

Introduction

Democracy, Insecurity, and the Commodification of Suffering

What has dehumanized me has become a commodity, which I offer for sale.

Jean Améry, *At the Mind's Limits*

In this book I trace the links between military and humanitarian interventions in contemporary Haiti and the nation's ongoing struggles to consolidate democracy and combat insecurity. I first chronicle the historic roots and practices of terror apparatuses and then describe how the coup regime targeted Haitian pro-democracy activists with cruel forms of domination during the 1991–94 period of de facto rule. I recount how members of the coup apparatus used sexual and gender violence as tools of repression to terrorize the poor pro-democracy sector. I also describe the disordered subjectivities that such traumatic experiences produced in women and men whom I encountered during my work. However, this book does not focus exclusively on the assemblage of sex, gender, violence, and trauma—a negative nexus of power that has plagued sociopolitical realities in Haiti from the colonial era to the present (James 1989 [1963]; James 2003; Renda 2001; Rey 1999). Rather, it describes the processes by which individuals and families targeted for repression formulated new political subjectivities as apparatuses of terror *and* compassion intervened in their lives.

On December 16, 1990, the citizens of Haiti elected the former priest Jean-Bertrand Aristide president of the republic. The democratic election was historic after nearly thirty years of the brutal hereditary Duvalier dictatorship (François “Papa Doc” Duvalier, 1957–71, and Jean-Claude “Baby Doc” Duvalier, 1971–86) and five years of “Duvalierism without Duvalier,” a period in which Duvalierist armed forces

sought to maintain political control by means of violent repression of pro-democratic sectors in civil society (Barthélemy 1992; Fatton 2002: 64–70). Aristide, a charismatic activist, espoused the ethics of liberation theology and promised to exercise a “preferential option for the poor.”¹ The Lavalas coalition,² a network of grassroots, pro-democracy advocacy groups, endorsed Aristide as a candidate, and he won 67 percent of the popular vote. The historic inauguration of President Aristide on February 7, 1991, gave many Haitians hope that democracy, the rule of law, justice, human rights, governmental accountability, and socioeconomic equality might become enduring conditions in the nation.³ But the meaning of these concepts has been at the heart of conflict in and over the Haitian nation throughout its history. To the consternation of those who supported the popular movement for democracy, the power to define and measure such conditions has remained in the hands of the international, national, and local actors whose interests in Haiti are often in opposition to those of the poor majority. These powerful actors routinely intervene to alter the course of Haiti’s affairs.

Dreams of sociopolitical transformation in Haiti were short-lived. On September 30, 1991, Aristide was ousted by a military coup d’état. In the three years that followed, tens of thousands of paramilitary gunmen known as *atache* (attachés) aligned with the military to repress the population.⁴ The terror apparatus murdered, raped, and “disappeared” fellow citizens in the poor pro-democracy sector, using methods of torture with historical roots in the brutal discipline of the slave plantations. Three hundred thousand Haitians were internally displaced, and tens of thousands of Haitian “boat people” fled to other Caribbean nations, South America, and the United States. Most Haitian refugees who reached U.S. shores were imprisoned in detention centers or repatriated. They were characterized as “economic migrants” fleeing poverty rather than granted the status of political asylum seekers.

On October 15, 1994, the U.S.-led Multinational Force (MNF), a twenty-eight-nation coalition of military forces sanctioned by U.N. Security Council Resolution 940, restored Aristide to power. International, national, and local humanitarian and development aid organizations worked alongside the peacekeeping and humanitarian military mission to rehabilitate the embattled nation and its traumatized citizens, much as they had begun to do during the period of unconstitutional military rule. Since the 1994 restoration of constitutional order, Haiti has recommenced the process of transforming systemic and systematic predatory state practices into practices of governmental accountability



Figure 1. U.S. military “Support Group” mural, Camp Fairwinds, Port-au-Prince. The Haitian Creole text from the upper left corner to the bottom of the sign reads as follows: *Gwoup Sipò Ameriken*: American Support Group; *Nap Travay Ansanm*: We’re Working Together; *Refe Wout*: Rebuild Roads; *Bati Wout*: Construct Roads; *Swen Moun*: Treat People; *Repare Lopital*: Repair Hospitals; *Fouye Pi*: Dig Wells; *Repare Lekol*: Repair Schools; *Nap Travay Pou Demen Pi Bèl*: We’re Working for a Better Tomorrow. Photo credit: Erica Caple James.

and transparency. Nevertheless, it continues to struggle with ongoing political and economic insecurity.

In 1995 I arrived in Haiti to study Haitian Creole and to conduct research on religion and healing practices in anticipation of future Ph.D. work in medical anthropology. This first visit to Haiti occurred nine months after the MNF military intervention and during the United Nations Mission in Haiti (UNMIH) peacekeeping occupation, a mission that included soldiers from the United States, Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, the Netherlands, and Canada, among other nations. In addition to the peacekeepers, U.S. military forces engaged in “humanitarian civic assistance” to rebuild Haiti’s infrastructure and provide medical care to Haitians in need. Many Haitians perceived the peacekeepers as a new kind of security force, one able to suspend the horror of the events that had transpired between 1991 and 1994. Throughout Port-au-Prince, the capital of Haiti, armored tanks and other military trucks commanded the roads. The soldiers who operated these imposing vehicles

seemed to receive welcoming gestures from pedestrians passing through the streets.

The experience of living under such conditions drastically reshaped my future ethnographic research. Dr. Marie George and her family hosted me at their home in the upper Delmas section of Port-au-Prince during this first visit.⁵ The neighborhood was residential, and to my untrained eye, it seemed calm and peaceful. The house was modest but comfortable, and I settled in to continue learning Haitian Creole with the George family, despite the challenges facing urban residents in daily life. That summer was one of the hottest I had ever experienced, and my hosts confirmed it seemed unusually warm. There was very little potable water, and we had electricity for only an hour or two each evening. We often cooked by candlelight while listening to hymns sung at a home-based Pentecostal church a few doors away. I was unsettled by the presence of high, gated walls around many of the homes. Broken glass or iron spikes were secured in mortar on top of these walls to prevent unwanted outsiders from entering. I began to sense the fear that still plagued Haiti despite the recent “restoration of democracy.” It was as if the population had not yet awoken from a nightmare, one that left palpable traces on individuals, families, and communities.

During my first few days in Haiti, my Creole instructor took me to visit his family and to tour Port-au-Prince. In addition to the foreign military forces patrolling the city, I saw private uniformed security guards whom business and home owners with financial means routinely hired for protection, a practice that is common in many parts of Latin America⁶ and increasingly characterizes many North American communities (Low 2003). The security firms that employed these men had names like Citadelle and Panther. These names evoked the power of the Haitians who triumphed over the country’s enemies when it won its independence from France in 1804 and during struggles against foreign intervention in the postcolonial period. Private security companies first came on the scene after the 1986 ouster of Jean-Claude Duvalier. Some of the guards were former members of the coup apparatus (Stotzky 1997: 203–4); others were civilians who were unable to find work in their chosen profession. As a whole, these security firms managed an armed force that could be deployed for private and political ends should the need arise. While at first I was shocked to see the guards, armed with rifles or automatic weapons, posted in front of grocery stores and banks, by the end of the summer I no longer saw them. They had become invisible.

At home, Dr. George was extremely concerned about our personal safety as there had been a number of recent robberies in the neighborhood. Earlier that spring an elderly couple living a few doors down was murdered during a burglary. Dr. George said that most people assumed that the *gason lakou* (yard boy, caretaker) had allowed the thieves to enter the home. No one was sure what had actually happened. In the shadow of these extreme events, our day-to-day life was strangely predictable, despite the persistent anxiety about what might happen if we were not vigilant about our security. Dr. George made almost daily trips downtown to the clinic where she worked near the National Palace. When I accompanied her on these occasions, we were always careful to return home well before nightfall and not to make any unnecessary stops.

While en route we sometimes discussed how difficult life had been during the coup years, but these occasions were rare. Dr. George was reluctant to talk about those times, and it was not clear that they were truly in the past. After the coup the international community imposed a porous economic embargo intended to pressure the *de facto* regime to relinquish power. The military obstinately maintained its unconstitutional rule despite these so-called sanctions and profited from the black market that the sanctions encouraged.⁷ Food was scarce and extremely expensive during the embargo. During especially uncertain times, Dr. George often remained at home to avoid the risk of going downtown to work at the clinic. She explained that these years reminded her of the social upheaval that directly affected her family after the fall of Duvalier.

Dr. George's brother, a businessman and manager of private schools that were owned by her extended family, was a target of *dechoukaj* (uprooting),⁸ the retributive violence following the ouster of Duvalier directed against alleged Duvalierists. His house in the posh Laboule section in the mountains above Pétionville was razed to the ground by a mob of poor Haitians. Dr. George said that the group accused her brother of being a *tonton makout*—one of the agents and beneficiaries of the Duvalier terror apparatus. The lingering effects of this attack on her middle-class family were manifested in Dr. George's apprehensions about the inhabitants of her home, including me. Like many other Haitian homes, the George residence could be locked from the outside to prevent the door from being opened even by those who remained within. All keys to the home, rooms, and cabinets remained in her hands; thus she controlled when we entered and exited the domestic sphere. To exit the home, I needed to be with her. The attempt to secure our domestic

space behind the clawed walls and locked doors of the gate and home only emphasized the specter of disorder in the social space outside.

Encounters with three other individuals would have a direct influence on my subsequent ethnographic research in Haiti on postconflict or posttrauma rehabilitation for individuals, groups, and even nations, especially in contexts of widespread social, political, and economic instability. In the mini-*bidonvil* (slum, shantytown) near the Georges' house, a woman could often be seen walking the streets at midday, crying out as if she were a bird or some other animal. I asked Dr. George about this woman and was told that she practiced Vodou. Sometimes the woman became possessed and walked the streets. "She's just crazy," I was told, "just ignore it." Nevertheless, I wondered if her possession was actually taking place in the context of ritual, or if there might have been some other factor that precipitated her dissociative state—especially considering the recent murder on the same street and the overwhelming climate of tension in the city as a whole.

Dr. George's dismissal of this woman's condition raised several questions regarding whether the local disruptions in social space and the broader context of political and economic instability disordered some individuals' subjectivity—their sense of self, identity, and bodily experience—more than others. Were there culturally patterned ways in which emotional distress manifested in Haiti, and did these vary according to gender, class, or social status? In what contexts did individuals dissociate, and when was it socially appropriate? From my previous study of religion and healing, I was aware that in ritual contexts of Haitian Vodou dissociation is considered a desirable spiritual state that precedes the embodiment of the spirits. How did those Haitians whose understanding of the body, emotion, and illness rested on the epistemology of Vodou express and interpret psychological distress? Were instances such as these markers of some sort of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as it is understood in biomedical contexts? If so, what methods of healing existed in Haitian culture to restore the integrity of the person? Were they effective for the victims of violence, torture, and rape who continued to struggle in the insecure environment?

A visit by a member of Dr. George's family gave me more questions to ponder about the relationship between political, social, and economic instability and the processes of establishing democracy and security in Haiti. Nathalie St. Pierre, a cousin of Dr. George, occasionally stayed with us while she worked as a translator at the nearby civilian police academy. We often spoke about her work with the U.S. Department of

Justice International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program (ICITAP), which provided instruction to civilian police forces globally. The new Haitian National Police force had been established recently, and American, Canadian, and French police gave technical assistance to the new classes of Haitian officers. Nathalie described the officer candidates as very young and inexperienced and said that translating across cultural and linguistic boundaries was often difficult. I wondered how this young police force would be able to provide security in such an unstable social and economic environment.

The third individual who encouraged me to think about the challenges of promoting democracy, the rule of law, and justice in Haiti was a Belgian priest of the Scheut Mission, Fr. Hugo Triest (1932–2003), a human rights activist, journalist, and former director of the Catholic Radio Soleil. Father Hugo had promoted human rights in Haiti since the Duvalier period. He visited me at Dr. George's home that summer and invited me to accompany him to the Carrefour neighborhood where he frequently celebrated Mass for disabled young adults at a residential center. Carrefour was one of the areas hardest hit by violence during the period of de facto military rule. In our conversations I learned about the overwhelming difficulties his Haitian colleagues and he had faced during decades of promoting human rights in the nation. Their efforts were hampered by repression and violence, the population's overarching illiteracy, and the difficulties of everyday social engagements.

Father Hugo told me, furthermore, that it was often impossible for the network of Haitian human rights organizations to achieve consensus on courses of action. He lamented the competition, suspicion, and indecision that some of these organizations exhibited. But he also challenged me to consider that it was not just the violations of what are viewed as civil and political rights that were affronts to humanity; violations of economic, social, and cultural rights can be equally if not more devastating. I will never forget his words that summer: "In Haiti misery is a violence."⁹ They remained with me as I learned how Haitian governmental and nongovernmental actors, as well as international interveners, approached the work of postconflict transition in Haiti between 1996 and 2000.

This book examines the paradox that many of the efforts to rehabilitate the nation and its citizens, and to promote democracy and economic stability, inadvertently reinforced the practices of predation, corruption, and repression that they were intended to repair. In response to the proliferation of human rights abuses during the coup years, the

humanitarian and development aid apparatuses—international, national, and local governmental and nongovernmental institutions assisting Haiti through improvised as well as “planned” interventions (Ferguson 1994: 20)—offered crisis assistance to victims and documented human rights violations as they were occurring. In the postconflict period the aid apparatus generated numerous and sometimes competing initiatives to rehabilitate these victims as a component of interventions to strengthen democracy in Haiti.

Integral to the processes by which aid apparatuses indirectly fomented social unrest was the pernicious presence of *ensekirite* (Haitian Creole for “insecurity”): the seemingly random political and criminal violence that ebbed and flowed in waves amid ongoing economic, social, and environmental decline. Through the course of my work in Haiti, I observed how *ensekirite* was experienced as vulnerability, anxiety, and a heightened sense of risk at a sensory level, especially by those who were most vulnerable. The sense of risk and vulnerability crossed racial, class, and gender boundaries and even threatened members of expatriate communities and agencies—whether governmental or nongovernmental—although to varying degrees.

I understand *ensekirite* as the embodied uncertainty generated by political, criminal, economic, and also spiritual ruptures that many individuals and groups continue to experience in Haiti (James 2008). The lived experience of *ensekirite* incorporates not only the threats residing in material space but also the perception of unseen malevolent forces that covertly intervene in Haitian society—whether such forces are natural or supernatural, individual or collective, organized or arbitrary, or domestic or foreign. Thus another goal of this work is to capture how individual, institutional, and government actors perceive and make sense of the hidden or occult powers that are integral to the generation of *ensekirite*.

HISTORIC ROOTS OF ENSEKIRITE

Haiti (formerly Saint-Domingue) is one of many nations attempting the transition from authoritarian regimes, civil war, colonial rule, and political violence to a state of social and economic stability. Haiti is also generally known as the “poorest country in the Western Hemisphere.” This oft-cited negative description renders opaque the way in which international and national political and economic powers have contributed to its dire state. Many have questioned why the world’s first black republic still struggles to consolidate democracy after gaining independence in

1804. To some degree the answer is straightforward: the majority of Haitian citizens lack security. Without security it is difficult to build lasting social and political institutions that support democratic processes and economic growth. Embedded in this seemingly simple answer are complex historical practices of international exploitation and disenfranchisement, domestic terror and economic predation, and long-standing societal ills and injustices.

The dilemmas of representation are a necessary starting point for this book. A long tradition of misrepresenting the Haitian nation and its culture, especially on the part of Westerners, complicates many recent as well as older depictions of the country's plight (Dash 1997; Farmer 1992, 1994; Lawless 1992; Renda 2001). Haiti remains infamous for the widespread practice of Vodou, the historically maligned religion that enabled former slaves to survive and to create other forms of spiritual governance in Haiti's postcolonial era. It is a religion that has been considered both a positive and a negative force for "development" at various periods in the nation's history (Desmangles 1992: 6; Mars 1977 [1946]; Price-Mars 1983). Undoubtedly, the ambivalence about its practice colors the way the nation and its people have been treated internationally (Farmer 1992; Sabatier 1988).

Questions about Haiti's capacity to achieve democratic governance and representations that depict violence and the Vodou religion as the hallmarks of Haiti's so-called national character also have deep political and historical roots. These representations mark their authors as occupying positions of privilege and power that the majority of Haitians have never approached. Frequently, observers of Haiti also deny any connection between their privileged position and the nation's ongoing struggles with democracy. Furthermore, representations of Haiti and its people, history, and culture directly influence foreign policies applied to and interventions in the nation.

The roots of Haiti's challenges in consolidating democracy are long and deep. They can be traced to eighteenth-century colonial plantation regimes in which overseers extracted material resources through slave labor in order to enrich European metropolitan centers. But Haiti is also the only nation to successfully liberate itself from the extreme brutality of the plantation regime, largely through rebellion and revolution by the slave majority. Between 1791 and 1803 there were approximately 450,000 African slaves, 40,000 ruling whites, and 30,000 mixed-race persons, as well as a small population of free blacks (Lundahl 1983: 68; Nicholls 1985: 23; Nicholls 1996: 20–21).¹⁰ In the course of the

rebellion and revolution, the Saint-Domingue slaves overcame Spanish, British, and French forces (Davis 2006: 159, 166–67). These intrepid slaves ultimately defeated Napoleon Bonaparte's efforts to reestablish French colonial domination between 1802 and 1803 and declared independence from France on January 1, 1804. The country's unique history is related to its current troubled state.

In its quest for sovereignty, equality, and liberation from tyranny—values promoted in the preceding American and French revolutions—Haiti entered its postcolonial era as both an outcast from colonizing and slaveholding nations and a symbol of freedom for the enslaved and colonized. In 1825 Haiti was compelled to pay a hefty indemnity to France of 150 million francs to compensate former plantation owners for losses sustained during the revolutionary period. The indemnity agreement, a condition of political recognition of Haiti's independence, put an end to France's attempts to reacquire its former colony but severely hampered the fledgling nation economically (Farmer 1994: 76). After adding the interest on loans required to pay the indemnity, the figure equaled more than U.S.\$21 billion in today's dollars (Charles 2003). As a further indignity, it was more than half a century before Haiti received formal recognition as a sovereign nation from the Vatican (in 1860) and the United States (in 1862, after the South seceded from the Union at the commencement of the Civil War) (Logan 1941: 303; Trouillot 1990: 51, 53).

The achievement of independence did not lead to the eradication of exploitative domestic practices. In the early nineteenth century Haiti's postcolonial leaders reproduced the colonial system of political and economic repression in parts of the nation, including the brutal discipline of workers (Trouillot 1990: 48–50). As the nineteenth century progressed the racial and class conflict between a “mulatto, city-based, commercial elite, and a black, rural, and military elite . . . was frequently such that each would prefer to invite foreign intervention in the affairs of Haiti than to allow its rivals to gain power” (Nicholls 1996: 8). The poor black peasant majority that cultivated the land was largely excluded from political decisions but mobilized to resist foreign intervention when Haiti's sovereignty was challenged by the collusion of foreign and domestic actors. By the end of the nineteenth century the former French colony that was once the most economically productive in the world received two-thirds of its imports from trade with the United States (Trouillot 1990: 54). In the early twentieth century U.S. control of Haiti's import market would also be accompanied by military occupation.

In the twentieth century decades of U.S. occupation, political instability, and economic development strategies favoring foreign investors reinforced the late-nineteenth-century position of the Haitian state and its agents as predators (Fotton 2002; McCoy 1997; Rotberg 1971; Smith 2001). The occupation also increased the nation's dependency on imports. Between 1957 and 1986 the Duvalier dictators deployed what Achille Mbembe (2003) has termed "necropolitics"—the power of death to subjugate life—in order to control the population. This repression occurred with the tacit approval of the international community because it produced a docile labor force that was available for industrial export production. The profit from the commodities that Haitians produced—items such as baseballs, microelectronics, textiles, apparel, and toys (Farmer 1988b; Grunwald, Delatour, and Voltaire 1984, 1985)—remained in the hands of the Haitian elite and foreign business owners. These international and national practices of political and economic extraction are major contributors to Haiti's current status as what is widely regarded as a failed state.

Predatory practices did not occur without resistance. Between 1986 and 1990 poor, pro-democratic forces struggled with former Duvalierists, at times violently, to determine the course of Haiti's future. Despite the reciprocal violence occurring in the period before its democratic elections, national and international observers considered President Aristide's election legitimate. But hopes for changing the endemic oppression and corruption were dashed by the September 30, 1991, military coup d'état, President Aristide's subsequent protracted exile, and the brutal suppression of the pro-democracy sector.

In light of the brief history recounted thus far, it is important to discuss another set of representations that depicted Haiti's political economy during the time of my research between 1995 and 2000. The *World Development Report 2000/2001* listed Haiti as a "low income" country (170th out of 206 economies), with a gross national product (GNP) of only U.S.\$460 per capita (World Bank 2001). The U.N. Development Programme's (UNDP's) *Human Development Report 2000* stated that 63 percent of the population lacked access to safe water, 55 percent lacked access to health services, and 75 percent lacked access to basic sanitation. Adult illiteracy rates were at least 55 percent, and possibly higher. At least 28 percent of children under age five were below normal weight. Infant mortality rates were nearly 64 per 1,000 live births.

Such dire conditions have not changed much in recent years. The CIA *World Factbook* of 2008 estimated life expectancy at slightly more than

fifty-eight years for women and fifty-five years for men. The same report cited an HIV/AIDS prevalence rate of nearly 6 percent for the entire population of Haiti.¹¹ Overall, at least 80 percent of the population lives in poverty and 56 percent in abject poverty. Haiti's current external debt is U.S.\$1.3 billion, and unemployment is currently estimated at nearly 70 percent (CIA 2008). Given statistics such as these, one might ask, What has happened in Haiti? Or, rather, What hasn't happened?

When President Aristide was restored to power in 1994, the international community, through its multilateral and bilateral aid institutions, proposed the "development" of Haiti by instituting neoliberal economic interventions: export-led agricultural production, continued privatization of national industries, expansion of the industrial assembly sector, and additional stabilization and structural adjustment efforts, among others. These plans were contested, as they required that the nation and its economy be open to nearly unrestricted foreign extraction of resources and exploitation of "cheap" labor. Foreign assistance came primarily in the form of loans. Such measures meant that for the most part profits would accumulate in the hands of the elite or circulate outside Haiti rather than "trickle down" to build state infrastructure and improve the status of the poor majority. While some of these efforts were implemented, ongoing political disputes in Haiti and in the international community disrupted aid flows.

Aristide's truncated term concluded in 1995 after peaceful elections. The transition that followed brought to power René Préval, who was once known as Aristide's protégé and who served as prime minister during Aristide's first term. In 2000, as President Préval completed his five-year term, Aristide was reelected to a second term as president, raising hopes that the unrealized promises of his first interrupted term could finally be accomplished. But despite these indicators of the development of democratic processes, the international community suspended direct foreign assistance to Haiti because of allegations that the election was fraudulent.¹² Multilateral and bilateral aid agencies filtered emergency funds through international nongovernmental humanitarian and development aid agencies rather than disburse them directly to Haitian institutions. After the 1994 restoration of democracy, close to half a billion dollars in direct international aid was withheld.

This suspension of aid was continued after yet another escalation in Haiti's sociopolitical instability. On February 29, 2004, Aristide was forced into exile for the second time. Armed forces in the north of Haiti composed of members of the terror apparatus from the 1991-94 coup

period and other anti-Aristide actors joined together in a campaign to take control of Port-au-Prince. In this instance the international community did not intervene. Rather, President Aristide was presented with the “choice” to resign and immediately leave the country or to face more civilian killings and his government’s destruction. The unwillingness of the United States, Canada, France, and other nations to intervene in the crisis permitted a virtual coup d’état that Aristide sympathizers have termed a “kidnapping” (Aristide 2004; Chomsky, Farmer, and Goodman 2004; Hallward 2007; Robinson 2007). These events plunged the nation into another cycle of violence, and since that time another round of military and humanitarian intervention has attempted to restore order and democratic rule. Ensekirite continues to proliferate despite (or as a consequence of) these processes.

Haiti’s cycles of economic decline and political and criminal insecurity are inextricably linked with this history of the masses’ suffering and resistance. Of course, these cycles are also influenced by foreign military, political, and economic interventions that are inextricably connected to the circulation of commodities in the global capitalist economy. Thus criticisms of Haiti’s apparent failure to achieve democracy and post-conflict security must be assessed in the context of the country’s unique geopolitical and economic position.

SOVEREIGNTY, SECURITY, AND INTERVENTION

Theorists of international relations have traditionally deployed the concepts of sovereignty and security to describe a given state’s political independence: its freedom from external interference, right to self-government, and right to protect its national interests from the threat of other sovereign polities. Likewise, international relations theorists have conventionally considered the ethics and politics of intervention in the context of war. In the aftermath of World War II and the Holocaust, however, the parameters of scholarship on sovereignty and related security discourses have shifted.

The evolution of the prevailing “culture of national security” (Katzenstein 1996) accompanied the formal development of the international human rights regime by the Allied powers at the end of World War II. After the war European nations were faced with the challenge of resurrecting societies and transforming national war economies into economies that alleviated suffering and promoted social, economic, and political recovery. On June 5, 1947, U.S. Secretary of State George

Marshall extended U.S. assistance to “rehabilitate” the ruined countries and economies of Europe as a humanitarian concern—one that had a direct influence on global peace and security, as well as on U.S. national security.¹³ Underlying the concern to alleviate suffering, however, were nascent cold war fears that Europeans, out of desperation, social chaos, and poverty, would turn to Communism rather than to democracy.¹⁴

The postwar period was also significant for the establishment of international institutions dedicated to promoting global peace, security, democracy, and human rights, alongside economic development. Governmental and nonstate actors alike began to affirm that the security of individuals and groups residing *within* a sovereign nation was a matter of international interest rather than a matter solely of domestic policy, a concept currently understood as “human security” (Rothschild 1995). On October 24, 1945, the U.N. Charter was ratified. It created an international institution committed to global peace and security; to justice, human rights, and equitable social and economic development; and to protect citizens from the repressive acts of their own governments. At the state level, membership in the U.N. required, among other things, that a government promote and protect human rights. As a consequence, states must also agree to external surveillance of their domestic affairs. Such monitoring could result in interventions in the affairs of sovereign nations that were violating such rights.

The international human rights regime codified ideals for regulating interpersonal, institutional, and intergovernmental interaction through the December 10, 1948, ratification of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the subsequent ratification of covenants, charters, statutes, and other legal instruments. Through such efforts human rights stakeholders have, in effect, defined what it means to be “human” in universal terms, even as these definitions remain hotly contested. As has been noted by numerous scholars of the human rights regime, vigorous debates continue to unfold around issues of culture, gender, and individual versus collective rights; a tendency to privilege the surveillance and enforcement of “civil and political” rights over the “economic, cultural, and social rights”; a Western or “Eurocentric” orientation to foundational human rights documents; and historical debates over the lesser influence of later entrants into the U.N. system after World War II (the newly independent postcolonial and postsocialist states, among others).

In the decades since the inauguration of the formal human rights regime, the dynamic nature of conflict and the plurality of settings in

which it occurs have impelled revisions and refinement of these conceptions of human rights and notions of security. Historically, the sphere of individual civil and political rights and the specter of violent threats in interstate wars have received greatest emphasis. As a result, classifying types of violence as “state-sponsored” or “organized” has been an essential step in the human rights regime’s procedures for intervening in the affairs of a predatory sovereign state. Given consensus that such criteria have been met, governmental and nongovernmental actors have implemented military and humanitarian interventions across the borders of sovereign states in order to reduce suffering and promote human security during and after periods of political strife. These interveners characteristically demand that transitional nations promote democracy, human rights, the rule of law, and justice—as well as embrace free market economies—as they undergo postconflict development. They also advocate that transitions take place in circumstances of governmental accountability and transparency. These activities constitute what has come to be called nation building.

Even given consensus that a population is suffering from human rights violations and an absence of security, the Haitian case demonstrates that refugees escaping instability and ensekirite can also be perceived as threats to the security of the nations to which they flee. These perceptions of threat, in turn, evoke conventional understandings of and debates about national security that prevail over concerns for human security. Thus the state—whether sovereign and legitimate, illegitimate, accountable, or failed—remains at the heart of these theoretical discourses, despite notions of a “new world order” in the post-cold war world.

Both conventional and human security discourses are largely framed in the shadow of paradigms that view the state and its organized agents as malevolent perpetrators or negligent patriarchs in opposition to vulnerable, “feminized,” or subjugated populations. In response, transnational interventions to craft democracies from “transitional” societies frequently adopt modern, universal discourses of law, human rights, and development to remedy the disparities in power between states and their civilian populations. In many transitional states, “cultures of insecurity” (Weldes et al. 1999) hamper efforts to consolidate democratic processes and economic growth. What must not be forgotten, however, is that these “new” conflicts have deep historical roots. Foreign and domestic powers may have instigated, manipulated, or suppressed violent disputes in order to maintain the previous dominant position of state, ruling class, or colonial power. In some respects interventions aimed at social

rehabilitation of transitional states are reminiscent of the missions of colonial expansion, the joint military and humanitarian interventions of the imperial past that sought to civilize their objects of intercession.

I use the terms *neomodern* and *neomodernism* in this book to refer to the resurgence of Enlightenment theories and practices of intervention that arise in relationship to the crisis of the state in the post-cold war era (Alexander 1995).¹⁵ In addition to characterizing new modes of warfare, neomodernism refers to the interventionist practices of nation building. Crucial to the neomodernist mission is the deployment of “governmentalities” (Foucault 1991: 103)—government rationalities or technologies of governance—to targets of intervention.

Neomodern doctrines of evolution and salvation are expressed through discourses of modernization and development (Escobar 1995: 194). A key tenet is the belief that the harmonious linkages of law-abiding nations that promote human rights and democracy and maintain open markets will inevitably achieve global peace and security. These secular creeds provide new flames to keep that motivate the zeal characterizing many well-intentioned interveners (Hopgood 2006).¹⁶ Neomodern principles of social engineering are also secular “theodicies”—theories explaining the origin of “evil” or suffering in the face of justice (or the goodness of God)—that seek to account for and remedy misfortune encountered across and within sovereign borders (Herzfeld 1992: 9–10). Nonetheless, intervention practices arising from such ideals frequently ignore political and economic disparities across and within nations that may ultimately underlie the eruption of “emergencies” (Agamben 1998 [1995]; Boltanski 1999 [1993]; Hopgood 2006). Despite possessing lofty ideals, the actual practices of promoting human rights, democracy, and economic growth abroad can be prejudiced, unequal, and unjust: some nations that desire to join the global community of nations are denied, whereas others are forced to follow the neomodernist path of development.

Another goal of this book is to show that these paradigms and the interventions engendered by neomodern discourses are inadequate to remedy chronic climates of *ensekirite* such as those that persist in Haiti. The limitations of conceptions of violence and vulnerability—as well as those of human rights, human security, and human development—likewise challenge the effectiveness of efforts to prevent, adjust, heal, or restore the cleavages wrought by *ensekirite*. I argue, furthermore, that the contradictions between neomodernist ideals and practices of governance produce ethical and moral dilemmas for the agencies and agents

working to facilitate Haiti's postconflict rehabilitation. These contradictions also create "double binds" (Fortun 2001) and untenable dilemmas of representation and identity for individuals who are both victims of human rights abuses and targets of aid intervention. Participating in and observing such processes as they unfolded also produced ethical challenges for the anthropologist.

ETHICS OF RESEARCH AND REPRESENTATION

In the introduction to *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter*, Talal Asad exhorts anthropologists to examine the ways in which the discipline's history, suppositions, and practices are rooted in asymmetries of power. As producers of knowledge, anthropologists' expertise may "have contributed to the cultural heritage of the societies they study. . . . But they have also contributed, sometimes indirectly, towards maintaining the structures of power represented by the colonial system" (1973: 17). These remarks are still relevant for the type of ethnographic practice that many anthropologists conduct today, known as activist or "critically engaged" anthropology.

In recent years the role of anthropologists as champions of their subjects has received considerable attention. The 1995 debate between Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Roy D'Andrade in *Current Anthropology* and the accompanying commentary on their perspectives raised questions about what moral obligations anthropologists have to relieve suffering rather than simply describe and analyze it. Are we, as Scheper-Hughes (1995: 417–18) admonishes, to act as "barefoot anthropologists" who are committed to siding with those who are downtrodden? Does such an activist position compromise the anthropologist's ability to record a politically neutral account? Is neutrality truly possible in the face of misery, or does such a position lean toward indifference?

Despite such tensions, anthropologists are actively advocating for human rights while simultaneously opening the theoretical space to challenge the universalism of its tenets (Goodale 2006; Merry 2006; Slyomovics 2005; Speed 2006). While the critically engaged anthropologist faces questions of how best to use ethnographic practices to represent their subjects' interests, she also faces the double bind of what truths to tell, especially when portraying complexity "on the ground" may undermine a particular political struggle (Fortun 2001: 52–54).

There are also current ethical debates about the role of anthropologists as cultural "experts" or translators in service of neocolonial,

imperial, or military interventions.¹⁷ Such anthropologists are *embedded in* the systems and structures of power against which many activist anthropologists are advocating. For example, Arturo Escobar (1995: 15), affirming Stacey Leigh Pigg's (1992) reflections on anthropologists working in the field of development, has said, "Anthropologists have been for the most part either inside development, as applied anthropologists, or outside development, as the champions of the authentically indigenous and the 'native's point of view.'" But "embedded anthropologists" are also ideally positioned to study the powerful effects of institutions, policies, and practices on their objects of intervention (Nader 1999; Pandolfi 2003, 2008).

Many of the actors designing and implementing the social engineering strategies in Haiti are both theoretical and applied anthropologists. They may be individuals with cross-cultural expertise from formal study of social theory or from humanitarian work. The anthropologists and social theorists with whom I studied and worked in Haiti are multiply positioned as activists, investigators, and experts. All of us were deeply implicated in the ethical dilemmas and failures of intervention depicted in this book. I critically assess the outcomes of these interventions with ambivalence, as I recognize that many of the sociocultural experts whose work is critiqued in this ethnography were the same ones who permitted me to participate in and observe the work in practice.

In writing this book, I have been forced to ask how the anthropologist describes Haiti's difficulties traveling along a chosen democratic path without reinforcing negative stereotypes about the nation and its people or demonizing the political spectrum of international interveners that sought to craft such processes. How does one discuss the problems of interpersonal strife, political violence, and pathological social cleavages without reinforcing the perception that Haiti is a pathological state? Is political neutrality possible when describing the processes that are transforming the social identities of both givers and receivers of aid in a climate of manifest insecurity? How does the methodology used to construct knowledge about the historical production of *ensekirite*—as well as the intersubjective, institutional, and governmental responses *ensekirite* provokes—generate additional dilemmas of representation?

In answer to these questions, I have chosen an interdisciplinary mode of analysis. I build on the insights of theology, medical and psychiatric anthropology, law and political science, human rights and humanitarian studies, and studies of race, gender, and religion; however, I am unable to delve deeply into the conceptual genealogies of each field without

sacrificing the narrative that I want to recount. As a discursive strategy, much of the analysis is presented as it was lived: the interpretation of events is sparsely interwoven in or immediately following the vignettes depicted. My intent is to give the *sense* of ensekirite that was experienced by Haitian activists targeted for repression and by those who sought to assist them.

The interdisciplinary character of this book also reflects the challenges that arose from the methodology used to gather data for the analysis. I conducted long-term, multisited ethnographic research tracing the international, national, and local responses to violence, trauma, and injustice in Haiti. I was in a unique position to evaluate interventions to assist Haitians who were targeted for political repression and to witness the unintended consequences of those interventions. I was also able to gauge the effects of ensekirite on both givers and receivers of aid. As George Marcus (1998: 98–99) has suggested regarding the challenges of multisited ethnography, the multiplicity of my participant-observation work necessarily shifted into “circumstantial activism.” I was often cast in the role of translator or advocate when the epistemologies and practices of agents and agencies involved in such gift exchanges conflicted with the needs and desires of aid recipients.

Negotiating the politics, discourses, expectations, and constraints of all these spaces over the course of several years was extremely difficult. The complexity of this project raised serious ethical problems concerning how to maintain a position of integrity when sometimes violently confronted by the competing frames of knowledge and practice to which I was exposed. In this regard, however, it is useful to recall Donna Haraway’s (1991: 192) statement: “A commitment to mobile positioning and to passionate detachment is dependent on the impossibility of innocent ‘identity’ politics and epistemologies as strategies for seeing from the standpoints of the subjugated in order to see well.” We must always recognize that the situatedness of knowledge produced in the locations we study, and our own shifting position in these locations over time, can constrain our power to see and act. Changes in my position and the responses to them among those with whom I worked became ethnographic tools for me to understand some of the more elusive features of contemporary life in Haiti. As I discuss later in this book, they were also the basis for threats to my own security.

Between 1995 and 2000 I spent more than twenty-seven months in Haiti studying transnational efforts to craft democracy and civil society in Haiti’s “post-trauma polity” (Fischer 1991). I accompanied victims of

human rights abuses from the 1991–94 de facto period as they sought justice, healing, and reparations from the aid apparatus. These individuals called themselves *viktim* (victims, pronounced “veek-teem”),¹⁸ not only to signify their status as a class of political martyrs for Haitian democracy, but also to draw attention to their particular needs for psychosocial rehabilitation and reparations. Most *viktim* were nonliterate, unemployed, and struggling with chronic emotional and physical illnesses resulting from their victimization.

My goal was to understand better the long-term medical, psychological, material, and spiritual consequences of having been targeted by the terror apparatus amid the ongoing climate of *ensekirite*. Early in my research many *viktim* claimed the identity of *militan* (activist). By the end of my work most emphasized the identity of *viktim* to the exclusion of other identities. The transformation of *militan* into *viktim* is one of the many troubling processes that I describe here. It is for this reason that I use the Haitian Creole form of the term to denote a political class of individuals from a particular period in Haiti and to denaturalize the concept of victimization as it is understood in a Western, liberal context.

I worked with *viktim* as a therapeutic practitioner and ethnographic researcher in multiple sites. From 1996 to 2000 I volunteered at a privately funded women’s clinic in Martissant that I call Chanm Fanm (Women’s Room). In my capacity as a practitioner of the Trager® Approach,¹⁹ a form of physical therapy, I treated women who were victims of politically motivated rape. Most of these women were first-generation migrants from rural areas who came to the capital in the 1970s and 1980s to work in assembly factories. Exploitative conditions compelled many of them to seek employment as small-scale merchants. In times of scarcity they may also have engaged in sex work to support their families. Financial insecurity corralled most of these women within sprawling slums, where they and their families became targets of torture and terror because of their struggles for economic justice and democracy. As my research progressed, I followed these women, their families, and a broad network of victims’ associations as they learned to negotiate the humanitarian and development aid apparatus that was based primarily in Port-au-Prince.

In spring 1997 I was a paid consultant for America’s Development Foundation (ADF), a private voluntary organization with headquarters near Washington, D.C., that received funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Many have called the USAID/Haiti Mission a “state within a state,” speaking to the

tremendous power and resources that it wielded in the country and to its virtual sovereignty. In 1994 USAID/Haiti and ADF inaugurated Fon Dwa Moun (Le Fond des Droits Humains, the Human Rights Fund) in Port-au-Prince. In May 1997 the Fund, as it was called in English, began housing the Victim Assistance and Rehabilitation Program (hereafter the Rehabilitation or Rehab Program) for Haitian victims of organized violence. To support this initiative, I designed and participated in a training program for Haitian mental health practitioners who, as members of the Human Rights Fund's medical network, treated torture survivors. The training took place in June 1997 in Boston, Massachusetts. I also studied conventional conceptions of PTSD and trained to use the Clinician-Administered PTSD Scale (CAPS) in order to learn more about the psychosocial distress that survivors of traumatic events might experience. The authors of this diagnostic instrument at the Boston Veterans Administration National Center for PTSD provided additional instruction in recognizing the classic signs of posttraumatic stress.²⁰

In fall 1997 and from summer 1998 to spring 2000, I conducted archival research and participant observation at the ADF Human Rights Fund in Port-au-Prince. I studied case files representing more than 2,500 victims to track patterns of violence from the coup years. Until the suspension of its services in May 1999, I also participated in the Rehabilitation Program therapy groups for victims of human rights violations as a volunteer co-facilitator and ethnographic researcher. Through my affiliation with current and former ADF staff, I was able to attend the USAID/Haiti Justice, Democracy and Governance (JDG) Program planning meetings to understand how the agency implemented political development assistance. I interviewed USAID/Haiti staff members and conducted additional archival research to learn more about the history of U.S. military, humanitarian, and development interventions in the nation.

Finally, from fall 1998 to spring 1999, I also studied with Haitian mental health practitioners in outpatient therapy sessions at the State University Hospital Mars/Kline Center for Neurology and Psychiatry in Port-au-Prince. This internship permitted me to learn many of the cultural idioms Haitians use to articulate emotional and psychological distress. I interviewed individuals working in these and other institutions that intervened to serve victims. Wherever possible, interviews were tape-recorded.

Throughout these years in Haiti, I continued to treat and accompany victims outside these institutional spaces as they sought reparations, rehabilitation, and justice. This allowed me to observe how a

discourse of trauma became an organizing trope producing new forms of bureaucratic practices throughout Haiti, much as it has in sites of disaster across the globe (Bracken and Petty 1998). Postconflict psychosocial rehabilitation projects reflect the growing prevalence of the concept of trauma in Western culture and the desire to define or classify the “unthinkable” horrors of social ruptures (Trouillot 1995), whether produced by human agency or other causes. The traumas resulting from conflict, from industrial, technological, and medical disasters, and from environmental causes, were “comorbid”—that is, they occurred at the same time but not always related to or arising from the same source.

As I discuss below, additional aspects of *ensekirite* exacerbated the social prevalence of traumatic comorbidity in Haiti. More generally, conditions of trauma resulting from disasters of human or “natural” authorship are global phenomena indicative of state insecurity. These complex circumstances have been identified in Indonesia (Good and Good 2008; Good et al. 2006; Good et al. 2007), India (Cohen 1999; Das 1995; Fortun 2001), Ukraine (Petryna 2002), and many other fragile or failed states.

Despite the prevalence of traumatic comorbidity, the etiology of suffering is a factor in the type of interventions undertaken. “Acts of God” cannot be controlled and are (usually) perceived as having morally neutral origins. Survivors of a natural disaster may become the objects of state bureaucratic management and rehabilitation and often receive care from charitable organizations and other benevolent associations simultaneously. These natural calamities and the interventions that flow as a result may reveal the fractures and disparities of power among their victims, as has been revealed following the Hurricane Katrina disaster in the United States.²¹

Similarly, survivors of industrial or manufactured disasters such as the residents of Chernobyl (Petryna 2002) and Bhopal (Das 1995; Fortun 2001) are targets of humanitarian intervention. In some ways these catastrophes can be characterized as unintended rather than malicious, despite their human authorship. Such “accidents” resulting from the negligence of transnational corporations or governments also generated movements for reparations and justice for victims.

In contrast, victims of conventionally recognized human rights abuses grapple with the question of “evil.” They confront the issue of whether their experiences of victimization were intentional. Individuals designed and carried out malefic action against them as part of individual and institutional efforts to extract power from and otherwise control or

punish them. Thus the moral, ethical, and political concerns evoked by the victims of state-authored conflict make assistance to them a thorny matter in the international political arena. All these societal ruptures can precipitate new identities for victims based solely on suffering or injury, especially when occurring in insecure states.

Along with analyzing how and by whom the discourse of trauma was employed in Haiti, I evaluated the rhetorics of rights, rehabilitation, and reparations that shaped institutional practices. Prompted by the work of the philosopher Michel Foucault on madness (1988 [1965]), biopolitics (1990 [1978]), discipline (1979), and governmentality (1991), I suggest that the discourse of trauma and rights reflects concerns for security for individuals, organizations, and governments that result from a crisis of the sovereign state, especially those deemed fragile or failed. The Government of Haiti's (GOH) response to the plight of traumatized viktim was hampered not only by insufficient material resources but also by a legacy of corruption, nepotism, and graft from previous administrations. Thus international, national, and local aid agencies and agents intervened between viktim and international political actors, the Haitian state, and their own communities but always within limits defined by the prevailing climate of *ensekirite*. Regardless of such restrictions, many Haitians perceived these institutions as invaders over which they had no control (Étienne 1997).

Categorizing intervening actors according to the conventional designations "local," "national," and "international," as well as "governmental" and "nongovernmental," was difficult. Many aid institutions in Haiti were satellites of international agencies and had both Haitian and expatriate staff members. If an expatriate was hired in Haiti, he or she was considered "local." Over time, many humanitarian relief and development projects had overlapping or intersecting mandates and memberships, or acted beyond the confines of their mandates in the midst of a "crisis." Furthermore, while international and national nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and associations largely filled the gap between what the state could provide for its citizenry and what it could not, these were not disinterested actors: demonstrating success in providing aid to "victims" was also a means to secure additional institutional funds.

At the international level, viktim worked with the U.N. system and bilateral institutions such as USAID and the Canadian International Development Agency. The joint U.N. and Organization of American States (OAS) International Civilian Mission of Human Rights Observers (MICIVIH)²² and international medical and human rights missions such

as Médecins du Monde (Doctors of the World) provided medical relief services to Haitian victims of human rights abuses while documenting the violations. Viktim also gave testimonies of suffering to Physicians for Human Rights, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the National Coalition for Haitian Refugees (now called the National Coalition for Haitian Rights), missionary groups, and other organizations.

At the national level, viktım sought assistance from Haiti's Ministry for Women, the Ministry of Justice, National Commission for Truth and Justice, numerous Haitian human rights and development organizations, and the Haitian public health system. In their local communities they formed victims' advocacy organizations and joined with church groups, neighborhood associations, artisans' groups, and other community-based organizations in an effort to find security.

I evaluated the successes and failures of this diverse aid apparatus in providing to Haitian viktım what they termed *ankadreman*, or support (lit., "framing"), amid chronic *ensekirite*. The trope of *ankadreman* referred to the way that multiple forms of assistance—social, material, institutional, infrastructural, and informational—engendered a sense of security, protection, and social connection that enabled individuals and families to reconstruct lives disrupted by violence.

Central to this study, therefore, is an analysis of the individual and inter-subjective experience of viktım. As I demonstrate, aspects of identity such as gender and sexuality shaped the way Haitians were targeted for repression. These factors also influenced how viktım experienced trauma. Gender and sexuality, among other markers, also influenced how viktım were represented by the bureaucratic languages and practices of the humanitarian and development assistance assemblage. Thus access to care was itself tinged with international, national, and local conceptions of gender and sexuality and social processes with roots in earlier periods of Haitian history and international relations that I explore later in this book.

I observed how the role of Haiti's viktım as militant—political activists—was to some degree eclipsed by a focus on their victimization during the coup years and on their subsequent traumatic suffering. The actors providing postconflict assistance tended to view victims of human rights abuses through lenses that objectified or medicalized suffering. They were viewed categorically as "women," the "poorest of the poor," "patients," or "vulnerable populations" rather than in terms of their contributions to democratic processes. Viktim were largely excluded from the international policy debates about Haiti's political and economic future, despite the fact that they themselves initiated the fight for liberty,

freedom, and democracy. They were often objectified, vilified, or ignored by the larger society in which they lived. Such processes evoke the theoretical attention in recent anthropology to refugees and asylum seekers in so-called secure states (Fassin 2005; James 2009; Malkki 1995, 1996; Ticktin 2006) and to survivors of disasters in “insecure” states (Fortun 2001; Petryna 2002) who gain recognition or citizenship on the basis of injury, displacement, or biological condition (Brown 1995; Das 1995; James 2004). As Ratna Kapur (2005) discusses in her work on law and feminism in postcolonial contexts, the Western liberal gaze tends to view post/colonial, racial, and gendered subjects in iconic or stereotypical ways through the lenses of victimization, powerlessness, or suffering. However, these subjugated actors may use the very categories by which their identities become essentialized as tools of resistance or means of garnering power, even in the most dire circumstances.

Thus viktims were not without agency. During my research I traced how they learned to engage the international discourses relating to human rights, women’s rights, public health, and democracy to gain medical, legal, material, and other assistance from the aid apparatus. I also observed how they resisted, adopted, or transformed the discourses and practices of the institutions and organizations that worked with them. In many examples, viktims appropriated their own suffering and the victim identity as means toward recognition or political subjectivity (Aretxaga 1997), as well as strategies for survival and resistance. At times their tactics were also effective measures to empower themselves vis-à-vis the Haitian state and the international community. I also show, however, that some of the social practices they used to resist terror, economic inequality, and political ostracism reproduced an overarching pattern of predation that has existed historically in sectors of Haitian society and political culture. These heartbreaking practices reveal some of the ways in which the engagement with the aid apparatus worsened the subjective experience of trauma, grief, and suffering and generated what I call a “political economy of trauma” (James 2004).

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF TRAUMA

The term *economy* generally evokes the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services or “the social life of things” (Appadurai 1986). It refers to financial systems and the circulation of wealth, whether in a global market or a household. Economies can be informal and unregulated. They encompass trade, barter, or gift exchanges. They

can also be unlawful and evoke the black market, or illicit traffic, in desired commodities. I use *economy* because it best describes what I learned in Haiti: the suffering of another person, when extracted, transformed, and commodified through maleficent or beneficent interventions, can become a source of profit for the intervener. Through acts of intimidation, destruction of property, theft, torture, and murder, agents of torture and repression generated what I call *terror economies*. Through documenting horror, treating victims, and providing asylum, psychotherapy, legal aid, and material assistance, the aid apparatus generated *compassion economies*. Both economies intersected or overlapped in the political economy of trauma.

In this political economy the activists' pain and suffering became commodity "fetishes" (Marx 1867; Pietz 1985, 1987, 1988, 1993), powerful products of material and symbolic value created through the transformation of raw materials that circulated in both terror and compassion economies (James 2004; see also Nussbaum 2003). In both economies individual and collective pain and suffering was extracted and remade into something "productive" but with opposite goals. In terror economies the extraction of pain and suffering was a tool to augment the illegitimate power of the de facto regime. In the compassion economy products of transformed suffering circulated in humanitarian markets alongside the aid dispensed to Haiti to assist with its transition. Such processes arose from a complex assemblage of forces comprising the major themes of this book: torture, trauma, and truth. Each theme portrays conflicts about suffering, its documentation, and its veracity that are also aspects of the political economy of trauma. As I elaborate in subsequent chapters, the following case serves as a paradigm for how these processes evolved over time and how humanitarian and development interventions can contribute to the commodification of suffering despite their benevolent intent. Recounting this narrative also presents dilemmas of representation that are explored further in this book.

FROM MILITAN TO VIKTIM

Liliane Saint-Jean, a small-scale merchant, was fifty-eight years old in July 1996 when I interviewed and provided physical therapy to her in Martissant, a poor, densely populated area just outside the capital. I was volunteering at Chanm Fanm, a women's clinic that had been established that year through the partnership of a U.S. and a Haitian women's rights organization with funding from the Episcopal Church.

Liliane explained that she had pain in her bones, problems with her head, and a hard mass that had congealed underneath a stab wound in her back that hurt continually. I asked, “Who stabbed you?” She then began sharing fragments of the haunting story of her suffering:

The stuff during the coup d'état . . . I suffered a lot. I had to sleep in the woods, I had a lot of problems . . . my child . . . my child had a child out in the brush. During the period of the coup d'état we received a lot of shocks. I was in hiding. Here is why I was a target. There was a brigade [a neighborhood watch group] in a quarter of the zone—I had to cook food, provide drinks, coffee, rum.

I interrupted and asked for clarification. “I would like to know when the violence began. Why were you in hiding? What was the date?” Liliane sighed and shifted to a narrative style that I recognized as having been shaped by legal depositions that require testimonies to have a rational, linear, teleological plot (Mattingly 1998):

On the fourth of February 1994, they came and entered my house. They beat me and they beat my husband. They raped me and they raped my daughter. They put a gun against my son's ear and told him to lay face-down on the ground. They beat my husband and beat him until they saw that he peed blood. He couldn't move or do anything. . . . [T]hey raped me, they took my niece who helped me in life, who helped me. When I escaped [after the rape] they came after me. In the morning I was so ashamed. When others in the neighborhood ridiculed me [because of having been raped], I went into hiding. I went to the provinces for three months. When I came back this organization was documenting what had happened. They came and got me. If it wasn't for that I could have died already. An older person like me. Then I was fifty-six.

My request for Liliane's story during our initial interview and therapeutic work was not the first, nor would it be the last. I had hoped to understand better what had happened to her and to provide relief with as much empathy and compassion as possible. In asking her to reframe her narrative, I was participating in the professional transformation of Liliane's suffering (Kleinman and Kleinman 1991) through clinical and bureaucratic procedures. After this therapeutic encounter with Liliane, I learned that in addition to my requests for her “trauma narrative” (James 2004), she had previously given testimony to an international investigative team advocating that rape be recognized as a human rights abuse that warranted political asylum under international law. Her case was also included in the final report of Haiti's National Commission for Truth and Justice.²³

The reshaping or translating of Liliane's suffering using the discourses and practices of clinical, legal, or other forms of intervention were intended to promote her civil or human rights, healing, and security. Such acts represented the benevolent side of what I characterize as "bureaucraft." In the compassion economy professional bureaucratic discourses and practices that arise from expert or "secret" knowledge are employed to reframe and transform the experience of suffering, thereby generating social, political, legal, economic, symbolic, and even spiritual power and capital for the recipient of aid. As I discuss in this book, bureaucraft is not employed solely to extract from negative conditions something that is generative or productive for the recipient of aid; it is also employed to generate multiple forms of power and capital for the provider of aid.

As Haitian viktim observed the flows of information, material resources, and other benefits that accrued in the hands of those who intervened in their lives, they began to employ bureaucraft themselves to participate in these processes as active agents, although with varying degrees of success. In November 1997, while attending the International Tribunal against Violence toward Women, an ad hoc tribunal organized by a coalition of Haitian women's organizations with the support of international development organizations (see chapter 3), I unexpectedly encountered Liliane and other women viktim I knew from my work at Chanm Fanm. At the event's conclusion we arranged to meet at the clinic so that I could learn how their lives had been since our last meeting the previous year. I also hoped that I could facilitate their access to the Human Rights Fund's rehabilitation services. I came to the clinic a few days later and was met by a large group of women. We decided to move the meeting to Liliane's home.

Liliane lived in an area called the zone *siyon* (Zion), referring to an open-walled Pentecostal church located high in the hills that was one of a few in the city to which hundreds of residents went to fast (*fè jèn*) and pray each week. The *siyon* was in the middle of a sprawling squatter settlement and had provided internally displaced Haitians with asylum during the de facto period.²⁴ After exchanging pleasantries, the meeting quickly became a formal one for which I was unprepared. The women began "testifying" about their victimization and asked me to document their trauma narratives.

Liliane's story was most troubling. She revealed that she had been the victim of *another* act of violence in the period following our therapeutic work together in 1996. She stated before everyone that earlier in the

year she had borrowed money from a lending house in *lavil*, downtown Port-au-Prince, to restart her business. When she left the moneylender—essentially a loan shark—there were men waiting who knew she had just received some money. Liliane asserted:

They followed me toward the Bicentennial road where there is a hideout where they kidnap the poor who've just bought things. Five men came on motorcycles and took me down by the sea where there are all kinds of foul things. They took me and beat me when they saw I didn't want to give my sack. They cut me . . . cut out my teeth. My head swelled completely, and I was there for three days. No one knew where I was. Finally, someone saw me and helped me.

As a witness and listener I was shocked and saddened by the ongoing dangers that these poor women and their families faced while simply trying to survive and support their families. I responded with pledges to assist the group with their efforts to find stability and security, and subsequently they were able to become beneficiaries of the Human Rights Fund's Rehabilitation Program. Two years after hearing Liliane's story of attack, theft, and extortion, I learned from participants at the gathering that the story was false: in the shadow of the International Tribunal against Violence toward Women the story had been performed for me with the tacit support of the other women at the meeting.

The effectiveness of trauma narratives in motivating intervention is an indicator of the global saturation of cultural forms of testimony and lamentation as means of recognition and redress for sufferers. Thus the performance of trauma narratives has become a necessary transaction in order for sufferers to participate in local, national, and international compassion economies. In humanitarian contexts, stories of misery are frequently solicited from "victims" in the course of providing social or judicial services to them.

As such, the creation, performance, and circulation of false stories were means by which resource-poor victims sought security, capital, and power, especially when their ongoing struggles were no longer considered acute. Liliane's second story of tragedy echoed the style of testimonies presented during the Tribunal and other quasi-legal or therapeutic settings. It was a form of testimony that had previously given her local and national recognition and was convincing to me as an ontological lament. The purpose of Liliane's second narrative, although never acknowledged, was to elicit sympathy and to provoke empathy and action using the "power of horror" (Kristeva 1982) to shock or compel intervention from the consumer of the story (Boltanski 1999 [1993]).

To my knowledge Liliane never repeated this second story, not even in a therapy group for victims of organized violence in which we were both participants in fall 1998 in the Rehabilitation Program—in our respective capacities as beneficiary and co-facilitator and ethnographer.

Whether authentic or false, trauma narratives are efficacious because of their ability to evoke horror and compassion. The combination of these two sentiments instills a desire to distance oneself from the unthinkable shock of violation at the same time that it inspires empathy and the feeling of identification with the victim. The contradiction in the two sentiments may be that which propels action or intervention regardless of the truth, *if* one recognizes the humanity or worth of the victim. Furthermore, by dramatizing a fictional “critical situation”—“a set of circumstances which—for whatever reason—radically disrupts accustomed routines of daily life” (Giddens 1979: 124), the gaze of humanitarian actors like me who were no longer explicitly focused on the plight of Liliane and others like her in Haiti was returned to local conditions of unrelenting misery.

Regardless of its truth, Liliane’s second story of traumatic vulnerability represented an archetype of the experiences of danger, economic vulnerability, and gendered insecurity in Haiti. It was also emblematic of the micropolitics of truth in the local realm. Accusations that victims were not authentic or had fabricated trauma narratives circulated in Martissant—especially when access to aid was threatened or its supply decreased. Rumors, gossip, and allegations about the veracity of victim status also circulated in the institutions that served them.

The politics of truth and its connection to global material and symbolic resources produced a similar process that I witnessed in the bilateral and international realms of humanitarian and development aid. Staff members of institutions that competed for donor funds or for victim clients also made accusations against other agents and agencies when the supply of aid dwindled after the crisis during the period of “democratic consolidation.” Interveners accused each other of falsehood, misrepresentation, or fraud in the context of financial scarcity. Rumors flowed about their histories, their motives for action, and their hidden connections to occult institutions operating within and outside Haiti.

At stake were questions of speculation, accumulation, and consumption of resources in what can be regarded as “occult economies” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999, 2003; James 2004). Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff describe occult economies as the real or imagined transactions of magic or sorcery for material or political gain in African polities

that are embracing market economies. The concept also refers to the “effort to eradicate people held to enrich themselves by [occult] means; through the illegitimate appropriation, that is, not just of the bodies and things of others, but also of the forces of production and reproduction themselves” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999: 284). Occult economies range from the illicit or unregulated traffic in commodities or other tangible and intangible items of value to the nefarious transactions between individuals and hidden forces, both spiritual and material, to attain power. In Haiti occult economies are not solely the product of traditional beliefs in Vodou or black markets controlled by criminal regimes: they are also generated by the secrecy and opacity of modern bureaucratic technologies and practices.

Like the witchcraft accusations that are stereotypical of traditional societies in times of political and economic insecurity (Ashforth 2005; Dolan 2002; Evans-Pritchard 1976; Farmer 1992; Favret-Saada 1980 [1977]; Geschiere 1997; Stewart and Strathern 2004), the competition for knowledge, resources, and institutional territory within the aid apparatus produced what I observed as the malevolent side of bureaucraft. Occult bureaucratic strategies employed to garner political and social capital generated conflict, contests for power, and accusations of illicit capital accumulation in the compassion economy. In international debates about national transitions, transparency, accountability, law, and justice are powerful discourses meant to oppose and transform practices of secrecy, corruption, impunity, and injustice—at interpersonal, institutional, and governmental levels. Supposed “premodern” practices of duplicity or corruption are viewed as needing reform because they are perceived to be obstacles to “modernity.” For the intervening agencies and agents in Haiti, truth and transparency were central indicators of progress toward rehabilitation to be documented at the level of individual experience, in organizations, and in governmental practices. Nonetheless, stated concerns for transparency and accountability were frequently belied by the actual practices humanitarian and development interveners employed to promote development, democracy, justice, and social restoration.

Thus the bureaucraft concept addresses the spectrum of benevolent and malevolent practices that contributed to the political economy of trauma. As discussed above, well-intended professional practices to transform suffering into something productive contributed to the objectification and circulation of trauma narratives during the course of aid interventions. One aspect of the malevolent sense of the term arose

from discourses and practices linking witchcraft, suffering, misfortune, and insecurity to the opaque and sometimes corrupt bureaucratic practices of individuals and institutions operating in the aid apparatus. As I observed them, the very rules and procedures that these complex aid apparatuses inculcated in Haiti created new spaces in which hidden, occult, or corrupt practices could flourish, especially in an overall insecure political and economic climate. Ultimately, competing perceptions of the right or just acquisition of power were at stake. This is yet another aspect of the political economy of trauma that highlights the link between intervention, Haiti's chronic *ensekirite*, and truth.

The extraction of truth was integral to the broad spectrum of intervention practices that are described in this ethnography. At one extreme in the spectrum of regimes of truth (Foucault 1980) were actors in the terror apparatus who used what I call "technologies of torture" to extract confessions and to control, damage, or destroy a particular target of intervention (see chapter 1). Their purpose was not solely to determine the truth of a victim's political activity or connection to pro-democracy forces; rather, it was to establish their own personal and institutional security in the face of external illegitimacy (Crelinsten 1995; Scarry 1985). The use of technologies of torture created the conditions for action at the opposite spectrum of cultures of truth.

The aid apparatus employed "technologies of trauma"—rational, bureaucratic, scientific practices intended to diagnose and authenticate the suffering of victims—such as forensic anthropology, physical examinations, photography, psychiatric tests, and affidavits for legal and therapeutic purposes, among other practices. *Viktims* were often recognized (Fraser 1995; Taylor 1994) solely through the technical languages of medicine, psychiatry, law, feminism, and others that speak the discourse of trauma and psychosocial rehabilitation. The intervener witnessed, authenticated, and transformed the suffering of the target of technologies of torture. Such practices of translation could also be used to authenticate the suffering of nearly any "client category" (Escobar 1995). Through the use of technologies of trauma, interventions to assist Haitian *viktims* produced symbolic and material emblems of extracted power.

Viktims were sometimes called upon as "tokens" to support many international and national organizations' quests for legitimacy and additional funding—a conversion and appropriation of their suffering that was in many ways a denial of their experience (Das 1995; Kleinman and Kleinman 1991; Petryna 2002; Povinelli 2002). In some instances

Haitian victims' performances of suffering enabled interveners to acquire international cultural capital through their links with the global social movement for justice and reparations. This positioned some victims and victims' advocacy organizations as desired political allies. The category "victim of human rights violations" lay at the intersection of ideological conflicts about the nation-state, security, and moral accountability and was often sacrificed by the ambiguity and indecisiveness of those conflicts.

The opaque and sometimes secret crafts of activists, bureaucrats, and other humanitarian and development experts aiding Haiti made suffering productive. Their labor converted the suffering that embodies individuals after malevolent, inhumane interventions into what I call "trauma portfolios" (James 2004), the aggregate of paraphernalia compiled to document and authenticate the experience of individual, family, or collective sufferers. The work of conversion created the identity of "victims" or "survivors" for individuals who were once militan. It was a professional transformation of suffering that fed a growing humanitarian market.

Trauma portfolios were circulated and exchanged in the local, national, and global humanitarian markets as commodities or currencies. At the individual level they resembled a portfolio of economic investment and were symbolic indices of material holdings or social capital. They were also material and symbolic signs of viktin status or identity. Interveners with the power to do so provided documents, photographs, medical records, psychological evaluations, letters of reference, and affidavits that authenticated victimization. These paraphernalia added to the value of the portfolio relative to those of other sufferers when circulated in the humanitarian market.

At the community or collective level viktin joined forces and created advocacy groups—often with the support or at the instigation of international and national interveners who provided them with bureaucratized forms of care. Viktin pooled their trauma portfolios to improve the chances that they would receive rehabilitation, restitution, and justice—if not from the Government of Haiti, then from the domestic and international aid apparatus. Such aid frequently engendered occult economies and developed independent "social lives" (Appadurai 1986, 2006) both within and outside the formal realms of exchange between donors and beneficiaries.

Trauma brokers facilitate these transactions. In local communities the humanitarian market generated gatekeepers who managed the "initial

public offerings” of tales of woe to the interveners. Brokers might be individual speculators in the local realm with access to actors or institutions in the humanitarian assemblage, or they might be institutions such as the Human Rights Fund or other victim assistance projects that used their collection of trauma portfolios to solicit funding from bilateral or multilateral donors.

Actors and institutions in the aid apparatus collected trauma portfolios in order to advocate for victims and “do good” (Fisher 1997). Through the use of bureaucracy we collected them in order to support benevolent interventions in the nations, institutions, minds, and bodies of others but also to support our own efforts to acquire funding and political capital—in other words, to promote our security. In analyzing the practices of interveners deploying technologies of trauma, one can say that at times the purpose was not to determine truth but rather to establish personal and institutional security in the face of external illegitimacy.

Trauma portfolios represent the legitimacy and accountability of the interveners and their institutions to their *own* donors and stakeholders. In this manner technologies of trauma are mechanisms of “audit cultures” (Strathern 2000), in which diversified trauma portfolios are the indicators of an agent’s or agency’s authenticity and accountability in the overall political economy. Nevertheless, while the trauma portfolio is a commodity representing the transformed suffering of an individual, a family, or a group that can function as currency, it can also be devalued when there is no longer demand in the humanitarian market.

Thus false trauma narratives like Liliane’s reveal the political economy of trauma in states of insecurity—one subject to the ebbs and flows of supply and demand in the global humanitarian market. False narratives are close enough to the commodities and currency of authentic trauma that they are circulated in this market without confirming evidence unless interested parties challenge their provenance. These sham currencies recall Bill Maurer’s (2005: 59) discussion of the “counterfeit”: “[A] counterfeit is only known when its circulation, its flow, is halted. If it circulates, even if it is ‘false,’ it is nonetheless ‘true’ in the now of the transaction: it is efficacious.”

Counterfeit stories of injury demonstrate the power that has coalesced in postconflict cultures of truth and in institutional endeavors at history making, assessment of the past, justice, and reparations. But they also represent the challenges of engaging with humanitarian and development assemblages that are characterized by impermanence, flexible accountability, and transnationality. In such cases one must also

ask what processes or conditions convert compassionate intentions into bureaucratic indifference (Herzfeld 1992) or produce bureaucraft. One must also assess the long-term consequences of such interventions on the political subjectivity of their targets.

In previous work I have named the status attained by viktim “traumatic citizenship” (James 2004). I recognized in Haiti a parallel social process from which has emerged the concepts of biological citizenship (Petryna 2002; Rose and Novas 2005), therapeutic citizenship (Nguyen 2005), and other tropes of identity formation based on injury (Fassin 2005; Ticktin 2006). These identities of victimization may engender limited types of sociopolitical inclusion and material entitlements (Brown 1995). However, I no longer view the status attained by viktim as a type of citizenship; their client status depends on assemblages and apparatuses that are fleeting and myopic in their gaze.

Humanitarian and development actors are in some senses “mobile sovereigns” (Appadurai 1996) or “migrant sovereignties” (Pandolfi 2003). They rarely maintain a lasting presence in their terrains of intervention and are seldom accountable to the states in which they work. Furthermore, recognition of the needs of clients—women, rape survivors, victims of human rights abuses, trafficked persons, and child slaves, of which Haiti has many—depends on the will and mandates of institutions that may only retain these specific interests for a limited period. Thus forms of inclusion and “citizenship” based on such interests are unstable and impermanent, as is the focus of the humanitarian market generated by these practices.

I describe in this ethnography what I call the “social life of aid,” the path that products of intervention—such as trauma narratives and the material assistance that these narratives generate—may follow once circulated. Arjun Appadurai (1986, 2006) theorizes the way objects like works of art can circulate and have social lives. During the course of their social trajectory, things—whether objects or persons—can “make the journey from commodity to singularity and back. Slaves, once sold as chattel, can become gradually humanized, personified, and reenchanting by the investiture of humanity. But they can also be recommoditized, turned once again into mere bodies or tools, put back in the marketplace, available for a price, dumped into the world of mere things” (Appadurai 2006: 15).

As an object, the trauma portfolio facilitates a kind of rehumanization of the viktim through the translation of suffering. But when aggregated for political and economic purposes, trauma portfolios are

commoditized and subject to the humanitarian market, effectively rendering viktim mere bodies or even tools for others' personal, institutional, or governmental security.

Thus humanitarian and development interventions lie at the nexus of economies of terror and compassion and in the space between gift economies and commodity economies (Appadurai 2006: 19). They operate as one spectrum of a process in which suffering is abstracted to give power to an intervener. The suffering of viktim makes the journey from singularity (unmediated distress or misery) to commodity (the trauma portfolio) and back to singularity when it is no longer a focus of the humanitarian market. Such processes constitute the political economy of trauma.

Here this ethnography encounters another dilemma of representation. I want to be clear that it is not my intention to equate torturers and humanitarian interveners.—Far from it. Rather, I want to draw attention to the ethical quandaries that can arise from the uses and misuses of power from the vilest to the most benevolent realms of human engagement. I am also ambivalent about pronouncing judgment on the truths of suffering during the 1991–94 coup period. If the truths of Haitian suffering are debated, discounted, or denied, especially by the very governmental interveners that may have contributed to their suffering—and that may withhold humanitarian and development aid or release it indirectly or sparingly—might revealing the existence of fictitious trauma narratives and trauma portfolios endanger or suspend these unequal exchanges completely?

On the other hand, might discussing the extent to which advocacy institutions appropriate the suffering of others in order to secure their own interests jeopardize the benevolent work of grassroots, privately funded associations? Despite these very real concerns, it is nonetheless important to analyze the flow of practices, technologies, exchanges, and discourses that circumscribe and define individual, collective, institutional, and governmental identities in an environment of *ensekirite*. My hope is that this story of trauma in Haiti can provoke further dialogue about the effectiveness of postconflict reconstruction and political development interventions in fragile and failed states across the globe.

Chapter 1 is a genealogy of sovereign forms of violence in Haiti that subjugate life to the power of death. The chapter begins with a

narrative that depicts ethical dilemmas generated by discourses of torture, trauma, and truth, then traces key periods in Haitian history when violence, sexuality, and gender intersected in the context of economies of extraction.

Chapter 2 maps the diverse spectrum of agents and agencies that intervened to rehabilitate Haiti's victims. I discuss how their competing and sometimes conflicting bureaucratic mandates, technologies, and identities produced ethical and moral dilemmas not only for the interveners but also for their clients, contributing to bureaucraft.

Chapter 3 analyzes the lived experience of gendered insecurity among *viktim*. I demonstrate how the aid apparatus employed bureaucratic categories to diagnose the causes of trauma that failed to encompass the complexity of suffering, vulnerability, activism, and resistance. The limitations of professional languages created tensions for *viktim* in representing the truths of torture and trauma. These epistemological and technological limitations produced additional moral and ethical dilemmas for victim clients.

Chapter 4 depicts how institutions such as the Human Rights Fund faced the challenges of mediating or brokering aid between donors and recipients operating in what can be characterized as a *grant economy*, one governed by an audit culture. I outline how routines of rupture impeded humanitarian and development actors from achieving their goal to transform suffering through technologies of trauma. Accusations of witchcraft and bureaucraft emerged as means to assign blame for suffering. I demonstrate how occult economies of trauma flourished in the gap between Government of Haiti accountability and the intervention of humanitarian actors.

Chapter 5 continues the analysis of witchcraft, bureaucraft, and the double binds generated by the circulation of aid by tracking contests about victim identity from the Human Rights Fund to Martissant.

Chapter 6 chronicles the closure of the Rehabilitation Program in the context of multiple attacks on America's Development Foundation, the Human Rights Fund, and the Rehabilitation Program staff members. These attacks took place at the crest of another wave of ensekirite and culminated in scapegoating and violence.

The conclusion argues that while aid agents and agencies may inculcate new political subjectivities based on secular theodicies of human rights, democracy, women's rights, law, and psychiatry, the overarching insecurities in their terrains of operation may also generate accusations of witchcraft, sorcery, and bureaucraft in the social life of aid. The

unintended consequences of aid created conditions that reproduced the cycles of economic decline and political and criminal instability in zones of intervention.

The story told in the following pages is one without heroes. No one, including me, is blameless or free from error. It is a story of violence, suffering, and loss and how word of these conditions circulates. It is an account of hope for change, of change, and of more of the same misery. It is a description of interventions in the lives of the Haitian people, both for good and for ill, and of the results of those interventions. It is a story of how suffering has become a commodity in Haiti. As the story is refracted through different lenses, truth and the foundations for its discernment collapse.