people as a suffering and "angered" (*anraje*) majority in order to summon the state or state-like power into being and action by forcing them to be an audience. However forceful, this performance is less an exemplar of resistance than a tactic for producing a moral community that is *at risk* and *in need of* the protection, services, and patronage of the state. In this way, "the people" recalls the kind of public that Dewey (1927) argues "discovers" the state, the public whose common problems provoke members to collectively long for the institutional authority they lack in common. Hence, while the bands' songs and processions certainly made use of what Scott (1990) famously called the "arts of resistance," artfully putting "on stage" what is often kept "back stage" or away from public view, they did not follow the logic of repression and resistance common to earlier struggles. Here was a politics of another moment, a politics defined by the logic of abandonment and reclamation, in which, to invert Althusser's (1971) interpellation framework, the state was being "hailed" by the people. [6] Put simply, I intend to show that these

[6] There is a long scholarly tradition of characterizing any action—even survival—among the poor within the logics of resistance and domination. Perhaps due to its revolutionary beginnings, this has been especially true of work in Haiti [see, for example, Bell (2001)]. In turn, some scholars have asserted the overuse of resistance and have argued that resistance and accommodation often depend on each other (McAlister 2002; Mintz 1974). Others have argued that resistance only allows us to see reaction rather than the expressive ways in which personal and collective expectations and desires are being claimed (Gilroy 2002; Smith 2001). My point goes one step further. My point is not merely that resistance does not capture the range of ways in which people subvert power, but that a politics based in reclamation necessitates imagining and desiring certain kinds of power and interdependency.

expressive techniques were ways of asking the state to be more powerful rather than resisting or rejecting state power.

"They done neoliberalized": Revealing a critical analysis

In January 2009, Anton, the president and *Sanba*, or song writer, of Leloup Party Cool, the most well known street band in the Bel Air area[7] and one of five *tenor* or "major" bands in the city, surprised many when he appeared on the radio. He was, to be sure, an unlikely guest for *Tribunal du Soir*, a politically oriented talk show that airs in the evening. The show had been running a series of discussions about this year's Carnival, and Anton had been invited to represent the "popular quarters" (*katye popilè*) in Carnival. Upon hearing the titles of the band's most recent songs, 2008's "My Misery, By Myself" and 2009's "Problems Aren't Finished," the announcer suggested that people might think the band was "too negative." Anton contested this reading, replying:

> It's a country that doesn't really have the state. Under this misery, you ask yourself, where did the state go? I did not say government. I said "the state." Listen, what I'm saying is something simple. 'They done neoliberalized' [yo fin neolibèyalize, a lyric from "Problems Aren't Finished"]… It's a country where no one puts in place any social services…When we put out the song, "My Misery, By Myself," effectively the problems were not finished. 2009, the President says the things will get worse.[8]… And, now, we take the opportunity to say the problems are not finished…It's us in Leloup Party Cool, we always thinking about things, and we always bring a message so that the population understands what we are saying, because we sit and we reflect on things […]
>
> It's a message we bring so those who are responsible can listen, so they can reflect on things too, so they can say: "My, in all the things that are wrong, let me fix something."

[7] Leloup Party Cool is located in Delmas 2, an area that borders Bel Air, and is often included as part of the zone.

[8] This comment is referencing President Préval's admission at the advent of 2009 that the year 2009 would be more difficult than the previous year.

> It's a message we make to carry forth a clear message, so that the people can understand, and those who are responsible for us can understand… Leloup Party Cool—how do I say?—is the Press Secretary of the People.[9]

In calling the band the "Press Secretary of the People," Anton, a stalky, forty-year-old man known for his flashy outfits and adoring girlfriends, situated himself and his band as the best possible vehicle for voicing and redressing the people's problems. However, and despite his unrivalled wit and raspy singing voice, he was not the most obvious representative of the people. The owner of a small boutique, and the holder of shifting posts within government ministries as well as the president of a celebrated band, Anton was undoubtedly a "big man" in Bel Air. Yet having lived in the area his entire life and having made a name for himself through the popular forum of a street band, he could also not be identified as a member of the educated, middle classes, much less the elite. Like many band presidents, and especially *Sanba*, he envisioned his role as akin to an organic intellectual and spokesperson for the people. All his "reflection" was oriented toward "*carrying forth a message*" that would make both the people and those who are responsible "*understand*." In this way, Anton positioned his songs as offering, in clear, evocative, and invigorating language, a critical analysis of the problems in the country. The act of song-making for him was envisioned as a form of truth-telling that would not only reveal "what's happening in Bel Air" but also engage the people in Bel Air and beyond as an organized collective with a set of articulated demands.

More than indicating several problems, the analysis he offered centered on revealing these problems to be rooted in the waning presence of the state, by which he meant the absence of a robust public sector rather than government per se. Like many in Bel Air, Anton was a keen observer and critic of the set of economic and political reforms that are often assembled under

[9] Broadcast on January 13, 2009 at 8:30 pm on Signal FM in Port-au-Prince. This segment was recorded while in the studio.

the label of "neoliberalism." In Haiti, as in much of the "developing" world,[10] references to neoliberalism (*neolibèyal, neolibèryal plan*, *neolibèyalize*) are not reserved for academic and policy debates but form part of the everyday grievances that ignite discussions on the *taptap*, at the market, or on the street corner, among all social classes. When Anton used the lyric from their 2009 Carnival song, "they done *neoliberalized*," he was referring, as do policy experts, to an ongoing process of politico-economic restructuring begun in the mid-twentieth century[11] and intensified in the early 1980s, during the latter years of Jean-Claude Duvalier's reign (Ferguson 1993). In particular, global financial institutions in partnership with governmental aid agencies and NGOs[12] have sought to "develop" Haiti by making bilateral aid dependent on the adoption of a new economic model. Known in development discourse as "structural adjustment," this new model essentially sought to orient Haiti's economy around light assembly exports and agro-exports (for example, mangoes, coffee, and avocadoes) rather than food or products for domestic consumption. Beyond the acceptance of massive debt, these aid-based reforms required that Haiti "liberalize" the state and the market. This meant, among other things, drastically lowering (or in some cases eradicating) import and export tariffs and downsizing (or in some cases privatizing) what had long been Haiti's largest employer, the government (Dupuy 1997; Fatton 2002; Shamsie 2006). The neoliberal plan, in other words, was intended to expand Haiti's economy by opening the domestic market to the cheap food imports and other goods that would ostensibly

[10] I thank Amy Cooper and the participants of the Medicine, Body, Practice Workshop at University of Chicago for pointing this out to me.

[11] These reforms, as Drexel Woodson (1997) among others (Trouillot 1990), has pointed out, are best understood as a continuation of food aid policies dating from the early 1950s.

[12] By global financial institutions, I am principally referring to the World Bank, IMF, and IADB. The governments with the most relevant aid agencies in Haiti include the United States (USAID), Canada (CIDA), France (AFD), and Brazil (ABC). Also significant is the development branch of the United Nations (UNDP). Finally, NGOs, many of which are supported by these aid agencies, have also played a major role. As a note, by using the term *NGOs* (*ONG*), I follow Haitian parlance and refer not to local organizations or national nonprofits, but foreign development and humanitarian organizations in Haiti

support the droves of peasants fleeing the countryside in search of low-wage jobs in the city's light assembly factories (DeWind and Kinley 1988). The shift that resulted has been dramatic. While Haiti produced about seventy-five percent of the food it consumed in the mid-1980s (DeWind and Kinley 1988; Dupuy 2007), today Haiti's largest import is food (McGuigan 2006).[13] While the urban industrial sector has had bouts of growth, it has neither been able to employ the ballooning urban population (from 200,000 in 1950s to over 2 million in 2000)[14] nor offer its workers a living wage (Dupuy 1989; Manigat 1997).

In short, this plan has not worked. And like many anthropologists,[15] Anton was using the term *neoliberalize* in a critical, even pejorative manner. He was referring not only to the fact that the problems are not yet resolved, but also that things have gotten worse for most people in Haiti. Moreover, and again much like anthropologists, he was configuring neoliberalism not as a transparent economic policy so much as a set of invisible, unpredictable, and unwieldy forces emanating from foreign sources of power that limit relations of responsibility between the state and the people. In this way, neoliberalism served as a both a nationalist and populist idiom, capable of denouncing global governance and a complacent, "globalized" elite class.

[13] Take, for example, "Miami rice" (*diri miyami*), the main food staple in urban Haiti. Whereas in 1980 the peasantry met domestic rice consumption needs, by 1995 Haitians farmers produced only half of domestic needs, and by 2008 imported rice accounted for eighty percent of rice consumed in Haiti (McGowan 1997; McGuigan 2006). However, household rice consumption has increased dramatically. Haiti is the largest per capita consumer of rice in the Western Hemisphere, nearly all of which is imported from a single U.S. rice producer and distributed by a Haitian subsidiary (Dupuy 2005).

[14] Historically, census data provided an accurate picture of population. However, with most residents living in unaccounted for housing, reliable population statistics are no longer available in this way. Estimates based on census data, aerial photos, and surveys suggest a population in excess of two million. See the CIA World Fact Book (2012).

[15] The critical literature on neoliberalism is far too vast to cover in a footnote, especially since I draw my analysis from works that treat liberalization as a total social fact, which shapes economic policy as much as embodied life. A sample of influential works that expand on the neoliberal "sensorium" include: Lauren Berlant (1997), Jean and John Comaroff (2001), Judith Farquhar (2002), and Elizabeth Povinelli (2011).

Anton eloquently captured these dimensions of neoliberalism in the first song he mentioned, "My Misery, By Myself." As the title suggests, this song situated experiences of suffering in relation to feelings of desolation and abandonment. Of significance, however, is that this abandonment is figured not through poverty alone but through the unraveling of the social contract, which is occurring at the hands of foreign actors. Positioning himself as unveiling to the people this serious and harmful reality, the Sanba here speaks as a leader urging his public to demand that the government contest it. I will recount this song in full before examining the way in which it performatively constructs the socio-political categories of, and relations among, the people, the state, and global governance agencies:

Look at the misery *we're* enduring, *we've* no mouth	Gade mizè n ap pase nou pa gen bouch
Look at the misery the people are enduring	Gade mizè pèp la ap pase
When will we have a mouth to speak?	Kilè nap gen pou n pale
A little country like Haiti	Yon ti peyi kou Ayiti
Look at the tribulation it endures	Gade yon tray l ap pase
Get your chair, sit, listen, and look	Pran tichez ou chita koute gade
What peace passes?	Sa lape pase
My friends, look at what *they* do to us	Mezanmi, gade sa yo fè nou
They do to us, *they* do to us [repeat]	Yo fè nou, yo fè nou
The problem of *the expensive life* turns into joblessness	Pwoblèm *lavi chè a* tonbe nan chomaj la
Oh, the misery by ourselves, listen [repeat]	Men mizè pou kò n, tande
If we are asleep, Sanba, you must wake us	Si nou nan domi, Sanba, fòk ou reveye nou
We mustn't stay sitting, we must wake ourselves	Fòk n pa rete chita gade fòk nou reveye nou
If we go in the mountain, Sanba	Si nou monte Sanba anwo nan mòn
Bring assistance for peasants to work the land	Pote ankadreman pou peyizan travay latè
If we invest in literacy	Si nou envesti nan alfabetizasyon
National production	Pwodiksyon nasyonal la
Our country will take another image	Peyi n ap pran yon lòt imaj
…Jah, Jah, Jah[16]	Djah, djah, djah

[16] The use of the "Jah," the name used for "God" in Rastafarianism, identifies this song and the band as *rasin*, or roots. Blending the styles of vodou ritual music and Jamaican reggae music, this traditionalist style

The misery will be over, listen	Lamizè va fini tande
For the peasants the misery will be over, listen	Pou peyizan yo lamizè va fini tande
For the people of [Bel Air, Cité Soleil…][17]	Moun [Bèlè, Site solèy…] yo
The misery will be over, listen	Lamizè va fini tande
They say we are free, we suffer even more	Yo di nou libere, n ap soufri pi rèd
The problem of the expensive life attacks us	Pwoblèm lavi chè a sakaje nou
We must scream 'Help!' to come save us	Annou rele Amwe pou l vin soulaje
The illness in the world is destroying our life	Maladi nan lemon ap detwi lavi nou
This is the language of Franklin Delano Roosevelt	Sa se pawòl Franklin Delano Roosevelt
He said we must take care of the poor	Li te di fòk nou kenbe moun ki malere yo
It's the only way we can dominate	Se sèl fason n ap kapab domine eee
This little country that took freedom with arms	Ti peyi sa a ki pran libète ak zam
Silencing domination for the black race	(Pouse) son[18] dominasyon pou ras nwa
that lives in the continent	k ap viv nan kontinan sa a
Can we hold on? Misery worsens, where will it go?	Eske nap kenbe, mizè ogmante, kote sa prale
OAS [Organization of American States]	OEA
UN	Loni
IMF [International Monetary Fund]	FMI
who programs this misery	ki pwograme mizè sa a
FAO [UN Food and Agricultural Organization]	FAO
World Bank opportunists	Bank Mondyal opòtinis yo
Dessalines swore white colonists	Desalin te sèmante kolon blan
won't set foot on this land	p at pile tè sa a
Too much disorder, oh	Twòp dezod, O o o…
We have forgotten that it was in *union makes the force*	Nou gen lè bliye se te nan *linyon fè lafòs*
We set order, oh	Nou te mèt lòd O o o
Our misery by ourselves, our misery by ourselves	Mizè nou pou kò nou, mizè nou pou kò nou
Listen	Tande

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developed as part of the popular movement following the end of the dictatorship. For more on *rasin* see Gage Averill (1994; 1997) and Elizabeth McAlister (2002).

[17] The reference to a slum area was not held constant. Rather, during the procession route, the chorus might address the residents of Bel Air only or Bel Air in addition to other impoverished areas.

[18] *To criticize* or *denounce* is the meaning at work in the expression *pouse son,* which is literally rendered as "to push sound." The expression reflects the strong association between sound and power in Haiti, and the fact that silencing someone sonically is a most powerful form of protest.

It's this that causes the country to go off course	Se sa ki fè sa ki kòz peyi devye
It's the reason that causes the youth to be derailed	Se sa ki rezon ki lakoz jenès la deraye ee
[repeat previous three verses][19]	
Our road of misery is long, full of problems	Chimen mizè nou long tèt chaje ak pwoblèm
We must not lose the faith	Nou pa ta dwe pou nou pedi lafwa
The people are always hungry	Pèp la toujou nan grangou
we must continue to fight	fò nou kontinye goumen
One day at last we must succeed	Yon jou kamenm fò nou reyisi
Mister, Mister, Mister, Mister	Mesye, mesye, mesye, mesye
What is there for us to do with this situation, Mister	Ki sa pou nou fè nan bagay sa a mesye
Children, elders cannot eat, Mister	Timoun granmoun pa ka manje mesye
Day after day, the misery is worse, Mister	Dejou an jou mizè pirèd mesye
My misery by myself, Mister [repeats]	Mizè m po kò m mesye
My misery by myself [repeats]	Mizè m po kò m

Addressing the people (and those people) in song

"My Misery, By Myself" is typical of songs performed by carnival street bands in Bel Air. Unlike the ribald humor usually associated with Carnival, most bandleaders followed Anton in describing their songs as delivering social critique (though at times in carnivalesque fashion; that is, through grotesque imagery). The serious subject matter, "angry" (*anraje*) valence, and public form of address of "My Misery, By Myself," in fact situate it within a recognizable and aesthetically specific style of political expression and "verbal art" (Bauman 1978) in Haiti—often described as *angaje*, meaning socially engaged. Likely rooted in the adversarial dynamics of *Vodou* song (Yih 1985), *angaje* songs are characterized by the use of "us" and "them" to publicly depict an ambiguous social conflict and indirectly launch moral critiques. In so doing, they rely on the construction of the Sanba as a prophetic, sovereign voice engaged in a call to consciousness among the people he embodies and represents. Typical of the genre, "My Misery,

[19] A short verse was sometimes inserted between the repetition of these verses. Evoking Catholic liturgy, it went: "*Ayiti Toma* we fall into coma; If we don't say Mea Culpa; Haiti won't ever take a step forward" ("Ayiti Toma nou tonbe nan koma; si n pa fè me a koulpa; Ayiti p ap janm 'fon pa' [contraction of 'fè yon pa').

By Myself" is organized as an address to one's comrades ("we, the people") with the intention of denouncing a class of powerful actors represented by the ambiguous but critical pronoun "they." Used poetically, "we" and "they" refer not to specific persons but to the social categories of *my people* and *those people*. They configure a political field divided into hierarchized, abstract subjects. "Look at what they do to us!" the Sanba demanded. In turn, these pronouns set up the song's triangulated mode of discourse, with the "we" referring to the direct participatory public (i.e., the singing crowd) and "they" to the song's indirect but nonetheless intended interlocutors: those powerful persons or social classes, or even vague forces whose interests are felt to disrupt or ignore "our" lives and livelihoods.[20] The ambiguity of "they" is often key in delivering the hostile or accusatory *pwen*, or "points," of the song (which I will detail in another section) but also, and more generally, in crafting populist critique.

This split addressivity helps create the people as a public in two senses of the term. On the one hand, and following Warner (2002:67), the people are conjured into being as a public "by virtue of being addressed." At the same time, however, the people take shape as the problem-based public that Dewey famously elaborated in *The Public and Its Problems*. This song, in other words, situates the people as a community whose existence is imputed by shared problems, by common feelings of misery, insecurity, and disrespect, which have been caused by or are opposed to *those people*. By way of this moral violation, this public takes on the features of a political community. And here is where things get interesting. Historically, this violation has

[20] Fischer, among others, has elaborated on the way in which this triangulated form of discourse is stylized and valorized in the Caribbean. He describes how in Barbados speakers will "make an utterance ostensibly for one person, though the intention is to 'drop a remark' to an overhearer," who is, in fact, the target of the message (1976:231). Similar to dropping remarks, the art of *voye pwen,* or sending points, in Haiti can also exploit triangulated address. Other similar forms of Afro-Atlantic orality include "signifying," "loud talking," or "naming" in the US (Gates 1988; Mitchell-Kernan 1972) or "throwing" or "dropping words" in Jamaica and Trinidad (Yelvington 1996).

reflected the antagonism between the people and what Fatton (2002) calls the "predatory state" (which, recall, refers to the economic *and* political elite in Haiti). However, while this dyad was invoked here, it is also destabilized. As this song progresses, for example, the "we" shifts from being contrasted with the "they" of the state to the "they" of foreign powers: "It's OAS, UN, IMF who programs this misery!" This unstable target allows the message to index not only a class-based but also nationalist critique of the people's misery. And, in this sense, the song's message takes shape as a critique that condemns predatory global governance while simultaneously indexing the need for, as Dewey put it, the "*discovery of the state*" (1927:37).

Much of this work, however, is also accomplished in the history told in the song. Lyrically "emplotted" as a tragedy, this history positions the people as the (would-be) productive class of the peasants and urban poor that has been "attacked" by foreign and elite interests and abandoned by the state. This tragic plot speaks to longstanding critiques of agricultural decline and mounting food imports in neoliberal Haiti and underscores the symbolic and visceral effects of this dynamic on the people. Invoking a familiar sentiment, the Sanba encompasses this consequential reality as *misery*,[21] which is then imagined through the experience of *hunger*. This is not surprising, since it is primarily through feeding that personhood and community, citizenship and nationhood, are produced in Haiti. "To be a *person*, a member of the household," writes Karen Richman (2005:162), "is to have one's food separated in relation to those belonging to members of the same unit." If feeding creates *persons*, then hunger signals the negation of personhood. Hunger is intensely visceral. It is a consuming sensation that not only threatens survival but also embodies the basic desire for life. In Bel Air, where most survive on one meal a

[21] A small sample of recent song titles among carnival and Rara street bands in Bel Air include: "My Misery, I'm Dealing" (*Mizè Map Jere*) "Misery of the Poor" (*Mizè Malere*) "Uncover the Misery" (*Dekouvri Mizè*), "Under Misery" (*Anba Mizè*), "More Tough Misery" (*Mizè Pired*).

day, hunger is pervasive, and it has taken on great cultural significance. The phrase *m grangou*, I'm hungry, may communicate a need to eat, but it may also mean that one is upset, depressed, or tired or that one feels excluded or marginalized.[22] In this way, hunger is a metaphor for "bare life" (Agamben 1998) and an index of the good life. Expressed through hunger, then, misery extends beyond individualized suffering to identify corrupt moral and political relations. In other words, its expression suggests *hunger* for a state, for a life that is secure. Indeed, people in Bel Air rarely expressed misery in an idiom of suffering. Instead, as in this song, they linked misery to a loss of respect, "voice," and agency, often highlighting that misery "means" that "them," "those people," or "the state" does not respect them.

In this song, the rise of misery/hunger is historically situated in "the expensive life" and the lack of "national production." "The expensive life" denotes the rising cost of living and loss of jobs associated with the shift from a domestic to neoliberal economy. In particular, it represents the people's large-scale dependence on imported foods and goods, whose price-points, controlled only by the global market, have been increasing rapidly. The expensive life is thought to make not only the good life unattainable but also "bare life" (Agamben 1998) insecure, since it wields, routinely and without recourse, the threat of hunger. Hence, the Sanba proclaims: "The world's illness is killing us!" Interestingly, this line also sets up a populist claim using the words of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, well remembered in Haiti for withdrawing the U.S. forces that occupied Haiti from 1915 to 1934. This claim—that sovereignty is linked to the force of the poor—gestures toward a reading of the influence of the global assemblages of governance (which are then named) as a "second occupation" from which the people must be freed.

[22] I am indebted to Karen McCarthy Brown's (1991) detailed account of the symbolic significance of food and eating in the life of Mama Lola, the vodou priestess in Brooklyn with whom she conducted extensive research. See also Alvarez and Murray (1981) and Karen Richman (2005) for an account of the ritual and everyday semantics of food.

The lyrical and critical climax of the song follows. Here the most aggressive of its claims are launched by invoking the figure of Jean Jacques Dessalines, a leader of the revolution and the first ruler of Haiti. Dessalines is best remembered among Haitians for his vehemence, and at times ruthlessness, during the revolution as well as his constitution of 1805 in which he banned *blan*, or "white" foreigners[23] from citizenship or landownership and declared all remaining citizens of Haiti *nèg,* or "black." He is the revolutionary figure most often summoned among the people in Bel Air (and elsewhere in Haiti) in calls for unity, strength, and change, and he constitutes a recurrent nationalist, racialized trope in the songs of street bands.[24] In this song, as in many others, the spirit of Dessalines is used to configure the international agencies behind the expensive life as structurally equivalent to the *blan* colonizers and enslavers of centuries past. Buttressing the FDR reference, the lyrics highlighted the connection between escalating misery and these "occupying" forces of neoliberalism. Together with the motto from the Haitian flag, "union makes the force," the phrase "We set order!" configured a national political community and urged the state to oust these trespassing *blan*. Attesting to their importance, these two lines (along with the title) were often abstracted in performance as the band's "slogan," often standing in for the whole song.

However, it is, perhaps, the final lines of the song which best depict its message. Positing a "long road of misery ahead," the song ends by "hailing" a powerful father figure called

[23] As noted in chapter one, the labels *blan* and *nèg* are derived from perceived differences in skin color. However, in practice they act as racialized markers of belonging that do not exactly map onto skin color. While all *blan* are foreigners, they are not all white. That is, a phenotypically black person can be considered *blan* if he is a foreigner or even outsider to a village. Similarly, not all phenotypically white people are "*blan"* in terms of citizenship. The 1805 constitution from which these terms derive includes in the category of *nèg* Polish and German residents who defected from Napoleon's army to join the revolutionary troops and also white women who had been naturalized by the government (usually for marrying nonwhite men).

[24] Keeping with the militant, aggressive persona of Dessalines, the maroon leader Makandal and Boukman, the leader of the 1791 revolt that launched the revolution, are also commonly invoked. The popularity of Dessalines and other bellicose figures as nationalistic tropes among the poor contrasts with the popularity of the presumably more judicious figure of Toussaint Louverture among the elite and scholars of Haiti.

"Mister." Holding the power over life and death, this Mister could, it seems, relieve the people's misery/hunger. But in keeping with the emphasis on agency, the people must "continue to fight" for this Mister to appear. When I asked Anton about this term of address, he responded, in characteristic fashion, with a well-known proverb: *Apre bondye se leta,* "after God, it's the state."[25]

"My Misery, By Myself" was, for Anton, entangled in a discourse about mutuality and collectivity, nationalism and populism, and misery and agency. He envisioned this song as a form of activism—"Sanba, you must wake us!"—rooted in uncovering the "true" history and showing it to the people and those in power. Or, as he put it:

> Our mission is to *show* what is going on in the country… The misery gets worse. The expensive life turns into joblessness turns into 'sit and look' [*chita gade,* meaning, inactivity]. *Nèg* [men] have no work…in a day, you fall into *Clorox* [metaphor for extreme hunger]. There's no respect in Haiti. The song *unveils* a message: 'White colonials have not finished understanding the country. And the state doesn't respect the 'poor folk' (*ti malere*), and the youth.' They need to see the reality.[26]

As a tenor band, Party Cool would, after a deferential salute, perform this song in full for the Carnival Committee on the fourth Sunday of Carnival. Here the band could potentially "show" the governmental figures who sponsor Carnival their [position] message. Yet, and without diminishing these revelatory lyrics, Anton would be the first to assert that learning the message also entails "seeing the reality" in a more concrete sense. Interestingly, at one point during the radio show, the announcer asked Anton if he could hear some of his songs. Rather than hand over a CD to be played on the radio, Anton began, to my great surprise, to give directions to "the base." Accounting for the tiny corridors and back alleys of Bel Air, he started to offer exceptionally detailed instructions, eventually provoking the announcer to stop him. What struck

[25] Interview, April 2009.

[26] Personal conversation, March 2009.

me, and I imagine the announcer and listeners as well, was that Anton knew all too well that his neighborhood in "lower Bel Air" was perceived as deprived, dangerous, and volatile, and best avoided. Those who do not live there do not easily venture into it, and certainly not the middle and elite class audience to which this radio show was addressed. Even more puzzling was why he would not jump on the opportunity to broadcast the songs, since he longed to bolster his and the band's reputation. Looking back, I suspect a few things motivated this indirect request to visit the base. It speaks to an epistemology that grounds understanding in the ability to fully inhabit a life world. It also emphasized that the force of the songs depend on an embodied, unalienable performance among a localized community. While capable of addressing national concerns and political figures, these songs could perhaps only be fully grasped by those who make themselves familiar within the localized community and become part of the performance.

Rehearsing the mini-public

Bands in Bel Air aspired to facilitate what was often called *ti kominite pèp la*, a "small community of the people." Such groups were akin to localized counter-publics: *localized* because they took shape within a particular residential community and *counter* because the public with which they marked themselves, "the people," was considered not only more specific than but also dissident from an elite or even national public (Fraser 1992; Warner 2002). Of significance is that this label challenges the conventional separation of publics from communities on the basis of their impersonal nature.[27] While the songs may speak to "indefinite strangers" in the name of "the people," the band is in fact oriented to those already holding communal ties,

[27] Michael Warner, for example, notes that the second defining feature of a public is that it is a relation among strangers. Yet, as Susan Gal (Gal 2002; Gal and Kligman 2000), reminds us the ideal of the public should not be confused with an actually existing corpus of people oriented around and circulating discourse.

aiming to relate to them as a kind of "mini-public" nested within a more general category of "the people," which is also imagined as a moral community. Moreover, it is this mini-public that is charged with the continued public enactment and dissemination of the moral force and messages of the band as "of *this* people" and "of *the* people." Speaking to a public, Michael Warner (2002) eloquently argues, is a form of poetic world making. It invokes and entails a particular world, and demands a performance among its members. "Run it up a flagpole and see who salutes. Put on a show and see who shows up," he writes (114). This show began with rehearsing the mini-public, teaching the songs and their messages, and preparing their enactment.

One of the most striking things about these songs was their enclosed publicity. They were not played on the radio,[28] and they were rarely heard along the procession route. Once a song was completed, the directors of the band engaged in teaching it to a circle of family, friends, and neighbors. Known as the band's *fanatik* (fans [from "fanatic"]) this public was charged with spreading the messages, "points," or slogans of the song throughout the neighborhood. This is not to say that the band members did not aim to impress a citywide or even national public. Rather it is to say that most viewed themselves as primarily in conversation with the base, local big men, and the groups in which they were in competition. Only fifteen of the hundreds of street bands in the city were selected to enter (and officially sponsored for) the procession that passes through the central, downtown plaza of *Champs de Mars* during the last "three fat days" (*twa jou gra*) of Carnival season. The vast majority of bands focused their processions around their base and surrounding areas and "go out" for only the four to five "pre-Carnivalesque" Sundays that follow Twelfth Night. And on this stage, achievement resided in the band's ability to manifest an exciting and enticing performance that "enforced" the messages already familiar in the zone.

[28] Occasionally the songs of the major bands are played on the radio, though is usually as a part of a special program.

The first time I witnessed this teaching at work was in mid-December 2008. My friend and research assistant, Lysa, and I headed to lower Bel Air to visit the Mardi Gras street band called *Biznis Pa M,* or "My Business Band." My Business Band was formed in 2003, as the Mardi Gras branch of a Rara group. I became acquainted with them because Kal and Berman of ZapZap helped augment the size of the band during the Sunday outings of Mardi Gras.[29] The band's base is on Rue Saint Martin, the main cross street that forms the northern and "lower" boundary of Bel Air, which straddles a hill. Bel Air is separated into Plateau Bel Air and *ba Bèlè*, or "lower Bel Air." Mirroring the geography of class in the city, where poverty descends and wealth rises up the surrounding mountainside, lower Bel Air is thought to be dirtier, poorer, and more derelict and dangerous, than Plateau Bel Air, and in many ways, it is. The paving of the main road is spotty, and though the street is lined with short, concrete houses, the bulk of the area consists of shacks built on dirt lots. This makes it endlessly dusty. Located near the sea, lower Bel Air also collects, during heavy rains, garbage washed down from higher, wealthier areas of the city. Mounds of trash fill the streets and overflow from large drainage canals cutting through the area. The main road also hosts a daily market, and this road constitutes the southern border of the country's largest wholesale market, *Croix de Bossales*. Beyond adding garbage, the hustle and bustle of the markets make lower Bel Air prone to petty thievery and violence, driving its reputation as a very "hot" zone.

[29] In general, street bands in Bel Air that principally identify as a Rara, like Zapzap, tend to "go out" on Saturdays, from the beginning of Carnival season until Holy Week, when the band performs for the entire weekend, with the climax being at Raranaval on Saturday.

Figure 12. My Business Band mural. Author Photo, 2009

Figure 13. Children enacting band at base of My Business Band. Author Photo, 2009

A large, pink and black mural on Rue St. Martin marked the locale of My Business Band. The base, however, was located a few hundred feet from the road, down a narrow, winding trail in a small dirt lot. Here about twenty families have settled over the past decade in two rows of one-room plywood houses built and "rented out" by an enterprising contractor on land recently abandoned, but at this point, still owned by Teleco (it is now owned by Natcom). Denis, a slight and soft-spoken single man in his early thirties, was already at the mural when Lysa and I arrived in the zone. The Secretary General of the band held in his hands a few copies of the "text" of the song, which he had printed out early that morning. He would soon share these sheets, along with a CD they had made, with the Federation (FEBARZM), the mayor's office, and other appropriate governmental offices as a condition of their registration for Carnival. Yet, for now, these papers would be passed among people at the base, creating a flurry of activity among those eager to learn the song. In fact, minutes after we made our way to the lot and Denis handed out the sheets, a large cluster of young men formed around a high school student, whose literacy and deep voice compelled Denis to charge him with belting out lyrics through a megaphone. At another visit, a few weeks later, this scene would morph into huddles of folks surrounding a stereo with a rigged up electrical connection, listening, in an endless loop, to the CD of the song that the band had recorded in a makeshift studio on the edges of Bel Air for about twenty-five dollars (1000 *goud*). For now, they would do without the accompaniment, singing them aloud with the appropriate emphasis and tempo that they had come to associate with the band. Soon these young people and several young children would be in the lot, with makeshift instruments in hand, singing and banging along as the band rehearsed. Ellie, the first of two delegates for My Business Band and one of few women to hold such a prominent post, was responsible for organizing the street processions. A brawny, outspoken woman in her forties, she would, in the days to come, work

with this group of young people to arrange about twenty youthful dancers and singers into a "troupe" (*twoup*), while encouraging the others to run alongside the band for each of their pre-carnival outings.

Later in the month, the musicians and this troupe would gather for more formal *repitisyon*, or rehearsals on Thursday afternoons, in which the band would coalesce into the "little community of the people." These sessions were extremely important, since it was common for the make-up of bands to shift from year to year, with some musicians being "hired" for the season.[30] While My Business Band had a corps of musicians (recall, they also performed as a Rara) at the base, they still employed others to augment the band's size. The goal of these rehearsals, as well as the bands pre-outing warm-up, was to *balanse bann nan*, literally, "balance the band." In Herderian fashion, the idea was to both stimulate and harmonize the diverse energies of the group into not only a choreographed performance but also a cohesive community.

For this reason, collective music production played as much of a role as eating and enjoying together. My Business Band's rehearsals, like those of others, were led by the main "directors" of the band, Denis and Ellie, and took place in a perestil at the band's base. Unlike Laloz, the president of My Business did not take charge of the band, but rather acted as its figurehead and official sponsor. He attended few rehearsals. However, at some point in the rehearsal, the band would usually pass by his small boutique and warehouse, keeping him and others abreast of their progress. The rehearsals usually lasted from four in the afternoon until

[30] While some members of bands' organizing committee were also musicians in the band, the majority took on more managerial roles (like Samba or bandleader [*maystro*]), and/or performance roles (like colonel). This meant that several people who played in bands were "hired" for the season. Those hired were usually local musicians that belonged to Rara groups or to brass ensembles that played for funerals, graduations, or other events. While it was practically forbidden to work with musicians from other zones in the neighborhood, some bands hired musicians from other neighborhoods or outside the city, especially Léogâne with its strong Rara tradition. This was, however, viewed as less desirable and could provoke neighborhood-wide doubts about the strength of the band.

well after dark and seamlessly blended the genres of a lesson and a party. Charles, the treasurer, acted as the "*maystro*," leading and correcting the musicality of the band, while Ellie orchestrated the singers into a unified chorus, and Denis supplied moral support in the form of cheers and pours of *kleren*, or sugarcane liquor, from a home-made batch. Late in the night, the rehearsal would break as Ellie and a few of her female singers would serve overflowing plates of rice with bean sauce and hot-dogs to the musicians, chorus, and those who had gathered around. These plates were all funded by the president and their other sponsor, *Sanba Boukman*, a former "soldier" of "Baghdad" who was now a spokesperson for nonviolence, holding a prominent post on the national commission for disarmament.

These rehearsals were key arenas for building community. Additionally, they served to extend the reach of the band and the authority of its leaders throughout the base. Much emphasis was placed on taking over the soundscape, gathering people to watch, and incorporating new fanatics through feasting and creating "feeling" in the zone. However, this work was always oriented toward the larger task of showing "the people" in the streets come performance day. Ellie, for example, often talked about these rehearsals as the "first step" toward "raising" (*leve*) the crowd that would put "force behind their message." Looking at the teenagers who had gathered on nearby rooftops to watch a rehearsal, she once told me, "The dream of My Business is to show the force of the people, because we have '*a speech to reveal to the people'* [a lyric from their song detailed below], but the obstacle is to make this little community of the people turn into a huge *crowd* of the people."[31]

[31] January 16, 2011.

Showing up: Making the crowd, displaying the people

The outings of My Business Band were typical of most bands in Bel Air. Like many others, their meager finances meant that they were not able to fund much more than the standard uniforms of specially made, pink and black T-shirts and caps for the eleven committee members, eighteen musicians, twenty dancers and singers, and other select posts (like the *pòt drapo* and queens and kings) that regularly "go out" with the band. On most days, the male musicians and (the few) male singers draped oversized T-shirts over shiny jeans and paired them with a new pair of tennis shoes, whereas the female singers and dancers, and the queens, "designed" (*deziyn*)—that is, slit, tied, and twisted—the rather unflattering, cotton T-shirts into flashy, skin-hugging, "sexy" (*seksi*) tops that they also paired with jeans and shiny tennis shoes. The processions were loosely organized, but to the extent that they were ordered, this order reflected not a parade-like progression of rows but a core center that radiated outward. The band constituted the center of the procession, with the corps of singers and dancers filling out the circle, and the committee members around the outside, usually at the front. As the corps sang, they danced a unique, partially choreographed step that blended with more general carnival styles. Around this circle of affiliates gathered layers of fanatics, singing along as they ran, hopped, and swirled their hips to the beat. While some of these fanatics could be considered members of the band, many more were only partially affiliated as residents of the zone or "base." In the course of these processions, the whole group aimed to attract more participants from the base through the force of their performance. A successful outing depended not only on "crashing" other bands, but also on the addition of more and more people, which of course, aided any crashing. In particular, distinguishing a "*total band*" (*bann total kapital*) from weak, fake, or criminal bands rested on the display of an expansive and dynamic base of support through the

crowd. Linked to the ceremonial disembarking of the band, which involved igniting the band through the ritualized production of heat (see chapter two), the goal of the debarked band was to extend this energy to others by "heating up" (*chofe* or *echofe*) the crowd. This extension of energy was oriented toward the formation of an undifferentiated mass of the people, in which collective force could be felt and communicated.

Special significance was placed on overtaking physical space. The directors were always hoping to "cork" (bouche) the street, blockading traffic and sweeping up (or away) bystanders with the rush of bodies. The route of the "small bands," like My Business, would even go so far as to avoid main thoroughfares, strategically entering narrow, neighborhood corridors and pathways that they could "make full" (*fè plen*) with people. The performative control of space exemplified the band's engagement in the politics of the base. Yet these performances were not only tied to the group's state-like project to control territory in relation to other bands and bases; they were also linked to a mode of politics premised on amassing bodies as a symbolic display of the potential of "the people." "We put everyone on the concrete, and make the people appear!" was a common boast among bands. It was, indeed, critical that this amassing occurred "on the concrete." Echoing the urban topography of class in the city, the site of the street and the performance of "on foot" *grounded* the outings of bands as "of the people." These "chronotopes" (Bakhtin 1981) of lowness were especially foregrounded during the final three days of Carnival, when the crowds of "bands on foot" marched before DJs and popular bands elevated on truck-beds through a *Champs de Mars* lined with towering street stands holding wealthier and more powerful spectators. It was at these moments that the bands' complete control of the street and the sheer force of the people could be put on display for a more general public. Yet, for small bands like My Business, who were not among the fifteen major bands invited to perform during

the "three fat days," their attention was focused on performing spatial dominance within the neighborhood during their Sunday outings.

Figure 14. Blocking the street. Author Photo.

Sonically pervading space was equally important. While grounded in the ability of the band to play loudly, command of the soundscape was most actualized in the sonic participation of the crowd. Those who "walk with" a band were expected to not only sing along, but moreover, to engage in boosting the music's amplitude. This certainly included keeping the beat with *cha-chas*. But it could also involve using whatever possible (e.g., voice, glass bottles, hands, or whistles) to make noise and contribute to the sonic expanse of the band. Ultimately, the goal was an "uproar" (*tenten*) of sound that could *pouse son,* "push out" or deafen the sounds of others. As with physical space, this effort to pervade the sonic landscape reflected a political imaginary.

There is, recall, a profound relationship between control of the soundscape and power in Haiti. The people are often configured as silent or inaudible, and to quote the song of Leloup Party Cool, as "without a voice." The loud and vibrant modes of expression characteristic of the Carnival crowd are, therefore, configured as both an assertion of the voice of the people and of their power to drown out others.

The exuberant dance forms of Carnival build on this use of space and sound, and ultimately account for the altered forms of embodiment that effect the performative realization of the people in the crowd. Whereas I was routinely reminded by outsiders and residents alike to "*kenbe kò ou,*" "hold your body" or "pay attention," as I walked the streets of Bel Air, on the days and nights I walked with bands, the goal was to *lage kò ou,* literally *"let your body go."* The art of *lage kò ou* is to achieve an existential state in which your body is inseparable from the crowd, where all of your senses are entranced and enchanted by the rhythm and flow of others. This feeling is channeled, most fundamentally, though a rhythmic sway that is also called *balanse*, literally "to balance." Just as the band "balances" before it goes out, their task once on the pavement is to "balance" the crowd. Spanning profane and sacred settings, balancing, as Karen McCarthy Brown (1991) notes, relates to a dynamic state of being in which distinct, often contentious energies fuse. This dynamic fusion may involve the weighing of choices, the amalgamation of various sacred objects, or as in this case, the cohesion of bodies in a pulsing sway, back and forth. In all instances, the intention is to "raise life force" so that social conflicts, tensions, or miseries may be altered.

Revelers build on this step by adding forward movement to the side-to-side swaying. They usually progress down the street in a tight two-step, and when the drum is slapped, in paired jumps. They lean back with hips jutting forward and slightly bent arms waving overhead.

Seasoned dancers instruct the novices or slow movers (like me) to "put their hands in the air" and to "advance without looking back." Many revelers will "pick up" the choreographed moves of the dance corps, which add slight hip and arm variations to this basic step. Ideally, this trend will spread through the crowd and become the newest dance craze, like "*laloz*" or *"gaypay,"* both of which are said to have emerged from Bel Air. Yet, despite the desire to be trendsetters, what is more important is for the band to quickly heat things up, enticing the corps and the crowd to move into what is called *apwiye pa frape*, literally to "lean not hit" (McAlister 2002). The name builds on the dual meaning of *apwiye* as "to slant" and "support," configuring this dance as an embodiment of risk and trust. Revelers lean back, letting the forward momentum of those behind them push them forward and even momentarily raise them off the ground. Set against "lean not hit" is the even more charged dance called *lese frape,* or "to let hit." Here revelers totally relinquish control of their body, letting themselves crash into and bounce off those around them. This style, as McAlister (2002) notes, can quickly get out of hand, instigating shoving matches known as *gangann,* outright brawling, or armed confrontations. Yet it also most fully embodies the danger, pleasure, and potential at stake in "letting go" with others. Resembling less a parade than a sea of people moving in waves, the crowd is often compared to an "overflowing river" (*rivye debòde*) or a "whirlpool" (*toubiyon*). Here is the epitome of the "transgressions" that challenge the heart of liberal, individualist order, when the separate, rational minds of individuals merge into one collective, sensory body (Canetti 1984; Stallybrass and White 1986).

Hence, insofar as this collective song and dance manifests the crowd, it also *shapes* the revelers into "the people." This is not simply because the "crowd" is a form of sociality associated with the lower class, but more fundamentally, because the crowd is itself the leveling mechanism that elides, at least momentarily, the sense of "distinction" (Bourdieu 1984) among

individuals. Put in semiotic terms, the crowd is an indexical icon of the people; it indexes—or refers to—the social class of the people by means of inhabiting an iconic image of seamless, mass association. This iconic relation is perhaps best expressed in Haiti by the concepts' linguistic interchangeability. "*Enter the people!*" or "*Enter the crowd!*" directs one to the same place. The other face of this interchangeability, however, is that the crowd is also a vehicle for configuring the people against those in power—what Stallybrass and White called the "*binary extremism* of class society" (1986:26). The crowd, therefore, defines the social roles through which political claims can be made. Without entering the debate on whether the crowd, or Carnival for the matter, is necessarily politically progressive or conservative, I suggest that the figuration of the people through the crowd (and all its concomitant signs) acts as a kind of political groundwork in Haiti.

While band presidents were continually reminding me about their desire for a nonviolent and peaceful outing, the goal was nonetheless to achieve this, as Gage Averill has it, while "teeter[ing] just short of chaos" (1997:21). The quality of being almost-but-not-quite "disorder" was what ultimately drove an outing's political potential—*almost-but-not-quite* being the key words here. These outings (especially the pre-Carnival ones, which were minimally policed) were certainly not well-planned affairs. Yet they were also not totally unstructured. People like Denis did not imagine the crowd in the manner popularized by crowd theorists like Le Bon (2001) and resurrected, on a regular basis, in (elite) moral panics surrounding Carnival and protests in Haiti. It was not, therefore, an act of fostering an uncontrollable, hostile, "savage" mass that could be manipulated to any end. Instead, they envisioned executing a performance that effected a crowd because it tapped into the stagnant energies and "structures of feeling" of their audience (Williams 1977). The band was charged with promoting the kind of self-

realization in imitation, or reflexive imitation, that Elias Canetti described as "man's specific gift and pleasure" (1984:108; see Mazzarella 2010). The force of the band, I was often told, was like a "fuse" (*priz*), a locus of transduction that used spiritual and social power to "balance" the people into becoming the collective body that they always already were. To put it in Durkheimian terms, in the crowd individuals experience a sense of "collective effervescence" that transforms collective consciousness. A crucial part of this transformative practice resides in the fact that the crowd *moves* through space. While the cohesion of bodies aids their sense of collectivity, the "overflowing river" instills the sense of a shared life trajectory (Bonilla 2011). The power of the crowd, therefore, is conditional not on the invention but on the *coming-to-self* of the people (Mazzarella 2010).

This does not mean, however, that Denis and others were unconcerned with exploiting the threatening power of disorder that the crowd indexed. But it does mean that neither the crowd's force nor its *threat* were reducible to disorder. Indeed, its political potential rested on the degree to which the band energized the audience by providing a means for them to express and identify with common structures of pleasure, misery, and desire. As Denis once told me, following a rather boisterous outing:

> When we make a crowd, we can realize a lot of things. When we attract people, gather (*ranmase*) everyone in the zone, [the] 'band on foot' (*bann a pye*) becomes 'soldiers on foot' (*solda a pye*). That means the crowd can make the band have the force of the army. Like that, we don't fall into total disorder. We *approach* it, and we can create (*kreye*) something. It's because… without a lot of people 'worked up' (*anraje*), no one takes the engagement. *Anrage fè angaje* (agitation breeds commitment). [32]

This last phrase, which I heard often, encapsulates a political philosophy: social engagement begins with being *anrage*, with being "worked up," "excited," or "enraged." On the one hand,

[32] Conversation with Denis and Ellie, December 10, 2008.

this idea grounds politics in shared experiences of heightened affection, elation, and unity. Insofar as the band facilitates this experience, it is at the center of activism. On the other hand, this philosophy reiterates that politics begins with embodied feelings of misery and disrespect, with being "angered" by something. Hence, social engagement in this view emerges from not only inciting but also directing collective energy. Much like the totem, the turning of the crowd toward redressing particular wrongdoings principally rested on creating images that allow people to recognize latent—but until then unexpressed grievances and desires—what people in Bel Air call "making slogans" and "sending points."

Poetical unveilings: Articulating a critical vocabulary

> Well, when the people take to the streets, and make a protest, they carry a "slogan" (*slogan*)… It's the same with the band…Slogans can speak about everything, any little thing that disturbs you. But what's important is…Look, everybody bring [their] problems, and you look at all the problems, and everything inside the problem, behind the problem, on the side of the problem, and, now, you gather everything to make one. And *now* you have a slogan. […] Slogan makes the people hot. It unveils all the things in a single *pawòl* (utterance). They say this year…*Clorox* will totally bleach carnival [laughing]. […] For ZapZap, "*Clorox* attacks us!" (*klowòks sakaje nou*).
>
> Sanba Junior, ZapZap, 2008

Sanba Junior was not alone in situating the art of sloganeering at the center of song making. It was widely accepted that the invention or adaptation of slogans constituted the most serious work of bands. I was, indeed, continually hearing about feuds over stolen slogans, and conversely, alliances to share slogans. In a sense, slogans are those lyrics that can stand in for the whole song and identify the band. But in a more specific sense, slogans are the emotionally charged lines that rally the crowd and configure conflicts and alliances. As Sanba Junior expressed, the art of sloganeering revolves around the use of proverbs, allusions, metaphors, and

neologisms to capture through a word or phrase all aspects of an existential situation and yet revealing only the qualities essential to enacting a particular point of view. Much enjoyment comes from crafting a witty slogan, and from deciphering, as well as adding to, its polyvalent meaning. A good slogan is so pithy and so charged that it is said to act like a "punch," compelling people to adopt its viewpoint. Yet for it to be successful, it must also be sufficiently figurative, coded, and polyvalent so that its sender can ensure its uptake while denying any specific intent or the impression of commanding. Slogans, in short, are rhetorical acts of concealment and revelation, representing a deliberate yet artful strategy of political persuasion and organization.

Clorox, as in the brand of bleach, is the politicized "slogan" (*slogan*) for the expensive life. When telling me, "*Clorox* will totally bleach Carnival," Sanba Junior highlighted the fact his group, as well as many Mardi Gras Bands and Rara groups in Bel Air, had played on the term *Clorox* in creating their own slogans for the 2009 Carnival season. ZapZap and its fan base would adopt "*Clorox* attacks us!" as their slogan. The term *Clorox* and the expressions derived from it were usually referred to as slogans in Bel Air. Yet I do not think this should prevent us from seeing these entextualizations as examples of what Haitians call *pwen*, or "points," especially since their usage was referred to as *voye pwen* (sending points) or *chante pwen* (singing points). *Pwen* are symbolic condensations of reality designed to wield persuasive force. In a spiritual context, *pwen* may refer to a soft, pliable doll fashioned with male genitalia and chained to a chair to correct a wandering husband (Brown 2003), or a pithy nickname, such as *Malgre Sa*, "In Spite of It," to protect a child who has survived a sorcerer's attack (Richman 2005). In a more worldly context, however, *pwen* refer to coded messages, like the 1990s Rara lyric "Asefi [female name] who threw away a baby at seven months" (*Asefi ki jete yon petit sèt*

mwa), which chastised at once a young girl for an abortion and those who threw Aristide out of office after seven months (McAlister 2002:171). In all modalities, *pwen* are concerned with mimetically enacting an event in order to recast and shift existential situations or ethical conflicts.[33] Thus, while not exactly representing the condensation of spiritual powers, I view the rhetorical genre of sloganeering or sending points as the practice of channeling and instilling powerful truths.[34] Words like *Clorox* are what Karen McCarthy Brown (2003) labels "word *wanga,*" or rhetorical *magic*, since these coded messages have the power, as she says, "to rewrite the existential narrative at issue."

The novel slogan *Clorox* took shape in late 2007 when food prices escalated worldwide and came to refer to this period by naming its effect, hunger. Its performative power rested on what Kenneth Burke would call its "entitlement" of a socio-political reality (1993). *Clorox* acted as a kind of magical "title" that toyed with worldly perceptions in order to create a moment, embody its concrete analysis, and incite action. It shifted understandings of rising food prices away from technical or coincidental explanations pertaining to the global oil market or bad farming seasons abroad, and toward a malicious account of the expensive life as a toxic attack of hunger on the people. One way of approaching how the magic of *Clorox* was constructed is by articulating the qualitative similarities it forged between bleach and hunger—and they were legion. The most obvious was the aftereffect of swallowing bleach as equivalent to the sharp, abdominal pains of hunger. But the associations went far deeper. In Haiti, where laundry is almost always done by hand, everyone is acquainted from an early age with the potency of bleach. After a day in the city, dust, grime, and sweat have all seeped well into the fabric of

[33] See Karen Richman (2005) for a fuller discussion of the mimetic properties of *pwen*.

[34] I would like to thank Jeffrey Kahn for urging me to clarify this point.

clothes. Whites of course take the longest, as they must be soaked and scoured in heavily bleached water. So potent is this water that it is known to "burn" the laundress (laundry being women's work), consuming skin and causing deep sores and cuts. Moreover, the lightening power of this water mimics the effects of hunger, which dulls the complexion, turns the hair an orange color, and fills your eyes with a yellowy sheen. While people in Bel Air rarely used bleach to clean house, it was regularly used to sterilize dishes, fruits and vegetables, and in bathing and drinking water. In these instances, the effects of bleach were often configured through a morbid act of consumption—it "eats the germs," as people say. Finally, bleach is known to be a particularly harsh poison, which might be used against people or by those driven to desperation, against oneself.

These indexical associations of *Clorox*, of bleach, animated the constellation of qualities that set this hunger apart from the ordinary rationing of food intake common in Haiti. It was a sign—or rather qualisign (Peirce 1931-58)[35]—that served to *embody* the qualities of toxicity, noxiousness, harshness, and aggression associated with extreme misery. Like Nancy Munn's (1986) Peircean observations regarding the "value signifiers" of lightness and speed in Papa New Guinea, the qualities embodied by *Clorox* were also "components of a given intersubjective space-time" (Munn 1986:16-17). They configured the effects of "the expensive life"—a negative, destructive limit of valorized forms of life. Characterized as "eating people," "bleaching them," and "driving them crazy," this life, so *Clorox* suggested, caused a potent form of misery, one that marked the agony and rage of a lethal attack. Framed as an attack, this life, then, should compel people to call for help, as it did in April, 2008, when thousands took to the streets in Haiti to

[35] C.S. Peirce defined *qualisign* as a "quality which is a sign" and which, as such, it "cannot actually act as a sign until it is embodied" (1998:291). It is always an icon, since a "quality can only denote an object by virtue of common ingredient and similarity" (294).

demand affordable food and investment in agriculture (alongside similar movements in Africa and Asia).[36] These protests were momentarily placated by a multiparty deal that leveraged foreign aid and price reductions by food importers to reduce the cost of a fifty-kilo bag of imported rice by eight dollars (from $51 to $43). Yet with no investment in national production, the price of rice surpassed its earlier highs at year's end. This paved the way for *Clorox* to re-emerge on the neighborhood and national stages of carnival.

Figure 15. Clorox Graffiti. "Clorox turns into battery acid. We must rise up!" (written over anti-Lavalas remark). Author Photo, 2009.

On December 10, 2008, at an earlier visit with My Business Band, Denis met me at the mural with the news that they had finished their new song. He referred to it as "the *Clorox* song." The actual title, however, was *Kite Mele Nèg Yo*, of which a rough gloss is "[We] Don't Give a

[36] In 2008, the rising prices of food affected so-called developing countries the world over, from Mexico to Bangladesh to Cameroon to Yemen.

Damn about Those Guys." Yet the song, as Denis explained, carried a message that "the people could not support what those guys are doing" and that "we have to organize so that they hear our demands." In other words, it was about just how much they do give a damn.

We have something to tell the people	Nou gen pawòl pou n pale avèk pèp la
This speech, must be unveiled	Pawòl sila, dwatèt devwale
Our mission is to unveil	Misyon pa nou se devwale
all that is not good in our eyes	tout sak pa bon nan je nou
Our mission, our mission	Misyon pa n, misyon pa n
Our mission is for the country	Misyon pa n se pou peyi a
to bring forth a better life	rale yon vi miyò
Without us crashing and burning	Sa nou pa ni kraze brize
Our local productions	Pwodiksyon lakay nou yo
Don't forget it's us who makes them, protects them	Pa bliye se nou k fè yo, pwoteje yo
Today life becomes more expensive	Jounen jodi lavi a vin pi chè,
Misery multiplies	Mizè miltipliye
Only the Eternal can say a word	Letènèl Selman ki kapab di yon mo
My friends, look at this trial	Mezanmi, gade yon tray
Can we hold on?	Eske nou ka kenbe?
God, what is there for me to do?	Oh, Bondye ki sa pou nou fè
The misery gets worse	Mizè a vin pi rèd
Don't forget we are in America	Pa bliye se an Amerik nou ye
That makes us not developed	Pou ki nou pa devlope
Countries in Europe are not in misery	Peyi ki an Ewop pa nan mizè
Like in Haiti	Menm jan ak Ayiti
When we recall the history of our country	Lè n ap rele istwa peyi nou
It's something that makes our hearts happy	Se bagay ki te fè kè nou kontan
Today we cannot talk	Jounen Jodi nou pa ka pale
Of the history of our country	de istwa bèl ti peyi nou an
When we recall the history of our country	Lè n ap raple istwa peyi nou
It's something that makes our history happy	Se bagay ki te fè nou kontan
So beautiful was our little country	Tèlman ti peyi nou an te bèl
They called it the beauty of the Antilles	Yo te rele li bèl dezanti
A cup[37] of rice sells for 50 goud ($1.20)	Mamit diri vann 50 goud
The country is ruined	Peyi a fin depafini
The big are swallowing the little	Pi gwo k ap vale pi pitit
O o o… Don't give a damn about those guys	O o o … Kite mele nèg yo
A little box of milk sells for 20 goud ($.50)	Yon ti bwat lèt vann 20 goud

[37] In Haiti, bulk goods are usually purchased by the small or large "mamit," or the standard round tin cans used by U.S. canned food packers. The former (No. 303 can) holds 1lb. of lard or 20.57 fluid ounces. The latter (No. 10 can), to which the song refers, yields 5 lbs. of lard and 110.7 fluid ounces (Mintz 1961).

Everyone who is rich is getting richer	Tout moun ki rich ap vin pi rich
(We) don't give a damn about *those guys*	Kite mele nèg yo
The country turns into a mess	Peyi a tonbe nan tchouboum
(We) don't give a damn about *those guys*	Kite mele nèg yo …
Our ancestors fought to give us liberty	Zansèt nou yo te batay yo ba nou libète
That was something historic we'll never forget	Se yon bagay istorik nou p ap jan m bliye
Today we feel discouraged	Jounen Jodi annou santi nou dekouraje
Oh! Dessalines say a word for us	O Desalin di yon mo pou no
1803 we fought Napoleon's army	1803 nou te bat lame Napoleon
1804 we became independent	1804 nou vin tonbe endependan
In 2004 we take a *moral occupation*	en 2004 nou pran yon okipasyon moral
Oh! Eternal say a word for us	O letènèl di yon mo pou nou
Shoo! The *Clorox* bleaches us, yes	Chichi[38] klowòks la blanchi n, wi
We take this *kou* ("punch" or "*coup*")	Nou pran kou sa
It's a surprise, yes	Se yon sipriz wi
We profit from this occasion to thank the youth	N ap pwofite remèsye jèn yo
who don't make violence	ki pa fè vyolans
who can wait for a better life	k ap ret tann yon vi miyò

Much like "My Misery, By Myself," this song emanates from a "respected" voice among the people, adopting the collaborative "we" while still speaking from an authoritative position. It likewise opens with an address that constructs the Sanba as "unveiling" an urgent "speech" about the people's plight. The following verses foreshadow that this speech will center on Clorox, highlighting the recent uprisings or "crash and burn" and the need for national production, and also detailing the class battle at the root of the escalating prices. Like *they* in "My Misery, By Myself," the more aggressive term *those guys* here emerge to effect a category of the wealthy and powerful against the category of the people. Yet while these lines might appear to juxtapose only, as people say, the "big importers" (*gwo komèsan*) against those who are suffering from high food prices, the following lines point to the possibility that those people also embraced international culprits of the expensive life. Buttressed by nostalgic longings for revolutionary

[38] *Chichi* is the sound that Haitians make to "shoo" a chicken from the house or yard.

glory, again in the guise of Dessalines, the colonial era is here aligned with the peacekeeping mission, MINUSTAH, begun in 2004. The curious line, "In 2004, we take a *moral* occupation" situates this foreign intervention as entailing not only political but also ethical consequences. It refers, on the one hand, to the unjustified, and therefore, immoral intrusion of the UN (and other foreign agencies) in a recognized sovereign state. But it also suggests that insofar as these agencies are "in charge," they have presided over a moral violation of the people in the form of "multiplying misery." They have presided, that is, over the expensive life and its ensuing hunger. This was stressed in the following lines, which delivered the song's slogan, "Shoo! The Clorox bleaches us! We take this *kou!"*

It is hard to say exactly why *Clorox* was such an infectious and enticing metaphor. Its qualities surely captured the essence of hunger. But its attraction was also because bleach was understood as an "actant" (Latour 1999) with many powers, giving *Clorox* the potential for several meanings. It was clear that people had great fun adding new layers to the pun to comment on diverse aspects of the expensive life. Take, for example, the lines *Shoo! Clorox bleaches us!* and *We take this kou.* In the first phrase, the lightening powers of bleach are used to invoke the "whitening" of the political community, while the term *shoo* invokes the idea of an unwanted outsider (an animal) in the household. As such, the line plays on the dual meaning of *blan* as a category of color and citizenship and comments on the intrusion of white/foreign foods and armies into the country. The second line then plays on the disorienting qualities of bleach by referring to Clorox as a *kou* or "punch." But since *kou* can also refer to a "*coup d'état,*" this line associates the expensive life and the *coup* against Aristide in 2004 with foreign influence and intervention. Playing on the dual meaning of *kou* has long been in the protest song repertoire. McAlister reports that in 1990 another version was adopted (*Yo bay nou kou. Kou a fè ou mal.*

["They give us a punch. The punch hurts us."]) to express disapproval of the attempted *coup* against Aristide. I also heard this version. Yet through the idiom *Clorox*, My Business Band added another dimension. They not only protested the coup and the illegitimate "occupation" that resulted. They also configured the expensive life as a kind of moral *coup*, destroying lives and communities. This recollection of past uses and its relation to the current debate surrounding *Clorox*—what Bakhtin would call its "dialogism" (1981)—compelled these lines' controversial meaning. It helped frame this veiled, multivalent critique, which framed this song a *chan pwen*, a "point song."

Like those between rival bands (see chapter two), this *chan pwen* drew on the political arena to make its point. Yet unlike these rivalry songs, it was oriented less toward shaming another band than toward criticizing those with power, including local big men and national or foreign figures on the political stage. While waging this political critique of "those people," this slogan was intended to rally "the people." In fact, when Denis finished dictating this song, he told me that it was good that other bands would be talking about Clorox (even the band with which they were in a polemic) since it would put more force behind the message.[39] The widespread wordplay of *Clorox,* that is, came to unite the localized bases into a popular crowd and define the worldview of a larger public. Denis did, however, note an undertone of competition when he told me their "slogan" was better.

Yet despite this generality, these slogans could still address local structures of power. This was made clear in one outing of My Business Band. It is customary for bands to perform an

[39] The lines to which he was referring were "Clorox Hunger has become unbridled, We feel like we can't go on!" (*Grangou klowòks fin mande dechennen, Nou santi nou pa kapab ankò*!)performed by Tèt Kole Band. More Clorox songs are transcribed in the appendix.

honorary salute, or *ochan*, to their sponsors. This salute, whether performed for governmental agents at the *Champs de Mars* or local sponsors in the neighborhood, acknowledges hierarchical authority. While My Business Band did not signal their ties to the Sanba Boukman in the performance, they did recognize the president when they approached his store. While usually a respectful gesture, on the third pre-Carnivalesque Sunday, this *ochan* took on a new dimension. As usual, when the band began the salute, the sponsor, a middle-aged, portly man dressed in a pair of basketball shorts and a t-shirt, came to the door and stood on the front steps of the two-story cement building. He looked out at the band and the amassing crowd while bowing and gesturing to tip an imaginary hat. When the band neared the end of this salute, Denis then offered a twist on the *ochan*. He began to recite a small poem that communicated, as he put it, the band's "respect for their sponsor." He sang:

Pleasant Sunday, Mister	Bon dimanch Mesye
It's your people	Se pèp nou
Look at the big thanks we are giving	Gade granmèsi n ap fè la
Tell us, tell us, tell us…[40]	Di nou, di nou, di nou…
Where can the people find a small bite	Kote pèp la ka jwen ti mòso

In this salutation and salute, Denis can be seen to have enacted the careful "footing" (Goffman 1981) in which the band presented who they relationally were and what role they were enacting. Through music and words the band signaled, in other words, their deference and another's duty, or both the social hierarchy and social contract that defined the relationship between the local big man and the people. In this way, they offered their gratitude while also demanding more support. The reference to the "small bite" served to request, as does the very *ochan* itself, that the sponsor (as well as audience members) continue to monetarily support the band. And amid *Clorox* this phrase was especially charged. It invoked both the stockpiles of food at the warehouse and the

[40] After these lines, Denis uttered an expression that was unintelligible to me, and to most others, as no one could reproduce it when I asked about it.

hunger of the people. Immediately following the *ochan*, the chorus, in fact, began to sing the pithy lines, "Shoo! The Clorox bleaches us. We take this *coup*. It's a surprise!" Their crowd was already large at this point. Yet, as they climbed the narrow passageway into the neighboring zone, joining two other bands with similar messages, the surge of bodies completely blocked the street, providing a powerful visual of their force.

Once this procession was complete, we all returned to the base. After everyone had finished sharing the meal that Ellie had prepared that morning, I asked Denis about his remarks to the storeowner. He seemed to brush aside the question and instead told me about the importance of the meal the group had just shared. He told me, "If we do not distribute (*separe*) the food for everyone then the hunger will remain in the gut. This will make us weak next week." In this way, he highlighted the notions of feeding and community that marked the negation of their *Clorox*-based message. This comment, in fact, echoed an earlier conversation in which Denis explained to me the meaning behind the slogan, "Shoo! The Clorox bleaches us. We take this *coup*. It's a surprise":

> The expensive life turns us into animals. The state does not respect us. No work makes one. No school makes two. But Clorox is too much. We say, "Shoo, shoo, shoo…!" Animal breeds (*fè*) animal. The people will die standing up.[41]

Like others, Denis invoked hunger as the central index of the people's misery and the metaphor through which to understand this misery. As a discourse about hunger, Clorox again drew the cultural significance associated with the state of hunger. In other words, it was used to not only rhetorically display the physical suffering of the people, but also to signal their anger and frustration—and thus, to threaten popular uprising. Hence, insofar as this situation marked the state's disrespect for the people, it also imagined the possibility of retaliatory disrespect *from* the

[41] Personal conversation, January 2009.

people. “The people will die standing up,” a phrase repeated often in song and everyday talk about *Clorox*, conveyed a fight till the end.

Such aggressive talk explains why much has been written about the use of *pwen* and slogans as “arts of resistance,” as a culturally specific example of what Scott noted as the usage of the “hidden transcript” in the “infrapolitics of the powerless” (1990:viii). It has been amply noted, for example, that such word *wanga* exploits figurative language, indirect address, and performance frames, like song, in order to cast aspersions or criticisms while veiling authorship, targets, and intention. Moreover, the manner of their circulation allows senders to avoid semantic responsibility. The meanings of sent *pwen*, as Karen Richman (2005) has shown, are determined not by those who create them but by those “who perceive them, by those who, it is said, ‘pick them up’ (*ranmase*)”—and become their “masters” (*mèt*). Yet, and without contesting the genre’s ability to express dissidence, I wish to suggest that those who throw *pwen* are concerned with more than exercising defiance. They are also concerned to effect alliances by expressing ethical conflict, and to induce positive change in the target’s attitudes or behavior toward the moral community. Indeed, this attention to our “friends and enemies” (Schmitt 2007) explains why *pwen* are called—even when they are not intertextual with political discourse—*slogan* in Bel Air. In line with Schmitt, they remind us that politics begins with a passionate act. Whether a pithy label, a coded accusation, or both, the *pwen* is identified with emotional world making, since their usage signals accordance or discordance with persons, situations, or viewpoints. “The socially prized way to respond to a *pwen*,” McAlister notes, “is to return it with another point, enlarging the frame of discourse by challenging or embellishing the utterance of the first communicator.”

More generally, sloganeering and point-sending exemplify the way in which people in Bel Air conceptualize language and thought in sensory and economical terms. The term *Clorox* spoke to the way language is approached as a medium for making others "feel" or "see" (*wè*) things in a particular way; that words aim not to describe social life but to "excite" (*anraje*, *eksite*), "touch" (*touche*), or "poke" (*pike*) others by invoking sensual portrayals *of* social life. There are many examples of such pithy and potent labels beyond *Clorox.* The violence that followed the 2004 *coup* was called "Baghdad" since for those in Bel Air, it not only felt like a war zone but was also seen as an illicit attack on them. And the name for the 2010 earthquake, *goudougoudou*, replicates the sound of the massive tremors that leveled the city and took so many lives; as such, it revisits the panic of that day while simultaneously sanitizing it into a witticism. These entextualized expressions also illustrate the importance placed on an economical manner of speech in which interpretations emerge as hints not commands. They attest, in other words, to the strong aversion people feel toward being told what and how to think or act. No two things are more derided in Bel Air than "speaking too much" or "giving orders." And the two tend to go together. Speaking with respect, the prized form of discourse, entails using as few words as possible to figuratively provide a maximum of socially relevant details without, as Keith Basso puts it in another context, appearing to "insult the imaginative capabilities of other people" (1996:85).[42] Gesturing toward rather than commanding a particular worldview conveys respect for your interlocutor, since there is, then, a choice of uptake. The genre of "sending points," then, is also used to convey moral lessons, or the proper way to

[42] Keith Basso's work focuses on belief and language among the Western Apache in Cibecue, Arizona. He writes, "With too many words, such a speaker acts to smother his or her audience by seeming to say, arrogantly and coercively, 'I *demand* that you see everything that happened, how it happened, and why it happened, *exactly* as I do' In other words, persons who speak too much insult the imaginative capabilities of other people, 'blocking their thinking,' as one of my consultants said in English, and 'holding down their minds'" (85).

behave or respond to a situation without engaging in direct confrontation. In relaying *Clorox* (or a Clorox-based expression), an individual was not only encouraging "comrades" to "see" the expensive life in this way, but also calling for the targets to remedy their ways. Put differently, sending a point is as much about the gestural interpellation of possible "masters" of the message as the evasion of authorial mastership. As Denis put it, "we sing [the] slogan *klowòks*. It's for us to *revandike* (reclaim or right) something. *You* [speaking to me] want to know if those people pick up the point? Well, gather it, send it… Or rather just leave it. That is their own choice… The people will die standing up [singing]."

In the weeks following the outing detailed above, the impression grew among people in Bel Air that the message behind the many *Clorox* songs had taken hold, at least provisionally. I was repeatedly told that market women were being more generous with the little bit extra that they routinely added to the small *mamit* people purchased, and that vendors of cooked food, where most people got their only daily meal, were also being more forthcoming. And word quickly spread that two main storehouses, including the one that sponsored My Business Band, had (again) lowered the price of a large sack of rice. Insofar as this social appeasement was occurring, it was even more ephemeral than the governmental price reduction in April. To me, it seemed practically unquantifiable. However, what is perhaps more significant is the way in which this protest movement was perceived to mimic the April protests, so that in the end the processions of bands like My Business were understood to relive both the force of the people earlier in the year and also the tenuous and episodic existence of the state and its presumed duties. Or, as Denis put it once all had passed: "We made the state appear in Bel Air like we did in April.

[…] The people can make 'those people' have concern for us again if we organize. That's politics. But, the presence of the state. That's something that's not durable."[43]

Conclusions

Traversing many scenes and many stages, this chapter has two goals. First, I have attempted to sketch the ways in which the category of "the people" is imagined, addressed, and "shown" in Haiti. My focus on *the people* rather than *the nation* is guided by the fact that these two words are far more salient in political discourse in Haiti, as in several other unequal societies. Moreover, the way many in Bel Air used *the people* often seemed to trouble both the limits and expansiveness of nationalist thought. Effecting and mobilizing the category of the people, for example, had less to do with asserting citizenship status than "showing" an otherwise neglected population through subaltern readings of history, spectacular displays of the crowd, and poetic assertions of collective misery. And here the people emerged as both more specific and broader than the citizenry, at the nexus of the nation and the poor, *the demos*. Hence, whereas the phrase *the people* (as used in Haiti but also elsewhere) often represents the majority, this political community draws its cohesion less from an imaginary of horizontal camaraderie within a territorially bound state (Anderson 1991)[44] than from a common structural position within a class-based society. Yet this is not to say that *the people* cannot be deployed in the name of the nation or in the service of nationalistic rhetoric. Indeed, the inaugural event of national community in the U.S., the Declaration's assertion of "We, the people" (Lee 1995), might be understood as having less to do with creating "*a* people" with common cultural and historical

[43] Committee Meeting, June 2009.

[44] I recognize that Anderson presents an ideal-type that is open to national forms other than those premised on a capitalistic imaginary of "free and equal" individuals. The rhetoric of "the people" or "the masses," for example, has played a key role in imagining communist nations. Yet my point is that this rhetoric does not necessarily presume thinking in terms of the nation.

content than with positioning a population as vulnerable to wealthier interests and in need of state power and protection (recall: "no taxation without representation"). As I have shown, the notion of the people is invoked in public performances to both engage in nationalistic sentiment against predatory foreign forces and to demand a stronger and more just rule from the economic and political elite in Haiti. What is significant is the way these invocations illustrate how the people refers to multiple publics. Put differently, the people is a category that is capable of *recurring* at "different levels of contrast" (Irvine and Gal 2000:38), alternately referring to relations that are highly local, to the urban and rural poor, and to the people of Haiti. In all instances, the people were rhetorically constructed through a discursive address of the people (Warner 2002). Equally important for this construction was the articulation of shared grievances, and in turn, not only their culprits but also potential sources of redress. In other words, and as Dewey (1927) long ago suggested, the discursive production of "the people" as a public in need of a state depended on the articulation of common problems and the need for leadership at multiple scales.

The second aim of this chapter, therefore, has been to explore how showing the people engages power and why the performative has such a privileged role in the process. I have demonstrated that at this particular historical conjuncture in Haiti, when the field of governance is defined less by a repressive sovereign power than by a diffuse, transnational network of forces in which sovereign responsibility is wanting, the logic of domination versus resistance fails to fully grasp the ethical and political dimensions of popular politics. The words and deeds crafted by people like Anton, Denis, and Ellie certainly "resist" the misery that defines their social position. Yet it would be wrong to suggest that these activities can be defined as acts of resistance (or even accommodation or subversion) against "the state." What their actions attest to

is rather the difficulties of staying within a binary logic of the people versus the state when the latter is overshadowed by a host of foreign players. And therefore, they illustrate the ways in which critiques of power are often about *particular* powers, and as such, also constitute longings for other forms of power and dependencies. In performing the people as in need and deserving of social respect, these "spokespeople" and their publics have inverted an Althusserian framework in which the state interpellates subjects who otherwise desire autonomy. Instead, their words and deeds expressed an aspiration to "hail" state authority and duty by concretizing the sovereignty of the people in public.

A final scene makes the point.

On the fourth Sunday of Carnival, the band Grap Plezi (On the Move) descended the main hill leading from Platon Bel Air to *Champs de Mars*. The chorus was unusually well pronounced among the blaring music, making it easy to sing along to their song, "My Misery, I'm Dealing" (*Mizè M, M ap Jere*). Like many, it incorporated a riff on the *Clorox* theme, though this time in the form of a carnivalesque *betiz,* or grotesque pun. Using a sexual trope for characterizing domination in Haiti, anal sex, it cast the expensive life as the ultimate violation:

Clorox is in my ass	Klowòks nan dada m
My Misery, I'm dealing, I can't support it	Mizè m m ap jere, m pa ka sipote

These were not, however, the lines that were picked up and emphasized. Instead it was a series of questions posed in the middle of the song that inquired about the whereabouts of the state. As the voices turned into shouts and the crowd heated up, something interesting developed. Not only did some of the singers begin to repeat only this set of questions, but others matched each question with a powerful refrain asserting the presence of the people:

Where are the directors of the country?	Kòt dirijan peyi yo?
Whoa, here are the people!	*Woy, men moun yo!*
Where are the ministers of the country?	Kòt minis peyi a?

Whoa, here are the people!	*Woy, men moun yo!*
Where is the mayor of the country?	Kot majistra peyi a?
Whoa, here are the people!	*Woy, men moun yo!*
Tell me, where the "aid" goes?	Di m kot ed pase?
Whoa, here are the people!	*Woy, men moun yo!*
Do we have a state that cares for us?	Eske nou gen yon leta k ap panse pou nou?

Soon, the crowd was able to carry this refrain alone. This call and response pattern continued throughout the procession, interrupted only by the period when the band played the full song for the officials who had gathered to make selections for the three fat days.

The refrain "Whoa, here are the people!" has long figured in popular movements and socially engaged (*angaje*) music in Haiti. These three little words, *men moun yo*, affirm, especially when sung amid the crowd, the overwhelming presence and power of the majority. A key slogan of the democratic movement, this phrase reappeared in 1991 as the refrain to the widely popular carnival song by the "roots" band Boukman Eksperyans. Here these words acted as an assertion and a challenge that the majority was present, active, and willing to assert their call for change against the minority who longed for the status quo (McAlister 2002). This was certainly at work on this day. Yet the questions *"Where are the directors, ministers, mayors?"* signaled that something else was at stake.

This series of questions, in fact, turned on another timeworn lyric: *Kote moun yo? M pa wè moun yo* (Where are these people? I don't see these people). This lyric has also long been used in the song repertoire to demand that those who are mistreating us come out of hiding.[45] In a way, by shifting the subjects of the inquiry to governmental officials, "My Misery, I'm Dealing," recalled this meaning and implored *these people* to come forward. Yet "My Misery,

[45] This lyric also resurfaced in the early 1990s during the de facto period following the first *coup* against Aristide. Posed by another popular roots band, RAM, at Carnival in 1992, these lines gained new signification in this context. They seemingly asked about the thousands of people who were had been killed, imprisoned, forced to flee, or silenced by the military regime (Averill 1997; McAlister 2002).

I'm Dealing" configured not a set of overbearing, conniving repressors so much as a set of figureheads that had abandoned a population that was present and in need of services, protection, and patronage. "Where are the directors?... Whoa, but the people!" implored those at the helm of power, as a member of the band told me, to "appear and do their job."

CHAPTER FIVE

The Feelingful State: Idleness, Agency, and the Mediation of Masculine Pleasure

> The sky was distressing blue. Misery was black. Faces were colorless. Drums had sounded at the four corners of the city. Vincent had given a magnificent speech on the radio in which flights of literary artistry had rivaled barely veiled threats…The demagogue had sponsored several koudyay and popular feasts for the people and all the beggars came running. He had even gone in person to the lower class sections of town where the lumpen proletariat were cramped. He gave coins to kids and a few pats on the behind to women—and he had a drink with the men. "Papa Vincent is a good old boy!" sang the drunks.
>
> Jacques Stephen Alexis, *General Sun, My Brother*, 1955

In Jacques Stephen Alexis' 1955 novel *General Sun, My Brother*, the caricatured politician, President Vincent, teaches his underling a few lessons in political strategy at a critical moment of popular unrest. Gazing from his gold and velvet presidential office at the "dark blocks" of Bel Air, where a dissident organizer is "stirring up" the people (174,178), he proposes an arsenal of appeasement: lowering parliamentary salaries, importing foodstuffs with the money saved, jailing senators, bribing the army, and forcing the ministers to outlaw communists and then firing them afterward. For the final tactic Vincent envisions a grand display of might and largess. He calls for U.S. warships to guard the harbor and for several popular fests like "*bouillon*, *koudyay*, and dances in the marketplace" (1999:178) "That's how you get the rabble to retreat," he lectures his wide-eyed would-be successor (178). Shortly after, he puts this politicking to work. We learn of his magnificent radio address replete with beautifully coded threats, and of his partying, carousing, and gifting in Bel Air and other popular quarters. "'Papa Vincent is a good old boy!' sang the drunks" (183).

Enforcing and manipulating relations of power through elaborate yet seemingly spontaneous displays of force, performance, and patronage have long defined the game of politicking in Haiti. This display has also long articulated what may be called the performative incarnation of manliness, or to borrow from Herzfeld (1985:16), what makes a male not a "good man" but "*good at being a man.*" This nexus of masculine and political performance is, perhaps, best represented by the *koudyay*. Invoking colonial era military celebrations held in honor of victories and coronations, *koudyay* names the somewhat impromptu street festivals or "little Carnivals" that are orchestrated by powerful personages or institutions at the national or local level. Derived from the French *coup de jaille*, meaning "gush out" or "burst forth," *koudyay* suggest a carnivalesque atmosphere of revelry, liberation, and liveliness not unlike the orgasmic, masculine form of pleasure captured in the French term "*jouissance."* Called simply "feeling" (*filing*) in Haiti, this pleasure denotes excessiveness and liberation, a breaking free from limited and limiting subjectivities in *active* enjoyment (Barthes 1975; Zizek 1989). "Feeling" is best expressed en masse, through musically, kinesthetically, and socially harmonized movement and bodily experience among a crowd. Modeled on the ephemeral experiences of erotic ecstasy or intoxication, feelingful moments are not self-generated but rather presuppose and entail powerful sources of stimulation, including musical, mystical, and political power.

Like the fictional President Vincent, many organized men in Bel Air imagined their claims to power and respect to rest on their abilities to provide a good-old-boy form of pleasure for the zone by hosting *koudyay*-like events and outings. Whereas their expressive displays of misery in song and everyday talk were oriented around the interpellation of state power, these *koudyay* activities were the means through which they could inhabit the role and share the feeling of power. However apolitical they may seem, these moments were often described as a

form of "doing politics" (*fè politik*). And, as Wittgenstein (2003) teaches us, what we do is inextricably connected to our descriptions of what we are doing, to the intentions by which we take ourselves to be acting (Anscombe 2000). Put differently, in this chapter, I argue that insofar as political power is embodied in manly displays of "feeling," the production of feelingful moments is an effort to embody state-like power. While the annual festivals of Carnival and Rarnaval certainly represent a form of "*koudyay* politics" (Averill 1997), my focus will instead be the series of events designed to keep the zone active and feelingful beyond these events. In particular, I examine the events of the block party, beach day, and soccer game as arenas in where males presented themselves as men—with varying degrees of bigness—by enacting the phallic fantasy of being a locus and source of pleasure for the zone. It has become commonplace for scholars to analyze the role political power plays in female subordination. Yet as Stephen Gregory has pointed out, the fact that those who hold power are men, "a politically constituted and exercised category," is seldom analyzed (2003:327). Even more rare is the analysis of manliness as the performative model for a certain kind of political power. My contention is that grandiose and everyday enactments of masculinity articulate a political architecture premised on a "sensorium" (Berlant 2000) of masculine sovereign power. [1] Within this sensorium, one might say, riffing off Gregory, that if it is real, power should *feel* good.

Ironically, however, the overwhelming attention paid to displaying manliness in Bel Air occurred alongside men's everyday emasculation. As members of the so-called lumpen proletariat, most men were far removed from the productive and remunerative lifestyle they valorized. Not only could they not provide for their children or the women with whom they had them, but they were also often dependent on entrepreneurial women. While not exactly

[1] It is important to stress that these sex acts are not exactly heterosexual or even heteronormative. The essential point is rather that they are masculine.

supplanting men's pervasive sense of idleness and dependency, these highly performative *rites of feeling* nonetheless served to elide, and therefore abate, *routine feelings* of unmanliness.

How to be a man in a time of idleness

In his groundbreaking 1973 ethnography of Providencia, Peter Wilson proposes a gendered framework for understanding social value and respect in the Caribbean. He argues that whereas women achieve acclaim through colonial forms of respectability, the "indigenous" value system of "reputation stipulates the minimum requirements for manhood and respect" (150). A man gains reputation, he asserts, through the performance of desirability and virility, a taste for adventure, command of knowledge, mystical powers, and expressive skill. This schema has proven widely applicable (Abrahams 1983). Yet many have argued that this framework is excessively rigid, obscuring the complex interplay of respectability and reputation, women's pursuit of reputation, and women's participation in reputation enhancement for men (Besson 1993; Olwig 1990; Trouillot 1992). Without committing to any strict dichotomy, I maintain that thinking in terms of social accomplishments, like respect or respectability, rather than personal traits, is useful. Instead of aspiring toward an individualized notion of subjectivity, men in Bel Air sought what Nancy Munn (1986) called the "spatial-temporal extension" of the subject by *balancing* their performance in ongoing practice as both respectable and respected persons. Put differently, men aimed to embody nodes in an expansive social and ancestral network, the construction of which depended on their presentation of respectable fathers and respected "comrades."

Though not mutually exclusive, these roles were nonetheless in tension. In urban Haiti, as in the countryside, the domestic and marketing domain belongs to women, yet men are

nonetheless expected to participate in the life of the household. The respectable way for men in Bel Air to assert their manhood was by expanding their personhood as fruitful laborers and responsible fathers. In an important way, however, their claims to manliness went beyond their engagement as "providers" to the cultivation of influence and reputation in male social circles. This entailed demonstrating command of manly activities, like those coded as playful, risky, political, militant, and even unseemly. For example, in Bel Air, such manliness could be pursued "on the concrete," by getting involved in the politics of the base to some degree, whether as a member of a staff, band, organization, gang, or all of the above. In this way, and as Wilson would expect, it involved activating one's manhood through everyday and spectacular displays of manliness. This was accomplished by demonstrating virility, attractiveness, and success with women; by having an expansive social circle; enjoying obvious wealth; being able to tolerate "drug" (alcohol); and having mystical powers and physical strength. Of special significance among men in Bel Air was also a talent for effective, personalized expression. It was important that one cultivate performative prowess in areas as diverse as argumentation, songwriting, storytelling, and music. While most men desired to be providers (and acted on this intention), joblessness greatly restricted their abilities to do so. This, in turn, tended to leave the achievement of manliness to these less respectable yet respected pursuits.

"I have no activity" or "there's nothing going on" were the phrases I heard most frequently from young men in Bel Air. Though they were rejoinder to the casual greeting, "What are you up to?" these expressions were not without antipathy. More often than not, they quickly led to the everyday laments that began "without activity" and ended with phrases like: "I'll remain in misery," "I won't ever become a grown person," or "I won't marry." These predictions

spoke to gendered critiques of widespread unemployment in liberalized and urbanized Haiti.[2] They underscored the fact that insofar as males were incapable of securing gainful employment, they were also unable to fulfill the role of men. Echoing Catherine Maternowska's (2006) observations in nearby Cité Soleil, I also regularly listened as young men complained about their mounting age and their inability to establish a formal union, since they could not yet afford the chocolates, daisies, or outings required to court a mate, let alone pay for a wedding or conjugal household. They proclaimed that they did not want to end up like the "vagabond" who did not see their wives for want of money to share with them. Against such grievances, assertions of "no activity" functioned as more than empirical observations. They were also tools with which men "*did gender*" (West and Zimmerman 1987). They helped men performatively affirm their manhood by justifying their failure to exhibit respectable gender expectations, like earning a living, marrying, or providing for a household. In light of my female gaze, they were, to be sure, also used as excuses for fact that they were passing the day with undignified but still masculine "distractions."

The streets of Bel Air attest to the confluence of male idleness and distraction. Dotting its corners and crevices are crews of able-bodied men—aged somewhere between late teens and forties—seated around makeshift bases and keeping themselves busy with a robust exchange of *bay blag*, the masculine form of gossip that translates as "telling jokes" but might be better glossed as "talking smack." Many also engage in small or no stakes games of dominoes, as they await the lotto drawings on the radio. When the "state is giving electricity," as people say,

[2] Unemployment is extremely difficult to assess in Haiti, since much of the economy is unregulated. The CIA World Factbook reports, for example, a forty percent unemployment rate, and then notes that more than two thirds of the workforce do not have formal employment (2012). While most men in Bel Air engage in some sort of income-generating activity, of the ninety-three households I interviewed only eighteen (less than twenty percent) were headed by a man who acted as the main provider.

groups of men line up behind televisions beaming from the galleries of households that double as small boutiques. If they are lucky, an international soccer match is being aired, but more often they're following an endless loop of popular Haitian and U.S. hip-hop videos. Poverty imposes a sobering effect, but many still find the means to "get feeling" with a Dixie-cup of sugarcane liquor and a few high-nicotine Haitian cigarettes and occasionally some marijuana. Although Bel Air is a key market for cocaine and heroin, these were less often consumed. Their high cost reserved them for higher income clients residing elsewhere. As a central arena of masculine pleasure, sex with women, and in particular extra-conjugal sex, was another key arena of distraction, and a topic of conversations.

Against this backdrop of male distraction, however, is the daily bustle of women engaged in the kinds of informal labor usually unrecorded in unemployment figures. The streets are filled with female residents "manning" all sorts of enterprises. Several run sidewalk stands that sell edibles like fruit and vegetables, bread, sticky confections, snacks, or the fixings for quick meals, while others vend daily essentials like soaps and toiletries. Those with smaller means occupy small canteens serving hot meals or fresh juice, while those with even less peddle cold drinks from plastic coolers, candies from large fanner baskets, sugarcane liquor from wooden cabinets, or used clothes spread out on sheets. Still more hawk all sorts of goods from baskets balanced on their heads as they meander through the streets. And while a "big man" is usually behind the small boutiques or depots in Bel Air, a woman is almost always its public face, managing its daily exchanges of credits and profits. Many women also labor elsewhere, employed as domestics in wealthier households, vending at other markets, or assembling foreign goods in the city's female-dominated light industrial factories. Not far from view, moreover, is the daily grind

of those engaged in supporting the household. Just away from the street, in small yards and corridors, women gather to wash clothes, occupy children, or prepare food.

It is not, however, only women in Bel Air who can be found working. Male "street children" wander the zone selling plastic packets of water from thirty-pound sacks resting on their heads. And male adolescents line the streets peddling cellular phone cards or calls from stationary cell phones. Many older men in Bel Air also continue to conduct "men's work" as tailors or cobblers, construction workers, repairmen, electricians, plumbers, and handymen.

All this laboring and entrepreneurialism seemed to boldly contradict men's assertion and social excuse of having nothing to do. Yet when I asked them about it, they usually found a way of either affirming their predicament or devaluing these forms of work. They dismissed the female laborers as engaged in "women's work," or the younger male vendors as engaged in a "little job" for children. In contrast, they envied those who had their own "activity" (*aktivite*) or "business" (*bisnis*). This is interesting, for it reflected the entanglement of masculinity and agency. While boldly complaining about "no work," young men frequently told me that they preferred to create their own activity rather than take on female duties, like housework or marketing, or take a job working for someone else, a structurally feminine position. Respected male work implied being one's own boss or holding a position with a degree of power. The significant distinction, one might say, was between work as toil and work as action ("activity"). Garnering social esteem in work rested not on earning money alone but on one's ability to *act,* that is, "create," in the world. Semerite, a young husband and father who ran a small sewing business "designing" jeans with fancy adornments, echoed many when he told me why he left a sweatshop after a few weeks. "That work, that's not a good activity. You'll find a little money, but after that, what else? It's for animals, not Bel Air men." He then quoted a proverb, which

articulated the valorization of men as fruitful laborers and sources of nurturance: "Work for yourself but eat with others."[3]

Echoing a Marxian idea of unalienated labor, this point of view articulated a certain longing for sovereign agency in work. By this I do not mean control over life and death, but rather a broader idea of sovereignty as the condition of being an agent capable of acting in the world (Markell 2003). The idea is developed in Isaiah Berlin's account of "positive" liberty, which refers not merely to the absence of obstructions but to a broader condition of intentionality:

> The positive sense of the word liberty derives from the wish on the part of the individual to be his own master. […] I wish to be somebody, not nobody; a doer—deciding, not being decided for, self-directed and not acted upon by external nature as if I were a thing, or an animal, or a slave incapable of playing a human role, that is, of conceiving goals and policies of my own and realizing them. (2002:178)

However, as the proverb reminds us, the notion of sovereign agency sought in Bel Air is not equivalent to a notion of total independence, or what Arendt calls "uncompromising self-sufficiency and mastership" (1998:234). Rather, it affirms the desire to inhabit the role of a provider whose "provisions" successfully entangle one in an expanding network of social relations.

This was, to say the least, not easily realized in the city. While reluctant to take on dehumanizing work, the vast majority of men claimed to be struggling to attain the start-up capital to undertake an independent business. As a result, they found themselves abandoning their roles as providers (or even partners) and instead exhibiting their manliness with distractions. Many others, however, sought to create their own income-generating activity by taking on a leading role in the area's street life. Not surprisingly, this involved providing collective,

[3] Personal conversation, June, 2009.

grandiose distractions for the zone in line with a sovereign display more akin to excessive expenditure than will-directed agency.[4] This was the case for the five core committee members of ZapZap, some of whom I have already introduced: Jak, Bernie, Kal, Berman, and Frantzy. Yet before detailing their activities, it is useful to describe their personal situations, since these men exemplified the range of gender roles among men in Bel Air.

ZapZap, short for "*Zafè pèp la, Zafè peyi a*" (the affairs of the people, the affairs of the country), is a highly politicized Rara group, which was founded in 1992 and was well supported by Aristide. Its members also formed part of a staff called *Staff Martin Luther King*, and they were known to be members of a secret society, or *chanpwèl,* called *Chanpwèl Blada*, which mimics the sound of "brother" in Jamaican English. Together, these names spoke to the framing of a populist, and at times, nationalist ideology within the terms of an Afro-Atlantic worldview emphasizing racial solidarity. In line with more bureaucratic discourse, two affiliated youth social organizations also called them members: "Youth Organization for the Renaissance of Bel Air" (OJREB) and "Organization of Moral Youth for the Enrichment of Education in Bel Air" (OJMOTEEB). Beyond these spiritual, musical, and organizational affiliations, Jak, Bernie, Berman, and Kal were also housemates. All except Frantzy slept at what was called "*Kay ZapZap*" (*kay* for house), a two-room apartment on the second floor of a concrete house at a prominent crossroads in Platon Bel Air. The six-room house was built by the mother of Berman's girlfriend, Nerlande, and it acted as a kind of neighborly shelter, housing upwards of twenty-five people each night.

[4] The notion of sovereignty as non-reciprocal exchange or excessive expenditure had been elaborated by, among others, Nietzsche, Bataille, and Derrida. While I do not wish to adopt this reading wholeheartedly, I do nonetheless acknowledge that the notion of sovereignty is manifested in varying degrees and in various ways.

Jak and Bernie, both men in their late twenties—well beyond marrying age—had never had a formal union. With minimal education, neither had any activity except for the share of ZapZap's profits they earned as musicians (playing *bambou*). They were always dressed in one or another promotional tee-shirt, oversized shorts, and mended flip-flops. Calling themselves "*tonton baz la"* (the uncles of the base), they often enacted a "dirty old man" character, making neighbors laugh with vulgar comments and jokes. They also regularly joked about their flirtations, which were usually non-existent. The last time that they could "search for wives" (*chache medam*) was under Aristide when they were given a job in Teleco and ZapZap was supported. Since then, they were neither capable of courting a wife nor even a *menaj* (committed girlfriend). They did, however, occasionally woo the casual sex partners called *ti zanmi* (little friends), which did not require much monetary investment (cf. de Zalduondo and Bernard 1995; Maternowska 2006). When I asked Jak if he had any children, he told me, "They tell me I have a little girl, but I've never seen her. She stays with her mother on *Rue Lamarre* (a few blocks away). I'm not like other men, *See-see*. I want to see her. But you must understand women in this zone are *di* (hard or difficult). Without money in my pocket I have no reason to go."[5]

Kal, slightly older in his mid-thirties, was in a formal union with Sophie, who lived with their nine-year-old daughter in her mother's house just down the road. Sophie's mother supported her and her daughter with the earnings from a small, household boutique and from the monthly remittances from her remarried husband, who worked as a livery cabdriver in New York. Kal could not contribute to the household, to say the least. Like Jak and Bernie, he had not had any steady income since 2004. He occasionally earned money as a committee member of ZapZap, as a musician in My Business Band, and through his other organizational work. He was

[5] Group conversation, October 20, 2008.

often hungry, and his hunger manifested itself in lassitude and rage. In fact, his "point name" *Kal*, which means soft or calm, played on the contrast between his everyday tranquility and violent temper. He was known to lash out at Sophie and to demand, sometimes violently, small change and meals. It was clear that he and Sophie were rarely on amicable terms. Nonetheless, he regularly walked his daughter to and from school, and on occasion he and Sophie were flirtatious and certainly intimate. Unlike Jak and Bernie, Kal sought no other female companion.

Berman, the oldest of all in his late thirties, had the most complicated personal life of all. When I met him in 2008, he had already long been engaged in a "*plasaj*" or committed partnership and had four children.[6] During the first year of our friendship, he was living with his "wife," as he called her, in a two-room apartment that he rented on the second floor of a concrete house for two years. In early 2009, he began an affair with Nerlande, a voluptuous, comely twenty-year-old mother of a three-year-old daughter. The affair was known throughout the zone, as he often spent the night at Nerlande's house (Kay ZapZap), and Berman's wife did not shy away from publicly chastising him.

In July 2009, he called with some "good news." On a walk shortly thereafter, he told me that his wife had given birth to their fifth child (later named my godson). The baby was born prematurely, and Berman needed help with the required hospital care. Almost in the same breath, and to my surprise, he announced that he loved Nerlande, wanted to have a child with her, and would soon be moving in with her. I could not help but show my disappointment, and I urged him to reconsider his decision. He retorted that he "loved" (*renmen*) Nerlande and that was God's choice. In a plea for understanding, he bowed his head and whimpered, "My wife gives

[6] *Plasaj*, which implies partnership and cohabitation, is the dominant form of union among the popular classes, yet marriage remains the only legally recognized union. This leaves poor women with few claims on the finances and inheritance of the men with whom they have had children and spent their lives.

me too much pressure, we have sex, but there's no love anymore, there's not even feeling. It's only *kote lajan, ban m lajan* (where's the money, give me money) all the time." He then told me in a more assertive tone that I was not to worry since he would "manage everyone very well" (*byen dirije tout*). He would still "see" his wife and help support his children (his proof being that he desired to help his hospitalized infant). And he mentioned that given Nerlande's "activity" as the local hair, nail, and makeup stylist, she could "help him more." In this way, Berman found a way of repositioning his extraconjugal sexual relations away from a selfish pursuit of pleasure to a moral endeavor aimed at supporting himself and his children. He had done the same when he told me of the relationship he maintained with a woman in Miami, who visited him during the summer and sent him "little gifts" throughout the year. Hence, while certainly a pleasurable escape from the stress of his household economy, these affairs were also not free of financial calculation. Though they attested to the "pressure" he faced as a father of five, they also affirmed his manly ability to multiply his funds and social network through sexuality. Of all the staff members, Berman garnered the most respect as a manly man. He dressed in flashy tee-shirts, stylized jeans, and sparkly sneakers and often sported a gold chain and fake diamond earrings. He was utterly charming, with an ear-to-ear smile that he passed on to others with an endless routine of witticisms and jokes. Better off than others, he often reminded me that he was responsible for the $625 annual rent (5000 Haitian dollars) on the apartment housing his wife and children. He earned money as the vice president of ZapZap, as a musician in My Business Band, and as a ranking member of two social organizations. Exhibiting spiritual prowess, he also ran a traditional healing practice. He normally had a few clients a week, from which he gathered payments ranging from one to thirteen dollars. Additionally, while he, like the others, no longer "worked for the state" (*travay pou leta*), he continued to "do politics"

(*fè politik*), which implied he was on the payroll of the government as well as that of Aristide's political party. None of this income was regular; consequently, his ability to act as a father or maintain his desirability was always in flux. As he saw it, this meant he had to constantly "manage his relations" (*dirije relasyon pa m*). By directing a network of women, he could negotiate his role as lover, provider, and dependent between them. In so doing, he did not aim to fully complete any role for one woman, but rather to "balance" his roles among them to create a composite performance of manhood.

Frantzy, the youngest at twenty years old, was the only staff member who did not spend nights at Kay ZapZap. As the secretary of ZapZap and a leading member of the youth social organizations OJREB and OJMOTEEB, he was a prominent member of the staff and was well respected in the neighborhood. Though he had no formal employment, he had experience in carpentry and often took on day jobs building houses in the neighborhood. He also earned money from his organizational activities, including his strong ties to "Yves ZapZap," a former soldier of "Baghdad" and now sponsor (and at times *kone* player) of the band. With his income, and even though his mother lived in Bel Air with his brother, he decided to rent a single-room plywood and tin shack for $125 per year on a corridor off Rue des Césars, a block away. His reason for doing so, he told me, was his desire to make his girlfriend, Cecile, his wife. They began living together in March 2010, and she gave birth to their son in December 2011.

Despite their various personal situations, all five men typically spent their days at Kay ZapZap. They would set up seats in or around the house's front gallery, adjacent to a snack bar and water dispensary operated by Nerlande's mother, or gather around the concrete bench, or "base" they built along the side of the house. They usually woke late, making it to the gallery around noon, where I often awaited them while getting the neighborhood news from Nerlande's

mother. Typically, they quietly watched the street, leisurely chatting and playing a game of dominoes. They were rarely drunk and hardly ever high, though they would gladly accept the opportunity to enhance their "feeling." Berman often retreated to a room in the back of the house to conduct a healing session, with Jak and Bernie sometimes helping out. During the few daily hours of electricity (usually 2 to 4 pm), they would watch the television on the counter of the snack bar. Some or all might also be found at the base of the staff MLK,[7] another concrete bench around the corner from the house, or seated on the shaded gallery of Kay Silva, the late well-known vodou flag maker. This entire corner was known as the "base" of ZapZap, and each day another nook might be claimed to establish an informal arena of male fellowship.

Enacting "the Man" at the *koudyay*

One afternoon in late October 2008, the staff, several other neighbors, and I were all crammed into the ten-foot-wide gallery of Kay ZapZap. We were finishing the customary inexpensive meal, a bowl of spaghetti, ketchup, and mayonnaise that Nerlande's mother had earlier prepared for everyone, when conversation picked up. Frantzy began by telling me that since 2004 the band had lost "force" and that it can't give the zone "good feeling." He complained that they had not really been "active" for four years, since by losing their "ancestors" during the *coup* period in 2004, they also lost "force." He told me, "We need the force of the youth. We won't let them stay sitting. We have to put them on the concrete, make a big activity, give everyone feeling! The first of November we'll make a big *koudyay,*" and then with a smirk, "just like in the Duvalier epoch." After stressing how it would entail "a lot of work," Berman

[7] Relations at the base are quite complicated and always in flux. It is worth noting that the staff of MLK runs OJMOTEEB, and that while only some of members of ZapZap are core members of the staff, all are affiliated with it and attend organizational activities.

added that on this day they would "*fè the man"* for the zone. Again emphasizing role enactment (as in "make state" or "do politics"), this expression combined the Creole word *fè*, meaning do, make, or perform with the popular English term *the man* (pronounced "day man"). I had heard this novel expression before, though in the context of women asking men to claim household responsibility. Here Berman moved from household to polity, invoking a paternalistic political discourse, in which the group would embody the "the man" for the zone. While "being the man" invoked an idea of providing pleasure for the zone (to which I will return), it also affirmed the belief that acting like a man provides its own pleasures. Against a backdrop of emasculating idleness, this manifestation of "the man" entailed enjoyment.

This expression of pleasure in agency was captured not in the event alone but in its full preparation. Following these remarks, the staff signaled that they were going to begin the process of planning the festival by holding a meeting in the backroom. When we entered the room, Berman began offering ideas on the street party. The conversation was soon heated, its noise spilling over into the whole house, as each offered his opinion. Children and teenagers began to gather around the door, eagerly listening to the news, before being shooed away. In the next few weeks this scene would repeat itself. During this time, I was less likely to find staff members distracting themselves on the gallery than engaged in a serious, argumentative discussion on the roof of the house or in the more private *demambre*, the small, spiritual hut in the adjacent yard, which housed their instruments and spiritual force and offerings. This constant cycle of "meetings" displayed that they were *active* and engaged in planning an important matter. In the moments before the party, they would exaggerate this show with a feverish *monte desan*, "up and down," and *reyinyon lanwi*, "all-night reunions," to arrange all the details, secure funds, and settle disputes. While staff members would regularly complain about being very busy, I rarely

heard them express fatigue during this activity, as they might when toiling away at women's work. There was a certain enjoyment in this commotion. I vividly remember one visit near the date of this party, when Jak greeted me by standing on the steps of the gallery and announced as he forcefully patted his right hand to his chest and smiled widely: "Me myself, I am doing a lot of activity today. Oh oh…a lot of work. Good feeling! *Travay se liberte*, work is liberty!"[8] An idiom repeated often in conversations about joblessness in Bel Air, *work is liberty* usually highlighted the oppression of poverty and the need for economic agency. Yet Jak's usage suggested that "work" produces not only an economic but also sensual liberation from misery, a "good feeling."

This enjoyment returns us to the significance of sovereign agency for valorizing particular forms of work. In contrast to a view of pleasure as a state achieved by having *been* active or productive, this form of pleasure was achieved through the performative process of *being* an agent of productivity. This good feeling was, however, unlike "leisure." It rather echoed Aristotle's maxim that pleasure is an action; or as Marx would later assert, pleasure is achieved in the process of meaningful labor, in realizing one's personality as "*objective, visible to the senses* and hence a power *beyond all doubt*" (Marx 1986:34) Within the logic of "feeling," as we will see, this power extended beyond participation in the community, as Marx suggests,[9] to manifest a specific form of masculine leadership within the community.

[8] October 28, 2008.

[9] Marx is concerned with the general enjoyment that comes from unalienated labor and mutual dependence. For example, in "Comments on James Mill" he writes, "In the individual expression of my life I would have directly created your expression of your life, and therefore in my individual activity I would have directly *confirmed* and *realized* my true nature, my *human* nature, my *communal nature.* […] My work would be a *free manifestation of life,* hence an *enjoyment of life*" (Marx 1986). While this is certainly at play in the valorization of activity, my concern is the intensification of this enjoyment in becoming a respected leader.

ZapZap did not normally go out during the days of late October and early November, when the streets of Port-au-Prince are overtaken by men and women incarnating the dynamic spirit *Gede*. But these roving Gede bands, which span the symbolism of life and death, sexuality and mourning, were considered this year to fit the transformative and feelingful aims of the street festival. The "horses" or surrogates of Gede dress in the funerary colors of purple and black, powder their faces, and cover their eyes with dark glasses. They carry phalluses in their hands and wear pacifiers, bibs, and rattles around their necks. At times enacting a mock funeral with cardboard coffins on their heads, and at others bribing passersby with kisses, they accept change in exchange for a dance of *gouyad* (lustful twirls of the hips), lewd jokes or gestures (*betiz*), and the "secret" in the tin box (e.g., a doll with hairy, oversized genitals). Karen McCarthy Brown describes Gede as a "transformation artist," since his randy, playful, and childish personality "raises life energy and redefines the most painful situation—even death itself—as one worth a good laugh" (1991:330). Although Gede was not to be explicitly enacted at the festival or other outings, his ethos of erotic feeling and humor as the antidotal energy for life's trials prevailed. And even more explicitly, his life-giving force was invoked in the mission to reignite ZapZap's capacity to transduce feeling to others. As Mannaze, the *houngan* for ZapZap told me in the days before the event: "Everyone has a Gede for himself. He is the first spirit, the first *zozo* (dick). He's there to give you feeling. Gede, big *zozo*. For that reason Gede is the master of the party. Nice *zozo* makes feeling multiply."[10] He then inserted a *betiz* (or sexual pun) from a song ZapZap was known to perform:

The size of our wood/dick	*Mezi bwa nou*
They'll hate us	*Y ap rayi nou*

[10] October 31, 2008.

This lyric is dense, playing on multiple meanings. It suggests the double meaning of "*bwa*" as wood and dick, and as such, its double valence as "hard" and "pleasurable." The lyric can of course be read as a violent threat of rape. Yet its more nuanced meaning was that women or feminized others desire the "big dick," and since they are unable to possess it, detest these men out of jealousy.[11] *Gwo bwa,* big wood, in fact often replaced the phrase "big man" in Bel Air.

Gede is also one of the masters of sending *pwen*, the playful, indirect, biting form of communication that characterizes political and social commentary in Bel Air. In true Gede spirit, ZapZap organized the publicity of the event through the construction of a *pwen*-filled rivalry with Rara M, the group located at the next crossroads. Its critiques of Rara M centered around their inferior performance of manliness. This was most clear in the placard announcing the party. In Bel Air, those who plan feelingful events, like concerts, parties, beach days, soccer games, or outings, advertise them with a large wooden poster elaborately painted and prominently displayed at the crossroads. On October 25, 2008, ZapZap placed a poster at the corner of *Rue Tiremasse* that proclaimed an all-day "gathering" (beginning at 10 am). The announcement promised that with the ample support of a new sponsor it would be an even "fiercer" party than the previous one in which "the masses" came out. It asserted in red and black capital letters, "Masters of the concrete return!" (*mèt beton retounen*). The next lines demanded of the *fanatik* (and I paraphrase), "If you don't have a new, brand-name outfit, come with a brand-name you already wore." This was followed by the polemic with Rara M. The next line—"*Tou ti wil chi gwagwa"*—conveyed that the rival band no longer had its lucrative source of funds and that ZapZap was taking over. Importantly, *gwagwa* implies blockage, which suggests stopping the

[11] McAlister (2002:68) recorded a lyric of a Rara in Port-au-Prince that included a similar double entendre. It went: "*jan m konyen bouzen, bouzen rayi m*" (for the way I fuck whores, whores love me).

exuberant flow of the other band by stopping the flow of sponsorship.[12] Below this was the proverb, "*Ti dyolè* (braggarts) may play with dogs but don't touch their tails." Like the *pwen* analyzed in the last chapter, this proverb was to be read, as Mannaze had it, as a "parable," as a message that castigates and instructs certain behavior. On the one hand, this proverb was used to undermine those who cast insults against the group by conveying that braggarts cannot hurt them. But on the other, it revealed the threat that if the talk escalates, the proverbial dog might bite. The last lines of the announcement returned to the theme of flirtation and sex. "*Bon flannè, bèl fanm au guichet, zòt dako*" (fine philanderers, pretty ladies at the ticket window, all in accord). All in all, this placard performatively invoked the multiple, interrelated aspects of manliness that were to be displayed at the festival. By way of it, the organizers made claims on their own (and their fan base's) attractiveness, hipness, fashion sense, and wit. Further, they asserted their social and political force within a competitive field.

While announced for 10 am, the party maintained the longstanding Afro-Atlantic association of the night with play and force (Abrahams 1983; McAlister 2002). It did not actually get underway until 10 *pm* and petered out at dawn. It was a mix of a block party, concert, and ritual ceremony. The street was lined with women selling food and beverages. A block of empty chairs was placed in the space between the corner store *Boutique Mystère* and an array of newly painted murals in honor of ZapZap, MLK, OJREB, and OJMOTEEB. The chairs anticipated "VIPs" such as the party sponsor, the presidents of other bands, local businessmen, and other notables, including Yves ZapZap, whose iconic white jeep would stay parked in the middle of the crossroads for the entire evening.

[12] This highly idiomatic phrase does not translate easily. *Ti wil* is a reference to the leader, so the phrase functions to assert that "[Someone's] been totally blocked."

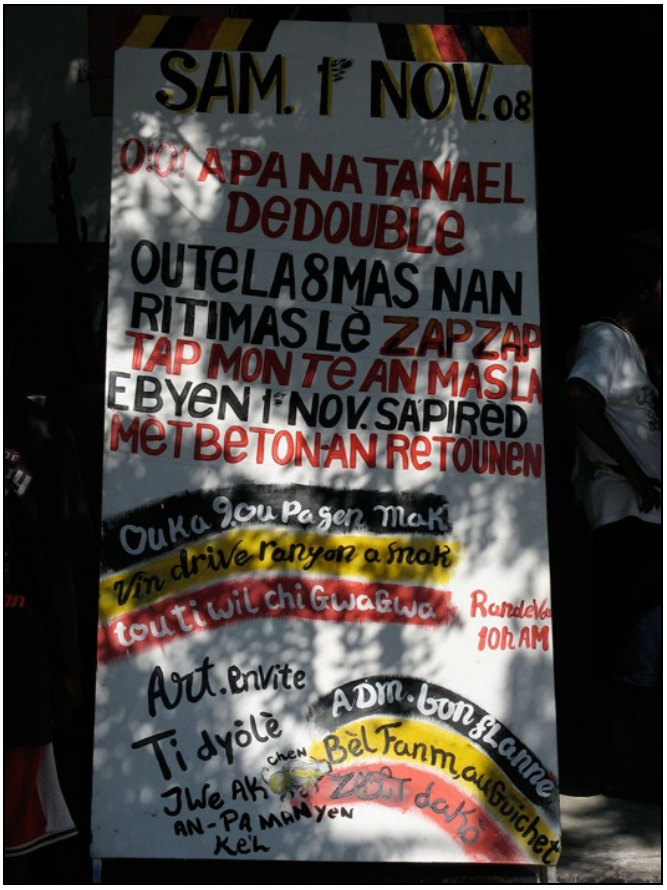

Figure 16. Poster advertising street festival. Author Photo, 2008.

Throughout the night, pockets of young men and smaller circles of young women and small children conversed with each other. Dressed in jeans, sneakers, and oversized polos, basketball jerseys, or white tees, the men posed before the newly painted murals, taking photos on cell phones or requesting that I photograph them. The lack of coupling off was apparent, though a couple often exchanged flirtations or bantering across their homosocial groupings. Beer and small cups of surgarcane alcohol and cigarettes were shared, as people listened to music that a well-known DJ blared from a deafening sound system rigged to a makeshift stage at the far end of the street.

Like the outings for Carnival and Raranaval, this festive ambiance also contained, and depended on, a militant core of ritualized work. At around midnight, Mannaze led a *Petwo* ritual to "heat up," protect, and debark the band similar to that discussed in chapter two, yet with significant changes that emphasized the mysticism of the secret society, *Chanpwèl Blada*. Early in the evening, two white doves were buried alive on one end of the crossroads near a black cross symbolizing *Bawon Simitiyè,* the presider of the cemetery. This cross marked the house of the late founder of the band. Later, the five staff members and I were compelled by Mannaze to pay a toll to *Mèt Kalfou*, the spirit of the crossroads, by dropping small change on the ground of the *demambre*, located diagonally from the crossroads. Mannaze then placed a mother drum and can of burning kerosene before the cross, gathered some chunks of dirt, which he put in a black piece of silk and brought into the *demambre* with the members of the *chanpwèl*. When he emerged, he carried an old bottle of Prestige, a signal that he had captured the *zonbi* of the founder in order that he would "work" for the band.[13] This entire ceremony ensured the protection of the band and their performative force, facilitating their ability to instill feeling in others through music and dance. However, given that the band only made a quick *vire* (turn) around the block, this ceremony was in fact more oriented around manufacturing feeling at the street party by way of the symbolism of the band. It was also key in articulating the members of the *chanpwèl,* and in turn, the presentation of their mystical abilities to effectuate feeling. In Bel Air, those who belong to *chanpwèl* acquire respect through their ability to not only incite fear and inculcate protection, as we saw in chapter two, but to also generate awe and an aura of reverence. Invoking yet again an ideology of statehood, the staff members often bragged that they had a special

[13] While securing *zonbi* in mystical contracts can be construed as a malicious act of sorcery, the positive or negative valence of *zonbi* rather depends on the dialectic of defense or attack. Echoing others (cf. McAlister 2002:185), Mannaze told me that the founder did not like being inert and would be happy to work for the band.

nighttime "passport" that allowed them to wander freely after dark as magical nocturnal beings who commanded the streets (cf. Beauvoir and Dominique 1987; Ramsey 2011).

This rather militant, defensive ritual was understood to produce the communal feeling that might at first seem at the other end of the experiential spectrum. Yet while "getting feeling" often signals a relaxed, pleasant, and easeful state of being, when attached to musical and performative achievement it is often described with words that convey hardness, might, and upheaval. The entanglement of feeling and force resonates with the way Feld theorizes the embodied process of "getting into the groove" as "hardness" among the Kahluli in Papa New Guinea. He writes, "Hardness is force, the attainment of that evocative, charged, energized state (where to extend the notion into English one is 'knocked out' or 'blown away')" (1988:89). This "force" is not akin to domination, yet it is nonetheless intensely powerful and persuasive. Its power is less about controlling others through repression than by stimulating common structures of feeling. Here is where the notion of "being a man" begins to take on a more specifically masculinized meaning, by returning to the imagery of the "grotesque" lyric, of hardness as both power and pleasure. The production of feeling by the *chanpwèl* members allowed them to imagine themselves as all-powerful male subjects ("big *zozo*") capable of manipulating the physical world and the sensual experiences of feminized others. The attainment of "feeling" facilitated an experience of intense bliss among previously disbanded bodies, which in turn, affirmed the transcendent power of these men.

Indeed many credited this ritual for the awesome, feelingful climax of the party. At around one o'clock in the morning "Fantom" and "Izolan," two members from what at the time was the most popular music group in Haiti, the rap group *Barikad Krew*, climbed on stage to belt out a few songs. Several members of their rival *Rock Fam* soon followed with another couple of

raps. A huge crowd gathered in minutes. Young people from throughout the neighborhood were overjoyed to see these famous groups duke it out in Bel Air. The song that ZapZap would later compose for Carnival relived this moment with boastful lyrics:

It's ZapZap that passes here	Se zapzap k ap pase la
It gives me feeling	Li ban m feeling
It moves in my blood	Li mache nan san m
Our Petwo is our own "tough" party	Petwo nou se malè fèt nou menm
It's not just talk	Se pa pale
My friends, I just saw a miracle	Mezanmi m sòt wè yon mèvèy
In Zapzap's party I arrived	Nan fèt zapzap mwen te rive
Fantom, Izolan arrived at the party	Fantom, Izolan rive nan fèt la
They left a gold microphone	Yo lage yon mikwo dò
Everyone "overthrown" to the left	Tout moun kapote agoch
My friends, I just saw a miracle	Mezanmi m sòt wè yon lòt mèvèy
In Zapzap's party I arrived	Nan fèt zapzap mwen te rive
The army of Rock Fam debarked at the party	Rock fam lame a debarke nan fèt la
They "crushed" the party	Yo sakaje fèt la
Everyone "overthrown" to the right	Tout moun kapote adwat

These lyrics reiterate the way feeling emanates from the ritual work and its practitioners, and the way it is primarily made evident through the medium of the body. Feeling, as we saw in chapter two, is displayed through what Aaron Fox calls in another context "compelling, embodied movement" (Fox 2004). In Haiti, it is "felt," in other words, in affective displays of bliss, like dancing and singing down the streets.[14] This song added another level by using a sanguineous metaphor that recurred often in conversations about *feeling*. This metaphoric and metonymic image gave feeling the properties of a charged fluid, capable of running through and being transferred between the bodies of people. It is perhaps not surprising that feeling good would be envisioned through blood flow, since "bad blood" (*move san*) in Haiti is perhaps the most general description for illness (Farmer 1992). The comparison with blood also suggested that

[14] In his study of country music and working-class Texas culture, Fox (2004) notes how feeling spans the contexts of bliss and depression. In contrast, "feeling" in Haiti primarily denotes pleasure, though it can be used to indicate a general re-sensitization following grief.

feeling created a model of inheritance. Those with feeling became part of the family. Interestingly, blood also raises the specter of violence and war. It indexes the militant, masculine core that facilitates the exuberant expression of feeling in a flow of force, bodies, and beats. And it points to the way in which this feelingful public can be set against others. The usage of the word *kapote* was interesting, since it is usually used to refer to a *coup d'état* or the "overthrowing" of the state. Here it was squarely situated in the rivalry and was meant to convey a changing of the guard. This overthrowing was to be orchestrated by the opposite of bloodshed: by bloodflow, by the charged flow of blood among a collective set against enervated others.

The soccer tournament: Competition among leaders

During the "vacation period" from July to September, most of the bases in Bel Air organize a soccer tournament on neighborhood streets. The day or weekend-long tournaments are usually played between makeshift teams organized from staff. The matches attract large crowds of young men who gather on sidewalks, balconies, galleries, and rooftops to socialize while watching the excitement below. While some women also enjoy these tournaments, soccer (or sport in general in Haiti) is a male-centered cultural practice that invites male sociality. Because of the crowds they attract and the layers of politicized patronage that make them possible (like the outings outline above), these tournaments have, in the past, been targeted by those seeking to disrupt the power of their organizers. In the summer of 2005, for example, when the *coup*-era hostility was still active, several tournaments in pro-Aristide neighborhoods were violently disbanded by armed actors supporting the interim regime—the most deadly of which occurred at a USAID-sponsored tournament in Martissant. Despite the feel-good ambiance of the tournaments I witnessed in Bel Air, this violence had nonetheless left its impression. It

encouraged many to stay home. Yet at the same time the association of soccer tournaments with danger and risk (if not outright violence) also added to their allure as charged events fit for men or those seeking respect as men.

In June 2009, OJMOTEEB, the youth organization most affiliated with ZapZap, began planning their second annual tournament on the gallery of Kay ZapZap. With all seated around, Berman called an informal "meeting" (*randevou*). Michel, the schoolboy who was charged with typing out documents for the youth organization (and also OJREB), was quickly roused from his nap on the concrete bench tagged MLK and called over to chat with the others. After announcing that this tournament must have "more feeling" than last year's, Frantzy gave Michel a hundred-*goud* note ($2.50) to go to the cyber café to draft letters requesting support. He paused before telling him to whom to type the letters, complaining that since no one is in charge "we'll have to write everyone." He decided on several powerful actors, Viva Rio, the Ministry of Youth and Sport, USAID, the president, and a local politician (deputy). He also quickly dictated a six-hundred dollar budget that would be attached to each letter, which included tee-shirts and decorations (6000 HGT); DJ or other entertainment (11,000 HGT); refreshments (5000 HGT); and equipment (2000 HGT). He wondered aloud if this would allow enough to give the staff members something, and then added another hundred dollars for "mobilization." He ended the meeting by telling Michel to print out some extra letters without addressees. These would be for less official sponsors as well as important personages, including Yves ZapZap and the armed staff *Gran Black*. These latter letters functioned more like respectful invitations that requested the permission and approval of the powerful actors. Such gestures of respect were critical to ensuring the success of any form of organizing in the neighborhood. (I also had to petition Gran

Black for support of my English classes.) In effect, obtaining permission stood in for a city permit system.

Once the letters were stamped with the organization's seal, Frantzy, sporting a button-down white shirt tucked into his pristinely ironed khakis, and I, in a skirt and blouse, went to deliver them. Frantzy had insisted on my company. He hoped that my privileged status as a white foreigner would help him get by the front desk to a meeting. It did not. We received from each office a small paper affirming the "reception" of the letter, which was to enable Frantzy to "follow up" (*swivi*) on the request. It was this ceaseless following up that accounted for much of the *monte desan* of the next two weeks. Ultimately, they received a check from the Ministry of Youth and Sport and a cash payment from the politician, which I was told totaled $100. The NGOs, as Frantzy complained, "don't like our match. They don't see 'serious things' in taking pleasure. They 'make the state' (*fè leta*) in corridor projects, violence projects only."[15] While suggesting that *koudyay* politics contrasted with the development ideologies of NGOs, his comment, moreover, conveyed how this soccer match did not fit with the current project agendas (e.g., water and paving corridors) of the NGOs in Bel Air. Not surprisingly, Yves ZapZap contributed the lion's share, another hundred dollars. I helped out by buying some new soccer balls. With a budget of only a few hundred dollars, the refreshments and tee-shirts were foregone. The teams wore matching promotional shirts, and the decorations were downscaled to blue-and-white striped plastic bags tied to telephone and electricity lines. For entertainment, two large stereos were secured onto the gallery of a boutique that had a generator, and Frantzy acted as DJ. A small version of ZapZap—comprising mainly new, young members—was also paid to make a short appearance after the finale. Finally, an older friend was hired to referee the game.

[15] Personal conversation, June 18, 2008.

Figure 17. Soccer game. Author Photo, 2009.

The soccer game consisted of four five-member teams from the surrounding blocks that OJMOTEEB had invited to play. These neighborhood games are at times played with formal teams, which compete in citywide tournaments, but for the most part, and at this tournament, they were makeshift groups of athletic youth who were known to regularly play in the streets. The written invitations were extended to other youth organizations that also stage summer soccer tournaments. Each organization, including OJMOTEEB, was then required to mobilize a team. Like other associations, these teams were connected to particular zones. Thus, the tournament, which brought together three different zones (two teams from the same one), was also integrated

into the politics of the base. However, it would be wrong to understand the tournament as a competition between zones or organizations played out through the teams. The significant match was rather at the organizational level.

Throughout the tournament, the main organizers, including the five members of ZapZap and Michel, sat in plastic lawn chairs on the ledge of the balcony even with mid-field, where Frantzy was playing the music. While Yves was not present, his white jeep was parked in the crossroads, behind one of the soccer nets. The organizers wore their best, hip-hop fashions, adding jewelry and new caps to the standard "outing" attire. They greeted friends and neighbors with fist bumps and self-assured smirks, and often had their arms around each others' shoulders. Several entrepreneurial women set up shop in spots OJMOTEEB had designated with white chalk, and for which the women made a small contribution (between one and five dollars). In addition to splurging on several rounds of beer from Boutique Mystère, Berman seemed to keep them all profitable with endless rounds of fried food, drinks, and candies that he shared widely. Besides me (and Nadine, whom I dragged along) nearly all the spectators were male and young, from little boys and teenagers to thirty-year-old men. They were huddled on sidewalks, crowded on balconies, and perched on rooftops, their feet dangling in the air. Their wide grins, unruffled postures, and friendly vibe gave the evening an ambiance like no other. It helped that it was a rare cool evening, with a pleasant breeze easing the heat of bodies jammed together, and that affiliations were shared across teams. Cheers and applause erupted at good plays or goals on both sides. The evening had a remarkable feeling indeed, and few wanted it to end. We all finally rose from the balcony at midnight. And though the night ended for me then, with a ride home on the back of a motorcycle Yves had recently purchased for Kal, I was told that the street remained filled for much longer and that the good vibe lasted till morning.

Clifford Geertz famously wrote of the Balinese cockfight, "It is only apparently cocks that are fighting. Actually, it is men" (1973:417). This maxim is easily interpreted as suggesting that men engage in masculine power plays via their cocks in the ring. But as Geertz so eloquently shows, the competition is not only between the men whose cocks (by tutelage or bet) are fighting, but also (and perhaps moreover) between which village chief throws the better fight. The same can be said of these tournaments. The competitions waged in the match were overshadowed by those waged between organized men at the level of hosting the event. Like the street parties, the significant question was which group of men organized the better tournament. And this decision largely rested on which group orchestrated the best ambiance of male sociality and pleasure. Hence, while it is true that some funds for the event were used by some of the organizers to momentarily act as providers for their women and children, this was not the goal of the tournament. Of greater importance was the way it allowed the organizers to act as pleasure providers for the zone, and in turn, make a show of political power. In fact, when all was said and done, their expenditures outweighed their profits, and they were as usual left indebted to their sponsors.

The organizational leaders certainly embodied the role of the village chief at the tournament. But they were integrated into a multifaceted network of political patronage that enabled the tournament to also advance their patrons' reputations. While funding requests were made to several official sources, the pattern of sponsorship echoed that of band outings, with the bulk of it being informally consolidated from local big men, especially the armed actor Yves. This support was not removed from the larger political arena, as Yves was connected to an expansive political network. Nonetheless, by way of it he was able to step in and perform the role of the state for this group of organized men in a way that the ministries and NGOs did not.

The tournament was, therefore, also an opportunity for him to engage in his own power project and position himself against other militant leaders in the neighborhood. Beyond a display of might, however, it also formed part of Yves's larger quest to craft his reputation as a respected authority following the violence of 2004. He was continually engaged in the kinds of extra-economic gift exchanges that presume debt forgiveness (Carrier 1995; Mauss 1954; Munn 1986). It was key that these gifts did not just revolve around handing out cash in the zone, but rather on the production of the communal good of feeling. Sponsoring feeling was particularly useful in giving back to the whole community, and in turn, sanitizing his notorious reputation as a (former) source of its opposite: namely, violence and insecurity in the zone. Put differently, these events helped transform his reputation from a "*bandi*" (thug) to a respected "*militan*" or defender of the community. This was also evident at another feelingful event, the beach day.

The beach day: The performance of masculine sexuality and power

Besides soccer games, the summer months in Bel Air bring an endless cycle of *jounen lamè*, or "beach days," in which busloads of residents travel an hour or so to a nearby beach and spend the day relaxing with their friends in the zone. These beach days, even more than the street party or soccer game, revolve around the display of masculine prowess. In the imaginary of Bel Air residents, whose days are lived among scorching concrete, rotting garbage, and crowded corridors, the beach is a space reserved for the elite classes, MINUSTAH troops, and other "development" workers. Beach days are, therefore, attempts to imitate the leisure of the privileged classes. However, the beach is not only associated with elite leisure but also frolicking, flirtation, and sex. For Bel Air residents, the beach is above all a place to indulge in illicit intimacies. New or secretive couples seek out the beach to engage in sex acts beyond the view of neighbors. The sea, moreover, can provide a degree of privacy, as it is impossible to see what

takes place under water. Yet despite this sexually charged atmosphere, actual sex acts occupy a small portion of the social interactions during beach days. The mainly male beach-goers spend most of their time advertising to other men their *potential* for engagement in an erotic and fun "adventure."

When the *monte desan* ignited again in mid-July, I had already heard a lot about the extravagant beach day. OJMOTEEB had been, since the fall, inviting me to their annual beach day in August. In mid-July, they displayed a new elaborately painted placard on the corner, and they circulated to friends and neighbors a grainy flyer that Michel had designed. It had a picture of a young, attractive girl in a white bikini, jumping enthusiastically, her long locks tousled around her coffee-colored face. The top of the flyer read: "*cha cha kò w, jwe kò ou, bon bagay* (cha-cha [i.e., dance] your body, romp your body, good thing!). Around this image radiated the architecture of the base; the titles of the various groups (OJMOTEEB [MLK], ZapZap, Chanpwèl Blada, and a newly formed rap group, Bèlè Masif) appeared in bold, graphic displays with the names of the sponsors, Yves ZapZap and Mystère Boutique, etched in finer print. The Ministry of Sport and Youth, as well as the NGO Viva Rio were also solicited in writing, and the former was added to the placard after issuing a check for about fifty dollars (2000HGT). Both the flyer and the placard advertised the five dollar (or 40 "Haitian" dollars cost that would be printed on small, pink tickets and distributed to attendees. This was a prohibitive cost for most, including these organized men. In fact, it was largely an empty performance of economic agency, since almost all attendees were given complimentary tickets by the organizers. Nonetheless, the display of economic agency was a real social good that helped position the organizers and beach-goers as bona fide men. The placard went as far as announcing, "You must work hard for the

ticket, or else you'll be ashamed!" In fact, the flip-side of this display was that the fee could also be invoked to restrict and shame unwanted attendees by virtue of their lack of economic and social capital.

Figure 18. Beach day flyer. Author photo, 2009.

When I arrived at the hilltop of "Baz ZapZap" at six in the morning on August 9, as announced on the flyer, I found the street bustling with the ambiance of the street party, except at this hour the young men and women switched the surgarcane liquor and fried foods for sugary coffee and tubes of white bread. The yellow school bus, for which OJMOTEEB was to pay about

$75, was already parked in front of Kay ZapZap, next to Yves's jeep. The staff members were casually chatting on the gallery, as Nerlande and her mom finished cooking a huge pot of rice and beans and saucy chicken. It appeared that we were all ready to go. But the hours soon began to pass. This delay went well beyond the lax concern for time to which I had grown accustomed. The staff members kept retreating to private meetings on the roof. I suspected that there was a problem with the finances, as the bus driver's payment was outstanding, but when I went upstairs after the fourth "meeting" I found them quietly sharing a joint and a drink as they looked at the crowd gathering on the street. After assuring me that we were soon leaving on our "big adventure," Berman told Michel to go and check if the bus of "La Familia," a carnival street band that was also planning a beach day, had already left and to assess how many people they were bringing. I began to realize that this ritualized display of "going to the beach" was a significant part of the beach day. The success of the day depended not only on the orchestration of the outing but also, and moreover, on the measure of attention this outing would garner in the neighborhood. It was not until noon that we left Bel Air, arriving at a tiny beach north of Port-au-Prince at two in the afternoon.

The interactions at the beach unfolded as a montage of various and varying attempts by youthful adult men to display sexualized attractiveness and erotic prowess. There were about three times as many young men on the bus as women, though the core members of the staff all brought along dates. When we arrived, Jak and Michel orchestrated the admission fee of the busload and we all descended onto the wooded, pebbled, and somewhat crowded beachfront. Despite the obvious flirtations, most of which had only recently blossomed from an invitation to this outing, the male and female attendees quickly segregated into separate groups. Many of the women, already mothers, brought along their young children, and they settled underneath a large

jasmine tree where the food was served. The older children were the most interested in the water and both girls and boys quickly entered the ocean. Like the street party, the young men were initially consumed with posing for the camera I had loaned Michel for the day. Four or five friends would arrange themselves into an assortment of "gangsta" like tableaus, with low-slung shorts, crossed arms, and gang-like signs. These photos soon morphed into "couple shots." Jak and Bernie were perhaps the most enthused with this genre, dragging their now bikini-clad "dates" around to various backdrops where they would pose together. Berman, in a pair of baggy orange swim trunks and Nerlande, in a cut-out white suit that clung to her full frame, were not far behind. With Berman's wife at home with the five kids, this day provided a moment in which they could publicly display their affection for each other, and in a way, socially consummate their relationship.

These photos were interrupted with the arrival of Yves, who drove in his own jeep accompanied by a friend and two young, attractive teenage girls, whose tiny frames were dwarfed by their corpulent dates. The girls, though familiar faces, were not friends with the others. They initially approached the group with Yves but were obviously uncomfortable around the group. Once Yves began to joke with "his people," both girls scurried to the car. They changed into new, bright bikinis with mini-skirts attached, took a quick swim, and then retreated to the inside of the jeep, where they spent the rest of the day by themselves. In the meantime, Yves openly joked with Frantzy, Jak, and Bernie, as Nadine and I chatted nearby. Yves, never one to shy away from sexualized boasting, affirmed that he had already tasted the "sweetness" of his date. "Her pussy (*koko*) gives me too much feeling, oh oh, all that (pubic) hair. Now, I have to *pile dada l* [pound her ass]," he said with a guffaw. Frantzy, clearly embarrassed by my presence, responded by sending a nervous laugh my way. But Yves seemed to relish the moment,

repeating, as he smiled widely, that she was driving him crazy just like the "one who doesn't know what the other is doing." This was a reference to me, a lyrical nickname that Junior, the Sanba of ZapZap, coined to poke fun at my long-distance relationship. The pun was well played, and we all fell into laughter.

The seeming irrelevance of the sex objects, the two girls, in Yves's conversation is an extreme example of the way in which masculinity relies on performances of manliness that happen between and are primarily addressed to *other men* (Sedgwick 1985). Masculine identities, in other words, are consolidated through male oriented cultural practices (Gregory 2003; Sedgwick 1985). "What is socially peripheral," as Barbara Babcock famously asserted, is "symbolically central" (1978:32). In this way, these male-centered performances are less than embodiments of sexuality itself. They are rather, following Wilson, performative *promises* (1973:166) or gestures aimed at giving the impression of superior sexual prowess without actually achieving anything other than the emotional excitement of other men—for example, making the crowd laugh. This was not the last laugh, however. Having long since found a way of asserting female sexuality in this group of men, Nadine countered with another joke in my defense, "You too ugly Yves," she said. Grabbing her crotch, she continued, "This beautiful, pink clitoris (*bèl krèk wouj*—another reference to me), if you don't have a beautiful dick, it'll cost your car." The bite of this joke was evident in the nervous laughs it produced. It played on the assumption that desirability and economic agency are two powers women possess over men in Bel Air. In this way, Nadine actually used her and my sexuality to undermine Yves's claim to manhood as both a source of pleasure and mode of provision.

Though the other male attendees also "promised" neighbors left behind of their sexual prowess, few were actually able to demonstrate it at the beach. In actuality, many spent the day

engaged in the kind of activities that dominate their days in Bel Air, socializing, playing dominoes, and trying to get a buzz sipping small amounts of strong liquor in plastic cups.

Nonetheless, it was easy for me to witness heightened displays of masculinity and sexuality all around me. Unlike the sexualized domination enacted by Yves, however, these displays evoked the expanse of interactions that characterize what Judith Farquhar (2002) calls in another context "erotic joy." Some couples, like Berman and Nerlande, performed under-water sex acts. But most simply engaged in "buoyant" flirtations. A short-lived dance party in which an amateur DJ, hired by the beach, played a few popular songs stimulated a few of the fun flings publicized in the poster. After a slew of rap songs caused a raucous moment with all the men dancing, a wave of slower *konpa* songs brought couples together in tight embraces. Soon groups of couples entered the water and played. Jak and Bernie floated their dates on their backs, as they smilingly held a beer above the water. More established couples relished in the rare moment of intimacy. Sophie and Kal, for example, spent much of the day sitting at water's edge with Sophie nestled between Kal's legs, the water running over them as they looked out at their daughter playing in the ocean. Unable to afford a new bikini, Sophie wore a tight, blue Obama tank I had given her, boxer briefs, and a hair cap, which Kal realigned with each splash. They were smiling widely.

When I came out of the water after a quick dip, Kal called me over to Sophie and him. I rapidly grabbed my notebook and towel on a nearby rock, and headed over to him. In an elated tone that revealed the value he placed on this rare moment of intimacy, he told me:

> I have had time to forget the city, I've forgotten the ghetto, totally. They call it Bel Air, but it's here I get the feeling of 'bèl' (pleasant/beautiful) air, itself, together with my wife (squeezing Sophie). OJMOTEEB, a lot of respect! We organized ourselves well. We're

> enticing/mobilizing (*se rale nou rale*)[16] a lot of men (*nèg*) with all this feeling. Good thing!

This was the happiest I ever saw Kal, who as noted, usually vacillated between depression and anger, and his comment left me wondering about the personal and social significance of this moment of personal, erotic joy. In conveying respect for OJMOTEEB, of which he was a member, he suggested that his good feeling was connected to a sense of organizational capacity, that his joy was political. By way of this event, he and the other organizers were able to momentarily transcend their everyday inactivity, immobility, and indignity. This *bèl* air was, however, also attached to a scene of playful intimacy, in which he felt himself to be a good lover and man. It was no less enmeshed in the portrayal of family life, in the fondness with which he and his wife were looking after their child. As I watched this wholesome intimacy, I was sure that this moment if not the whole day provided an arena for Kal to ask forgiveness for past transgressions. It enabled him to show the kind of man he might be under different circumstances. As much as "feeling" was realized in his abilities to act as a respected leader in the zone, it was also expressed by personifying the role that eludes him on most days: that of a respectable man.

His comment also made me dread the imminent trip home. After the dance, the drum is heavy (*apre dans la tambou lou*) is an oft-cited Haitian proverb that captures the way in which the weight of the world returns once the festivities have passed. While providing an exhilarating escape from idleness and depression among the poor, these *koudyay*-like events also tended to highlight the structural inevitability of poverty and marginalization—of both participants and organizers. The trips to and from the beach were overrun with anxieties about the ability of this group of (mainly) young men from Bel Air to exercise mobility in the city. Many beach days in

[16] The verb *rale* also implies a supernatural attraction and, therefore, a degree of mystical force.

Bel Air were in fact unsuccessful. Buses regularly broke down or the group would have insufficient gas money, which left attendees hitching rides back on public transportation. There was also always the risk that the bus would be robbed by local *bandi* as it left or returned to the area. On this day the organizers made a point of only allowing the cash needed for gas and admission to the beach onto the bus. It was also the case that the bus might be stopped by MINUSTAH soldiers or policemen at the checkpoints surrounding Bel Air and the routes exiting the city. As a large group of informally organized men from Bel Air, their adventure to a locale reserved for upper class residents and tourists often provoked suspicions of kidnapping and theft. This risk actually motivated much discussion about my participation in this beach day. They were well aware that having a white female on the bus might excite the authorities' curiosity. While we discussed the possibility of my riding in a separate car, it was eventually decided that I would sit near the back and be ready to explain myself if we were stopped. I was asked to carry a few past photos of me with the group to confirm our long friendship.

Fortunately, this day went off without a hitch. Nonetheless, the precautions and the anxieties that motivated them confirmed the marginal place of these young men and undercut the organizers' effort to appear as big men within a broader urban context. When we disembarked from the bus that day, it was well after dusk and the streets of Bel Air lacked daytime bustle. The lingering climate of insecurity kept most people indoors after dark. Other than the mothers of the younger attendees, only a few neighbors looked on curiously as the bus unloaded. The young men and their dates scurried off the bus and quickly made their way to nearby houses. Parched, I grabbed a bottle of water from Mystère Boutique. The owner Bob and female shopkeeper Guendolen had stayed home that day. Handing me the water, the owner asked me how it went, and I said that everything went well. Before I could say more, the owner interrupted me. "Today

they acted like (*te fè*) *leaders*," he said softly, invoking this term's dual meaning as community leader and thug (see chapter three). Then loud enough for others to hear, Guendolen joked, "What are they going to do tomorrow? Nothing at all! (*anyen menm*)." This cynical comment touched on the evanescence of any *koudyay*, of the way its dynamic jouissance and the stimulus behind it are defined by their fleetingness. While offering an intense display of manliness and hierarchical community, the beach day, like the other feelingful events discussed in this chapter, was by definition only an ephemeral consolidation of political power and masculine pleasure.

Conclusions

In *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1*, Foucault (1990) identifies the historical rise of a politics of sexuality. In modern societies, he argues, power is oriented around the surveillance, categorization, and ordering of sexed and sexual bodies. In this "truth regime," in which sex is something to be studied, power operates through the regulation and production of a particular kind of sexuality and a particular kind of reproductive body. The rise of this regime fits nicely with the other historical trajectory he traces. It helps consolidate, that is, the shift from premodern sovereign power toward modern disciplinary power. This shift articulates power's passage from being realized in spectacular rites to being directed in projects that treat the organization of social bodies and life as a technical problem that can be known and analyzed. In other words, it marks the transformation of power from performative displays of transcendent force to an implicit, covert, "capillary" network of regulated production and reproduction. What I appreciate about this schema is its articulation of the way power operates through the *production* and not repressive control of a particular kind of sexuality and erotic pleasure, and in turn, its

assertion that abstract power relations are produced in "the most immediate, the most local power relations at work" in a society (1990:97).

The regime of feeling that I have traced in this chapter also connects the production of particular kind of erotic pleasure to the realization of power. Yet this regime looks very different from the sexual science and "biopolitics" that Foucault associates with modernity. Here is something more akin to what Foucault associates with sovereign power, and although Foucault does not specifically address masculinity,[17] I believe he would agree that the performance of masculinity provides a model of and for sovereignty. This may not appear to present a novel case. After all, feminist scholars have long been concerned with the connection between male domination and the workings of power (MacKinnon 1989; Rubin 1997). This path-breaking work has in fact driven much recent scholarship in Haiti. Working in diverse locales, anthropologists have not only documented pervasive gender inequalities (Bell 2001; Brown 1991; Dayan 1995). They have also shown how political control has historically been established and sustained through the everyday subordination of women as well as strategic acts of violence against women (James 2010; Maternowska 2006). However, by focusing on the subordination of women, I would argue that these studies fail to adequately address the role that masculinity plays in valorizing a particular sovereign mode of power. This mode of power is certainly characterized by embodied displays of might and violent force, such as the systematic use of rape in the terror regimes of Duvalier and in the more recent *coup* periods. But its power also derives from the notion of force as rooted in the presumed pleasures of social hierarchy, in the imagination of social power as the effectuation of a certain kind of masculine feeling. The

[17] Several feminist scholars, for example, have argued that Foucault does not adequately attend to masculinity in his study of sexuality and power and especially in his account of sovereign power (Diamond and Quinby 1988; Hartstock 1990; Stoler 1995).

practice of eroticized feeling is, I contend, part of an active effort to conjure power within the confines of manhood and manliness, and to thereby present male pleasures as the "natural" substrate of power.

In asserting the interplay of masculinity and sovereignty, of feeling and premodern power, my point is not that Haitian political life is in anyway premodern. In fact, I argue that assertions of masculinity through feelingful events are hyper-modern. They are novel attempts to ritually manifest concrete embodied power in a neoliberal world where both local and global relations of power are far from clear and orderly. As I discovered, the relations among masculine sex, power, and pleasure extended beyond intimate spheres of interaction between men and women in Bel Air. They also characterized organized men's power projects, or more precisely, their efforts to performatively construct themselves as active, consequential, and important leaders of their zone. Importantly, these displays were not reducible to forceful domination. They depended on the use of force, of an energetic core, to stimulate pleasure across a mass of bodies and to thereby create an encompassing, overwhelming, and extraordinary collective bliss. In so doing, these men not only experienced a short-term but intense escape from misery; they also embodied the phallic fantasy of being a source of pleasure that boldly (if episodically) contradicted their everyday conditions of idleness, marginalization, and emasculation. While it is tempting to dismiss these feelingful moments as frivolous or foolish amusements, they were in fact key vehicles for the enactment of a political imaginary premised on an ethics of masculinity and respect. Feeling was deeply connected to notions of agentive personhood and political community. It is thus not surprising that its activation was a key engine of recovery after the earthquake.

CODA

Performance and Community

Jak, Bernie, and Kal were sitting on the gallery of Kay ZapZap, when the 7.0 magnitude earthquake struck ten miles southwest of Port-au-Prince on January 12, 2010. They quickly leaped into the safety of the street. Frantzy, who had been playing a card game with Michel on the MLK bench, scurried out of the narrow corridor into the crossroads. Berman, Nerlande, and Nadine did not fare so well. At 4:53 pm, they were in the back of the house watching music videos as Nerlande braided her friend's hair. With good instincts, they sped down the narrow hallway to the front of the house, but they were not quick enough. As they neared the gallery the weakly reinforced walls came crumbling down on top of them. Berman was crushed instantly. Nerlande fell on top of Nadine, her arms lifelessly hanging over Nadine's shoulders. With a heavy slab of pink concrete pinning them down, they were unable to move. As Nadine later recounted, "At first, I could hear her breathing, low and slow. I told her, 'I cannot hear you. I don't hear your voice. I don't hear you!'" After a few minutes, there was silence. Nadine turned her head and bit with all her might the arm that dangled lifelessly over her shoulder. "I knew she was gone," she told me, "when she made no sound."

About this time, in another part of the city, I sat on the street before the collapsed house I shared with a couple and another student. One of our neighbors, a woman in her early thirties, had escaped her house but was unable to save her two-year-old son from the falling concrete. As she threw her hands in the air, another woman tightened a cord around her waist and tied a handkerchief on her head. For the rest of the night, we listened as she cried out in seamless

repetition: “I don’t hear you, I don’t hear your voice, I don’t hear you…” (*M pa tande ou, m pa tande vwa ou, m pa tande ou…*).

The following day, a block from our house, a mother and her adult daughter, who together ran a kindergarten, invited the full block of neighbors into their *lakou* and fed us the spaghetti reserved for the children. Neighbors and strangers throughout Port-au-Prince were engaged at this extraordinary moment in the ordinary spirit of solidarity to which I had grown accustomed. “*Youn ede lòt*,” one helps the other, as people say. When night fell, the daughter, Françoise, and her husband accompanied her two-year-old son, two nephews, and me to an open lot where neighbors were gathered. An older woman played with the kids, as we set up a few beds with cardboard, sheets, and loose fabric from a local tailor. Like the rest of the city, we found ourselves gathered together under the dark sky in the comfort of each other’s presence. It took a while for people to settle on the song leaders and songs, with some good-humored jokes shared in the process, but before long the whole group was joined together in an entrancing, rhythmic chant that reverberated against others echoing throughout the city. I would later learn that it was the chorus from a popular Christian hymn. Delivered in measured breaths, it quickly put me at ease. It seemed we all fell asleep singing,

With confidence we will walk	Ak konfiyan nou pral mache
With confidence we will triumph	Ak konfiyans n ap triyonfe
With confidence just till the end	Ak konfiyans jiska la fen
God will open the path	Bondye va louvri chemin

In Haiti, the sound of the voice is the sound of life, and the sound of voices joined together is the sound of life force. The voice encapsulates, both physically and metaphorically, the connection between embodied performance and respectful presence. As the privileged medium of expression and sentiment, performance is the building block of personhood and personality. And as the elemental sign of social life, performative exchange is also the practice

through which presence and participation in the collective is imagined. Expressing oneself and being acknowledged defines what it means to be included in something larger than oneself, to be respected. In this way, embodied performance captures what Marx called "human-sensuous activity," and it forms a core part of the "social being that determines [men's] consciousness" (Marx 1859:4). In the aftermath of the disaster, the emphasis on expressing presence through the body was intensified. While the loss of voice indexed the loss of life, the synchronicity of many voices and bodies in song was the powerful sign of life in common.

Within a week of the earthquake, I left Haiti aboard a U.S. Coast Guard flight, before boarding a Jet Blue flight from Santo Domingo to New York. I would soon learn that Berman and Nerlande were buried in the mass grave near the city's main garbage dump, along with hundreds of thousands of others. Fortunately, the other men and women who have figured in this dissertation survived. Their tiny houses were not massive enough to bring them down, and like most days, Woody and Gregory, Denis and Ellie, Anton, and Erick and Patrice were in the street socializing when the tremors came. Bel Air was, to be sure, devastated. Most of the concrete block construction that had begun to dominate the landscape in the 1970s came tumbling down. The area lost most of its tall buildings, including the grand church on which the memorial image of Dread Mackenzy had stood, the community school where I taught English, and the only public health center. Several small camps sprung up in the crossroads, and two large camps were established: one at Viva Rio's headquarters and another set up by the Red Cross at the nearby plaza at "Place la Paix."

A couple of weeks after the quake, during one of my regular phone calls with Kal, he gave me an update on Bel Air. Like many people I listened to in the aftermath of the quake, Kal lamented the absence of the state in the recovery process and the slowness of foreign aid in

reaching his neighborhood, which was still considered too dangerous for humanitarian staff to venture into without military escort. “Each firefly can only illuminate for its own eyes” (*chak koukouj k ap klere je pou je yo*), he complained, expressing his frustration at the difficulty of trying to get by on one’s own. This, he said, was why those who had lived in Kay ZapZap, as well as Berman’s wife and children, had set up a makeshift campsite on the *Champs de Mars*, which was surrounded by collapsed government buildings. “If we show those people that the people are still alive, then they’ll have to do something.” At the same time he told me how the neighborhood was “very calm” and had a “good feeling.” People had helped each other as much as they could. Neighbors had rescued several people trapped in the rubble and worked together to dispose of the corpses of those who perished. “We don’t wait for help at *Baz* ZapZap. We make the state for ourselves,” Kal said. As if to confirm this camaraderie, he told me that even those on *Champs de Mars* pass the day with us. “There’s no disagreements (*kont*) now. There’s no disorder at all. We’re on God’s account. We’re all on our knees, sing prayers, all the same.”

In *A Paradise Built in Hell*, Rebecca Solnit writes about the unexpected “enjoyment” that arises in the initial aftermath of disaster. This joy in sorrow is unlike pleasure in pain. It is, as she explains, “the sense of immersion in the moment and solidarity with others caused by the rupture in everyday life, an emotion graver than happiness but deeply positive” (2009:5). It is best understood as compassion. To articulate this mutual feeling, she turns to William James’ essay following the 1906 San Francisco earthquake in which he argues that the devastation ignited in people a *civic temper* much like the way an army at war ignites a collective spirit and pride among the citizenry. James (1987:1222) writes:

> The hearts concealed private bitterness enough, no doubt, but the tongues disdained to dwell on the misfortunes of self, when almost everybody one spoke to had suffered equally.
>
> […]
>
> In California every one, to some degree, was suffering, and one's private miseries were merged in the vast general sum of privation and in the all-absorbing practical problem of general recuperation. The cheerfulness, or, at any rate, the steadfastness of tone, was universal. Not a single whine or plaintive word did I hear from the hundred losers whom I spoke to. Instead of that there was a temper of helpfulness beyond the counting.

James goes on to suggest that this reaction is generalizable across populations. While I tend to agree, I believe it is fair to say that in Haiti it was especially the case. This can be partially attributed to the vast class divide that characterizes Haitian society. With the grand houses fairing worse than many modest ones, there was a remarkable and perhaps unprecedented sense of collective suffering in the immediate aftermath.[1] But the temper of helpfulness was also no doubt linked to the long-standing vibrant street life that I have depicted in this dissertation. The residential concentration, extensive familiarity, and cultivated public engagement enabled quick and expansive application of the desire for helpfulness. This temper was already at play in the collective cooperation that characterizes everyday life in urban Haiti. People in Bel Air (and also in elite households) harbored no pretense that daily chores could be carried out without neighborly assistance. It was a fact of life that several hands worked together to take care of the household, occupy the children, or prepare food. Yet this temper was also being continually activated and exhibited through the activities that organized men planned and orchestrated at the base.

This neighborhood organizing was, as I have shown, consciously explained with reference to the absence of public services. And, as Kal asserted, the necessity to organize locally

[1] Social inequities were of course evident in the recovery, as is clear by the relative ease of my departure among other things.

after the earthquake was also intensified because of the absence of any governmental response, and moreover, the lack of expectation that the government could respond. The bolstered civic temper did not, in this way, reflect the ethos of "personal responsibility" lauded in liberal circles. Rather, it was an acknowledgement of the fact that people in Bel Air could not count on the government or the aid apparatus to secure the basic conditions of life. Securing life was an entitlement that was not granted by birth but one that people knew they needed to *accomplish* through vigorous acts of public engagement, for example, by occupying the land before the National Palace or arranging a neighborhood work brigade. In all instances, this public engagement was not meant to replace a functional state; instead it was an attempt to model, and therefore construct, the conditions of the social contract and political community.

Before I ended that phone call with Kal, he told me, "We still have a message to take to the streets." Rara M, the group with which ZapZap had "beef," had already gone out, and ZapZap planned to follow suit. This outing would not, however, be in the spirit of competition or politicking, as the others had been. Kal made sure to assert that all of the Rara were going out, as he had it, to "bring feeling to the zone." He said this was needed just as it was "after 2004." They had composed a song for Carnival that was filled with the political critiques of the international community and a weak government not unlike what we saw from other groups. And they wanted to showcase it. Yet they were also excited to rehash old lyrics, such as those composed after the violence in 2004. Kal was especially excited about the excerpt from one song. He repeated it to me until he was sure I had it right:

What's for us to do?	Sa pou nou fè?
It's pray that we need to pray	Se priye pou nou priye
It's sing that we need to sing	Se chante pou nou chante
It's call out that we need to call out	Se rele pou nou rele
It's talk that we need to talk	Se pale pou nou pale
It's go out that we need to go out	Se sòti pou nou sòti
To bring back feeling	Pou nou reprann filing

I have gone to some lengths to describe the assertion of masculine power at work in producing feeling for the zone. But it is important to emphasize that feelingful events are political in another sense: they create a sense of humanity, solidarity, and mutuality across gender. This is, indeed, the other face of "respect." Scholars attuned to emic understandings of "respect" (*respè*) in Haiti have acknowledged that it is not only about asserting reputation or authority within men's circles but also about affirming the humanity of all by recognizing a profound interdependence (Smith 2001). Feeling, I hope to have made clear, cannot be attained alone. In Durkheimian fashion, like "collective effervescence" (1995) feeling transforms sensual perception and social consciousness, making people feel part of a larger life force. The procession that ZapZap would conduct in Bel Air would join a soundscape already saturated with collective expression. In addition to the singing of that first night, song-filled processions were held throughout the capital in the weeks after the earthquake. In a discourse that bordered on justifying oppression, media coverage simply hailed these events as representing an innate "resilience" among Haitians. Little was said, as McAlister (forthcoming) notes, about why these acts of collective expression would be the means by which people overcome the historical predicaments they have been placed in. Yet these processions were not unusual or novel. They fit into a long history of unifying individuals, manufacturing force, reclaiming space, and charting political futures through acts of ambulatory performance. Like the processions of street bands, these processions attempted to locate the collectivity in terms of a particular past and inhabit the

force of the people to project a new trajectory. They were collective acts of mourning, but their performative vivacity suggested that what was at stake was the expression of common will. Stimulating the synchronicity of bodies through marching and song allowed people to materialize a "common-sense," and in so doing, gain a consciousness of collective agency and force in what often (and certainly for months after the quake) appeared to be an out-of-control environment.

While these processions articulated a collective re-sensitization, Kal and ZapZap's procession was also hoping to "bring back feeling" in a sense closer to the *koudyay*-like events described in earlier chapters. There is, perhaps, no more dramatic assertion of force and will than collective pleasure, and no better medium for that than dancing down the streets with a Rara. In my conversations after the earthquake, I was continually reminded of the way the reconstitution of self was rooted in expressing liveliness through the assertion of presence, activity, and "feeling." Whereas "not talking" (*pa pale*) and inactivity were the dominant expressions of depression and trauma, "dialoguing" and "restarting one's activity" (*reprann aktivite w*) were the most common advice for recovery. This was not surprising, but in the midst of all the international attention to shelter, food, and water, it struck me as especially significant. While these basic needs certainly mattered, what was equally important was for people to reclaim their sense of personhood beyond mere survival. And this occurred not through the claiming of "aid" so much as through the manifestation of agency in making activity and collectivity in experiencing pleasure.

Kal called me just prior to the outing he had anticipated above. It was eleven o'clock at night in early March. With a bad connection and amid the sounds of *kone* and drums, I could barely hear him. It sounded like he was saying the lyrics above. I asked him to repeat and in a

now clearly audible voice he told me: "*Nou mete gason sou nou*, we've put the man on us! You would be happy, a lot of feeling, a lot of feeling. I feel (*santi m*) good!"[2]

Five months later, and the next time I was in Haiti, I made the trip to Bel Air. I knew to expect lots of "activity," as I had heard about the way male staff had been tapped to participate in rubble removal. Yet the activity I encountered was unanticipated. In the former space of Kay ZapZap, leaning against a dysfunctional telephone poll, amid an empty lot filled with the traces of rubble, was a new placard announcing another beach day. Anticipating relocations and displacements, it announced with characteristic wit: "We await all new ladies (in the zone), all my new 'brothers.' We're waiting for everyone at the base of ZapZap. Everyone who has 'tongue' (talks too much), stay home!"

Figure 19. Beach day poster. Author Photo, 2010.

[2] March 7, 2010.

Beyond signaling revitalized activity and feeling, this sign also revealed the increased and shifting flows of capital in the wake of the earthquake. In place of the sponsorship from local big men were an array of international and national organizations oriented toward recovery, such as a water company started by rapper Izolan, an NGO that runs a nearby school, and another focused on infrastructural development. Rather than secure a fun outing, however, this increased capital emanating from outside sources caused much controversy. Accusations of theft and hoarding abounded, and in what was understood as an act of "jealousy," the bus was stoned as it returned to Bel Air that day. Compared to the previous year's feelingful outing, this one threatened the very institution of the beach day. All forms of organizing in Bel Air risked accusations of jealousy, since symbolic gains were always intrinsically connected to real economic exchange and power. But this particular controversy touched on the fact that the deployment of capital, especially "foreign" capital, could in fact hinder the modus operandi of value production in the larger context of neighborhood organizing. Money was a prerequisite for organizing outings (whether beach days or band processions), and the display of economic agency was an important element of their enactment. Yet financial gain was neither the only nor the principal reward at stake. The social value produced in these outing was, in fact, centered on the display of a degree of financial sacrifice and the ability to accumulate debt in the service of others.

Ultimately, the appeal of organizing among men in Bel Air was not that it made people free of misery or insecurity. Rather, it enabled those organized to link themselves with powerful actors, assert a degree of agency and leadership, claim moral entitlements, embody an icon of manliness, and cultivate reputation in the community. Amid a disordered and uncertain political

world, these “activities” provided a stage on which young men could perform the contours of power and secure a respected position in their zone.

APPENDIX

Chronology of Democratic Transition

1986
February 7: Jean Claude Duvalier leaves Haiti following widespread riots against the rising cost of living. The National Council of Government is established and led by General Henri Namphy.

1987
March 29: The new constitution, which promises broad economic and social rights for all citizens, is ratified by a constituent assembly.

1988
January: Leslie Manigat is elected in militarized elections, which were largely boycotted by the public.
June: Military *coup d'état* overthrows government and installs General Henri Namphy
September 11: There is a massacre at Saint Jean Bosco, the parish of Jean Bertrand Aristide, an influential Catholic priest and follower of liberation theology. Several are reportedly killed.
September 18: Namphy is overthrown by General Prosper Avril.

1990
March 10: Avril resigns, and Ertha Pascal Trouillot is appointed head of a provisional government.
December 16: Aristide is elected president following with an overwhelming majority.

1991
January 7: Roger Lafontant carries out a foiled *coup*. Thousands riot in the streets.
February 7: Aristide is inaugurated as President of Haiti
September 27: Aristide delivers famous speech that is interpreted by some as ordering necklacing of members of the opposition.
September 30: Aristide is ousted from power by the Haitian military. He seeks exile in Venezuela. Raoul Cedras, the Commander of the Army, becomes the *de facto* leader of Haiti.
October 3: Organization of American States adopts resolution to institute an embargo suspending economic activities with Haiti.
October 4: Aristide forges alliance with the Congressional Black Caucus on a visit to Washington, D.C.

1992
Thousands of Haitian refugees take to the high seas in small boats called *kantè* to seek refuge in the U.S. President Bush's policy of forced deportation becomes a campaign issue for candidate Bill Clinton.

1993
June 23: U.N. institutes a stronger embargo, blocking oil and other imports. Gas shortages and hunger lead to mass rioting and looting.

July 3: The so-called Governor's Agreement is signed. It promises a U.N. stabilization mission and Aristide's return to power by October 30.
February: U.N.-OAS International Civilian Mission in Haiti (MICIVIH) is deployed.
August 27: Prime Minister Robert Malval is elected, and the U.N. suspends embargo.
September: The U.N. Mission in Haiti, the first peacekeeping mission is deployed.
October 11: A band of *makouts* prevent the USS Harlan County, which is carrying the military instruction unit, from entering the National Port. Embargo is reinstituted shortly thereafter.

1994
May 6: UN announces complete economic embargo against Haiti.
July 30: UN authorizes a 20,000-strong multinational force to restore democracy through the use of force.
October 10: Cedras agrees to relinquish rule of Haiti.
October 15: Aristide resumes his term under the auspices of the multinational force, which is headed by the U.S.

1995
Aristide disbands the military.
René Préval, Prime Minister under Aristide, wins the presidential elections.

1996
February 7: A peaceful transition of power occurs between Aristide and Préval.

2000
November: Aristide is elected for a second term in elections, which were boycotted by the opposition because of contested parliamentary elections held earlier that year.
U.N. troops leave Haiti.

2004
The bicentennial of Haiti's independence is celebrated.
February: Rioting breaks out in Gonaïves with bands of armed insurgents challenging Aristide's rule.
February 29: Aristide resigns from office and flees Haiti via a U.S. military aircraft to South Africa. U.N. authorizes a multinational interim force.
April 30: The peacekeeping mission MINUSTAH is authorized.
September: Hurricane Jeanne devastates the Artibonite region and kills an estimated 2000 people.
September 30: Pro-Aristide supporters rally in the streets.
October – April: MINUSTAH-PNH raids occur in the popular quarters of the capital, especially Bel Air, Martissant, Cité Soleil. The raids become known as "Baghdad," with hundreds killed over a six-month period. The opposition then fractures and the violence shifts into a series of "turf wars" between rival gangs. Kidnappings and theft escalate throughout the city.

2006
February: René Préval is elected for a second term.

2007
Préval signs peace accords with armed staff in Bel Air and other impoverished areas. Viva Rio begins comprehensive violence reduction and development program in Bel Air. Violence declines in Bel Air and neighboring areas.

2008
April: Riots break out over high food prices. They begin in the city of Les Cayes in southern Haiti and quickly spread to Port-au-Prince. A number of civilians and one MINUSTAH troop are killed.
August: Several storms and hurricanes strike the Artibonite region. An estimated 800 are killed, and the harvest is decimated.
April 12: Prime Minister Jacques Edouard Alexis is forced to resign from office due to the food riots.
July: Michèle Pierre Louis is named prime minister.

2009
November: Prime Minister Pierre Louis is forced to resign over fallout due to the handling of earthquake relief funds. Jean Max Bellerive becomes prime minister.

2010
January 12: A 7.0 earthquake strikes 10 miles SW of Port-au-Prince killing an estimated 200,000 people and claiming the majority of governmental buildings and the MINUSTAH headquarters. MINUSTAH increases the size of its mission and U.S. troops are deployed as part of a humanitarian mission.

2011
April: Michel Martelly is elected president in minimally attended elections and takes office in May. The failure to fill the post of prime minister renders the government impotent.
October: Gary Conille appointment as prime minister is approved by parliament.

2012
May: Prime Minister Gary Conille resigns following disputes over the handling of earthquake funds. Laurent Lamothe is appointed prime minister.

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