

**A Carnival of Gods in the Panthéon:
Reimagining Religion and Abolition in 21st Century Paris**
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Abstract

In this paper, I argue that Euro-Christians have harnessed Catholic saints as key figures in the ongoing “cosmic battle” between those whom Sylvia Wynter describes as the overrepresented figure of Man and the survival of the much broader human species. I analyze two distinctive ways of celebrating and calling on the power of divinized humans in this continuing struggle. I explore an art exhibition and performance held in the Panthéon of Paris in the fall and winter of 2023-24, and contrast it with the final attempt to secularize the Panthéon at the end of the nineteenth century. The debate about whether the Panthéon and a host of other “sacred” practices in France have effectively rid themselves of their Catholic roots to become distinctively secular, I argue, distracts us from the broader significance of their role in the ongoing violence of the modern world shaped primarily by the “wake” of 1492. I conclude by asking how our analyses of Catholic histories, traditions, and practices can more effectively acknowledge their role in this struggle, which continues to shape our present.

I.

I can feel the expectant energy from the moment I enter the Panthéon of Paris on a cold afternoon in early February. With a quick glance at those gathered—whispering, gesturing, admiring—I observe far more attention to sartorial choice and many more Black French visitors than I have seen in the half dozen times I have visited the space over the past few months. During this period, I have come to find the cavernous space surprisingly constrictive, due largely

to the repetitive debates etched in its stone sculptures or painted on its stone walls. Today, however, we are here for a celebration unlike any other that has occurred under these vaults, and for the opening made way by a series of beautiful, flowing, vibrant fabrics.

We have gathered because of Raphaël Barontini, a young artist from Paris's northern suburb of Saint-Denis, a region recently described in the *New York Times* as a "no-go zone" where 20 percent of the residents are unemployed, nearly a third live in poverty, and 40 percent live in public housing (Alderman and Porter 2024). His parents herald from Guadeloupe (one of France's former Caribbean colonies, today categorized as a French "Overseas Department"), and Italy. Invited by the Foundation for the Memory of Slavery, Barontini was given *carte blanche* to occupy this site, built first as a Roman Catholic church to house the relics of the patron saint of Paris, St. Geneviève, in the mid-eighteenth century, then transformed into a "Panthéon" during the French Revolution, then returned to Roman Catholic worship by Napoleon in 1806, and then made a Panthéon again by King Louis Philippe in 1831. Napoleon III, whom Marx described as a "caricature of the old Napoleon" (1852), went the way of his uncle and turned it back into a space of Catholic worship in 1851. Under the Third Republic, and with the death of Victor Hugo in 1885, the site was changed, perhaps for the final time, back into a site of secular memorial in order to appropriately mark the death of the celebrated novelist. So far as explicitly secular spaces go, however, it is an odd one, given the large cross mounted atop the building's peak, and the numerous frescos celebrating Jesus and figures who naturalize the Catholicity of France that grace its walls and ceiling.

Barontini, however, has called on all of us gathered to not mistake the clerical, monarchical, and Republican debates as the only voices and actions to shape France's long nineteenth-century. As the end of his exhibit, "We Could Be Heroes" approaches, Barontini has

planned a second “Carnival” in this grand nave, in which the Black insurrectionary figures of France’s enslaving colonies will be celebrated through procession, music, and dance. While the first Carnival occurred somewhat quietly at the time of the exhibit’s opening in October 2023, word has spread in the intervening months and the Panthéon is now packed with, among others, community members from Saint-Denis with ties to the French Caribbean,¹ and those in the know in Paris’s contemporary art scene.

In what follows, I approach Barontini’s artworks and Carnival performances through a framework informed by the philosopher Sylvia Wynter, and a literary scholar who has taken up her work, Jared Hickman. For Wynter, “the struggle of our new millennium will be one between the ongoing imperative of securing the well-being of our present ethnoclass (i.e. Western bourgeois) conception of the human, Man, which overrepresents itself as if it were the human itself, and that of securing the well-being...of the human species itself/ourselves” (2003, 260). While many in France fantasize that colonialism resides in the distant past alone, Wynter—and many others—demonstrate how the “wake” (Sharpe 2016) of colonialism and enslavement continues to shape the present.² The work of asserting the supremacy of the Western bourgeois or, Euro-Christian conception of Man above all others undeniably involves various strategies of representation. The stakes, however, are highly material. From the vastly unequal distribution of resources, in which the majority of the planet struggles for access to the basic means of

¹ The presence of this group in this space is itself remarkable. In an interview with an arts magazine, Barontini confessed that he had never visited the building before being invited to exhibit there. “I didn’t even know that one could visit,” he laughed (Lanot 2023). When we met in December 2023, he explained that it seemed to be mostly for tourists. I pointed out that I had also noted a number of school groups in attendance. He laughed, and added, “but not from Saint-Denis!”

² Scholars of Black and postcolonial studies have demonstrated how the racializing effects of these systems powerfully shape the social worlds we inhabit in the present. See, for example, Césaire 2004 (1950), Fanon 1967, Glissant 1997, Lowe 2015, McKittrick 2006, Sharpe 2016, and Trouillot 1995. For analyses of the *longue durée* of Black chattel slavery in the French context, see Bessone and Cottias, eds. 2021, Fleming 2017, Heath 2014, Lewis 2017, Outin-Bastide 2005, Schmidt 2009, Soumahoro 2020, and Vergès 2005.

reproduction, to the seeming inevitability of global climate catastrophe, this struggle remains a part of our everyday lives in ways both profoundly visible and profoundly overlooked.

For Wynter, the overrepresentation of Euro-Christian Man is now primarily expressed in “the second and now purely secular form of...the ‘Racism/Ethnicism complex,’ on whose basis the world of modernity was brought into existence from the fifteenth/sixteenth centuries onward” (Ibid). I situate my research in the work of calling attention to those spaces and practices through which this overrepresentation takes place, day in and day out. The cold stone walls of the Panthéon of Paris are surely one such site in which this work occurs. But the frescos and sculptures found throughout this space suggest that this struggle has not become “purely secular.” In *Black Prometheus*, Hickman argues that this struggle has been and remains a “cosmic” battle, replete with Christian stakes, images, and fantasies.

Undoubtedly, processes connected to secularization—disenchantment, fragmentation of received authority, privatization of religious belief—have been present in Europe since the early modern period. But for both Wynter and Hickman, the violence unleashed by Columbus’s journeys initiated in 1492 can best be understood as an “eschatological event” that sent Euro-Christian secularization on a very particular course. Wynter describes how Euro-Christian geographies were undercut by what Hickman describes as “a new planetary immanence” (2017, 11). In “1492: A New Worldview,” she points to the realization by Portuguese sailors in the middle of the fifteenth century that the land below Cape Bojador in sub-Saharan Africa was, in fact, fertile, rather than uninhabitable, as a key moment in the destabilization of these geographies. Columbus’s discovery of a massive and highly populated landmass in the Western Hemisphere, which Euro-Christians had presumed to be covered in water, caused a further rupture in their accounts of the world.

If the newly discovered territories profoundly ruptured Euro-Christian geographies, then the discovery of previously unimagined human diversity was even more unsettling. Having declared these spaces “terra nullius” and “peopleless’ voids,” Euro-Christians—despite undeniable evidence to the contrary—insisted on continuing to view them as outside of “the terms of normal habitability” (McKittrick 2014, 129). The geographer and interpreter of Wynter, Katherine McKittrick describes how this refusal to allow new information to radically transform Euro-Christians’ worldview created “an ideological perspective that dehumanized and disembodied subaltern populations by conflating their beingness with terra nullius, places and bodies outside God’s grace, idolaters in the uninhabitable” (Ibid). The humans who inhabited the spaces outside of God’s grace, that is, were deemed to be not fully human, an assertion that could only be maintained through a great deal of ideological, material, and representational work.

In order to address the monumental and quotidian ways in which this work continues, we need to look at spaces like the Panthéon anew. To insist that secularization is the key to understanding European modernity—articulated, for many, most fully in France—exacerbates a profound and often-purposeful *disorientation* in the questions we pose and histories we fashion about Europe. In viewing 1492 as an “eschatological” event, we are able to recognize certain continuities that are maintained over this period, most particularly in the desire to wield power in absolutist terms. Following 1492, says Hickman, “non-Euro-Christians [were] placed in the position of resisting Euro-Christians acting in the name and asserting the rights of the Absolute God.... The anthropological absolutism...is made possible by Euro-Christians availing themselves of the opportunity of becoming-God extended by 1492—ontologizing the non-European world and its peoples as a bad immanent sphere they were in a position to save” (Ibid, 11-12). European colonial powers—and Euro-Christian missionaries—wielded this power by

attempting to annihilate the many human lifeways “discovered” through imperial expansion, and by asserting, again and again, Euro-Christian moral and cultural supremacy.

Spaces like the Panthéon are, undeniably, spaces in which such absolutist—or, in French terms “universalist”—claims are reproduced. It is also a site that demonstrates how Christian and secular iconography can be used interchangeably to uphold the supremacy of Euro-Christian lifeways. This paper will both pay heed to how the Panthéon participates in the “vigorous discursive and institutional re-elaboration of the central over-representation” (Wynter 2003, 262), and attend to practices that refuse, abolish, repair, and create alternatives to such claims.³

As part of this work of refusal and repair, Barontini created a series of banners of creolized-collages (a term to which I will return below) to bring Sanité Belair,⁴ Dutty Boukman, Cécile Fatiman,⁵ Jean-Baptiste Belley,⁶ Flore “Bois” Gaillard,⁷ Josephe Ignace, Louis Delgrès,⁸

³ For a concise set of reflections on the potential expansiveness of the concept of reparation in France, see Bessone and Cottias, eds., 2021.

⁴ A great deal could be said about each of these figures. The summaries in the following nine footnotes are taken from information provided in a text accompanying Raphaël Barontini’s exhibition, “We Could be Heroes,” displayed at the Panthéon in Paris from October 19, 2023 to February 11, 2024.

Born as an enslaved person in Saint-Domingue (now Haiti), Sanité Bélair (1781-1802) was a revolutionary fighter in the battles fought against the troops of General Leclerc (the brother-in-law of Napoleon Bonaparte sent in 1802 to re-establish slavery in what had been France’s most profitable colony). As part of the bicentenary celebration of Haiti’s independence, Belair’s portrait was added to the Haitian ten gourde note.

⁵ On the night of August 14-15, 1791 in Saint-Domingue, Dutty Boukman (1767-1791) and Cécile Fatiman (1771-1883) presided over a Vaudou ceremony that has come to be known as *Bwa Kayiman* (Fr. *Bois Caïman*). In the weeks, months and years following this ritual, tens of thousands of Black enslaved and formerly-enslaved people then engaged in violent insurrections which successfully ended slavery by 1793 and, ultimately, created an independent Haiti in 1804.

⁶ The first Black deputy elected in France, Jean-Baptiste Belley (1746-1805) represented Saint-Domingue in the National Convention in 1793 and was among those who pushed the delegates to acknowledge the truth already on the ground by legislating full and immediate abolition on February 4, 1794.

⁷ The years of her birth and death are unknown, but beginning in 1793, Flore Gaillard led the “French Army of the Forest” on the island of Saint-Lucia. Made up of maroons, free people of color, and White deserters of the French and British armies, they fought against British troops trying to claim the island and reimpose slavery. A mountain on the island is named in her honor and she is the hero of a novel by Édouard Glissant, called *Ormerod*.

⁸ During their brief lives, Josephe Ignace (1770-1802) and Louis Delgrès (1766-1802) were leaders in insurrections against slavery in Guadeloupe, and fought the troops of General Richepance sent to re-establish slavery in 1802. Along with three hundred other fighters, they chose to commit suicide rather than surrender. In a proclamation made just before their deaths, Delgrès wrote: “The last cry of innocence and despair. It is in the brightest days of a century that shall forever be known for the triumph of the Enlightenment and of philosophy, that a class of unfortunate souls whom some wished to crush, find themselves forced to raise their voices towards posterity, so that when they have vanished, posterity may know of their innocence and misfortunes.”

Anchaing and Héva,⁹ Victoria “Toya” Montou,¹⁰ Claire the maroon from Montagne-Plomb,¹¹ and Solitude¹² into France’s space of secular memorial. On that afternoon in February, after a few speeches made illegible by the reverberations of microphoned voices bouncing off of the stone walls, the sounds of drums and the call of a conch shell begin to transform the cold, gray space. Out from behind the stone sculpture celebrating the Revolution’s “National Convention,” we see the tips of colored banners pulsating in the cold, but barely perceptible breeze. Before long, these ten figures rise above us, their fringed banners held aloft on long metal poles by members of Mas Choukaj, an association of performers from Seine Saint-Denis with ties to Guadeloupe who work to keep the culture and practice of Carnival alive in Paris. The figures move through a procession before standing still again in a circular formation around, but facing away from, Foucault’s pendulum.¹³ The figure of Cécile Fatiman, the Mamba of Kayiman, stands before me. The gentle undulating fabric upon which her creolized-collage has been silk-screened gives her the appearance of breath, and I marvel at the power of her presence in a site whose unspoken task has been to deny her very existence, or refuse its humanity and significance.

As I stand before her, my mind begins to flood with possibilities of what might have been. How, I wonder, would the world we inhabit now look different if, in 1794, Fatiman and

⁹ Anchaing and Héva escaped from enslavement to live in the valleys, or “cirques” of Bourbon (now Réunion). A number of beautiful legends circulate about them in Réunion, where a peak of one of the valleys, the Cirque de Salazie, is named the Piton d’Anchaing.

¹⁰ Known as “Toya”, Victoria Montou (mid-18th-century-1805) was born in the Kingdom of Dahomey (now Benin), where she was captured and then enslaved in Saint-Domingue. A powerful fighter, she is said to have used the battle skills she learned in Dahomey to fight alongside Jean-Jacques Dessalines in the forging of an independent Haiti.

¹¹ Claire (1700-1752) ran away from a plantation in French Guiana, joining a maroon “counter society” in the forests of Montagne-Plombe. This community began fighting the French army in 1742; Claire, along with numerous other maroon women, was captured and hanged in 1752.

¹² While pregnant, Solitude (1772-1802) fought against Napoleon’s troops in Guadeloupe. She was arrested and imprisoned until she gave birth, at which time her child was taken into the slavery then re-established in France’s colonies and she was executed.

¹³ Napoleon III invited Léon Foucault (1819-1868) to undertake an experiment demonstrating the earth’s movement using the dome of the Panthéon in 1851. Copies of the 67-meter steel wire and 38-kilogram lead sphere were installed in the Panthéon in 1995.

Boukman had been invited to forge a true Pantheon here by bringing other gods besides the Christian god into this space? What if, back then, Fatiman had been celebrated and revered not only in Haiti, but here, in the Pantheon in the center of the Hexagon? If the pantheon of Haitian Vodou gods had been invited to possess humans in this space, might they have more effectively fought back against the Christian god who, through his European avatars, appeared so insistent upon the domination and annihilation of non-European lifeways? What if the vision of equality and freedom espoused by formerly enslaved revolutionaries had not been refused, but instead had expanded the limited version articulated by the sans-culottes and philosophes in Paris in 1794, and by numerous other radical groups since? Might this broader vision have helped to constrain the resurgence of non-democratic forms in France, and its commitment to enslavement, exploitation, and colonization?

By posing these questions, I am following the lead of Lisa Lowe who has called for “a past conditional temporality.” She insists that it is necessary to consider “what could have been” so that we might “revisit times of historical contingency and possibility to consider alternatives that may have been unthought in those times, and might otherwise remain so now, in order to imagine different futures for what lies ahead” (Lowe 2015, 175). I also see it as important to ask questions such as these to call attention to what centuries of discursive and representational work have naturalized. The decisions made by those who designed and redesigned the Panthéon were not the only options available to them. Enslaved revolutionaries very explicitly offered fuller visions of human freedom that need not have been refused or overthrown. Put differently, when Euro-Christian geographies and hierarchies were dismantled, doubling-down on false assumptions was not the only plausible response. This is not an argument for anachronisms, but a

reminder that humans create the social worlds we inhabit, and, therefore, could always make them otherwise.

What follows, however, will not be a work of speculative history, which, as Saidiya Hartman (2019) has recently demonstrated, can so evocatively counter the dominant histories we have received. Instead, in what follows I will explore, in the next section, how the final transformation of the Panthéon into a site of secular memorial reformulated rather than reduced its sacrality in ways that upheld Euro-Christian absolutist claims. Then, in the final section, I will return to the Carnival of Gods I witnessed in the Panthéon to address how Barontini's exhibition and performance can best be perceived as a religious event, along the lines of what Alexis Wells-Oghoghomeh (2021) has described as the work of putting dismembered lives and bodies back together. Throughout, I hope to show how, in the words of Tri-Cirque, the Haitian teacher in the Martinican writer Patrick Chamoiseau's novel, *Texaco*, "rubbing the real with the magical (as practiced in Haiti since in the moon was born) has added to the ways of apprehending human truths" (1997, 324-325), both, I would add, by demonstrating the most violent and the most liberated of human potential.

II.

The exhibit, "We Could be Heroes" included ten fabric banners depicting a single figure (or, in one case, two figures) through a mix of acrylic, ink, and silkscreen. The images were displayed on dyed cotton linings with fringe trimmings, mounted high on poles attached to aluminum pyramidal bases. The images were what Barontini described as "creolized" collages, created by combining historic photographs, acrylic painting, and layers of foliage. Each of the insurrectionary figures depicted on them predate the invention of photography, and—quite

intentionally—portraits or detailed descriptions of very few were made during their lifetimes. Without an image from which to work, Barontini visited the photographic archives at the Musée du Quai Branly, Paris’s ethnographic museum, and selected images taken in France’s colonies, most often with the goal of furthering processes of racialization that would reduce those in the images to less than human status. Careful to avoid inadvertently reproducing these narratives, Barontini sought out images of faces with expressions that struck him as particularly bold and imposing. Cutting the images off at the neck to avoid displaying exoticized nude bodies below, he attached the faces to, for example, reproductions of classical Greek statues. Limbs are missing from some of these ancient carvings, simultaneously pointing to the endless work put into caring for certain treasures from the past and the violent horrors enacted on certain humans. The technique of silkscreen allows Barontini to layer these different sources on to one another, adding foliage from the Caribbean, decorative images and symbols from different eras and regions to the photographs and fragments (see Figure 1). In so doing, he highlights the practice of layering and blending necessary to the work of all forms of representation.

In a small publication that accompanied the exhibit, Barontini explains that “from this dark period of history emerges a unique cultural blend in the Americas, particularly in the Caribbean. What Édouard Glissant brilliantly theorized is the unexpected, unsuspected encounter of these cultures coming from several continents.” The term Glissant uses for this unexpected blending is “*créolisation*.” As he reiterated to me in a conversation we had while seated amidst the exhibition on a Saturday morning in mid-December, Barontini did not come across Glissant’s theories until relatively recently. But, “initially and surely unconsciously,” he recounts in the publication, “the aesthetic choice of collage, of montage, imposed itself on me as a mirror of what I experienced in my childhood between France, Guadeloupe, and Italy, and especially in

my immediate universe in Saint-Denis. This formal principle is therefore paramount in my artistic production; it allows me to reassociate myths, stories, to invent new pictorial scenarios.”

What interests me here is how such practices have been essential in both sides of the ongoing struggle described by Wynter and Hickman. If, in the Caribbean, créolisation is the term Glissant gave to the varied creative efforts aimed at refusing the absolute domination of Euro-Christians, Euro-Christians turned to a more limited repertoire of images in their attempts to assert that absolute domination. In the words of Marx:

The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living. And just as they seem to be occupied with revolutionizing themselves and things, creating something that did not exist before, precisely in such epochs of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service, borrowing from them names, battle slogans, and costumes in order to present this new scene in world history in time-honored disguise and borrowed language. [Marx, 1852, Chapter 1]

While Marx here is lamenting the rise of Napoleon III¹⁴ and the limits of revolution within continental France, I would argue that these words take on even more significance when placed in the context of the global cosmic battle after 1492.

This strategy is profoundly visible throughout the Panthéon which, like most of Paris’s Roman Catholic churches, is shaped like a cross, with a longitudinal entrance opening up to the transept, or the horizontal portion of the cross, before ending in a shorter longitudinal space and culminating in the apse, the often-rounded space behind the altar. At the Panthéon, in place of an altar is a large sculpture in stone entitled “National Convention” by François-Léon Sicard (see

¹⁴ I am currently undertaking research in France in the company of my spouse and my children, ages seven and four. My children are enrolled in the local French public school and accompanying my seven-year-old on her school field trips has offered fascinating insight into how one learns to naturalize some of these practices over others from a very early age. On a visit to the Musée d’Orsay (a museum which displays nineteenth-century French artists), the children in her class expertly identified the sandals, skirted armor, and crown of laurels depicted in a stone sculpture as the sartorial traits of a Roman general. “Very good,” the museum guide exclaimed before pausing. “Of course, this is actually a depiction of Napoleon III...” she added, looking momentarily perplexed, before moving onto another work of art.

Figure 2). Originally intended for the Tuileries Gardens, it was ultimately installed in the Panthéon in 1913. At the center is a giant representation of Marianne, a symbol of French liberty. She is surrounded by revolutionary generals at a more human scale depicted in the work of forging the battle for freedom next to the phrase “live free or die.” Rising behind them, however, is a golden neo-Byzantine style mosaic of Christ with the angels and St. Geneviève, seeming to offer his benediction to the stone scene below.

The silkscreened fabrics added by Barontini powerfully diminished these pretensions etched in stone. The ten banners of the insurrectionary figures lined the longitudinal nave, with nearby pamphlets offering a small description of each figure. The vibrant colors of the images and fringes contrasted powerfully with the muted tones that—apart from the mosaic of Jesus—otherwise define the space. Then, in the transept, seven much larger banners conveyed the historical context these figures inhabited, including representations of the crossing of the Atlantic, a *lewoz* (a Guadeloupian musical tradition), and the battle of Vertières, a decisive fight in the creation of an independent Haiti. Among the images silkscreened onto these large banners are statues of African and Haitian gods. It was the presence of these figures that first alerted me to the possibility that, perhaps, with his exhibit, Barontini had finally made of this strange place a true pantheon: a home for the celebration of many gods.

When I first visited the Panthéon back in 2008, I presumed that the paintings on the walls had been completed at the time of the building’s initial construction as a Roman Catholic church in the mid-1700s. I was surprised to realize, on closer inspection, that most of the paintings in fact dated from the Third Republic (1870-1940), created between approximately 1874 and 1905. According to information listed on screens found in the Panthéon, the Director of the Académie des beaux arts at the time, Philippe de Chennevières, argued that, in the interest of unity, the

walls of the Panthéon should be decorated with paintings that would “celebrate national Christian heroes.” The cycles of paintings found throughout the nave depict events in the lives of Saint-Louis,¹⁵ Joan of Arc,¹⁶ Saint Geneviève,¹⁷ Clovis,¹⁸ Saint Denis,¹⁹ and Charlemagne.²⁰

I want to push beyond an argument in which I have too often found myself mired: namely, one that would be concerned with explaining the Catholicity of this space whose symbolism is primarily understood in secular, Republican terms. I want to argue that the two—the Catholic and the secular—are expressed in similarly absolutist terms in France and, thus, can equally contribute to the far more significant project of articulating Euro-Christian, and specifically French moral and cultural Euro-Christian supremacy.

¹⁵ No descriptions of who, precisely, these figures are can be found on the walls or explanatory screens throughout the Panthéon, demonstrating how their stories and their significance are taken to be self-evident. Saint Louis (1214-1270) ruled over the kingdom of France from age 12 to his death. He led two disastrous crusades in the Middle East where the European forces were captured. His bones were brought back to Paris after the second crusade where they began to enact miracles (Gaposchkin 2010). The images in the Saint-Louis cycle in the Panthéon were completed between 1874 and 1877 and depict him (1) being taught by his mother, (2) rendering justice, and (3) being held prisoner in Palestine.

¹⁶ Joan of Arc (1412-1430) believed “in the absolute right of kings,” engaged in “conversations with saints and the archangel Michael when preparing for battle,” and, most problematically in the eyes of the Church at the time, wore men’s clothing (Meltzer 2009, 495-496). In the Panthéon, in a cycle of paintings depicted between 1886 and 1890 (precisely the period in which her canonization process belatedly began), she is depicted (1) being burned at the stake, (2) at the coronation of Charles VII, (3) at battle in Orléans, and (4) receiving a vision.

¹⁷ St. Geneviève (c. 419-422-c. 502-512) lived in Paris for most of her life. “Between 1500 and 1793, Saint Geneviève’s relics were involved in 120 public invocations...over a third of which occurred during the eighteenth century” (Williams 2016, 323). In the Panthéon, a cycle of paintings completed between 1874 and 1892 depict her (1) calming the Parisians, (2) present as Atilla and his army march on Paris, and (3) through the miracles associated with her since her death. Additional cycles by a widely celebrated artist at the time, Pierre Pavis de Chavannes, depict (1) her childhood and (2) her bringing supplies to Paris. A final cycle by Jean-Paul Laurens depicts her death.

¹⁸ The Frankish king Clovis (466-511) was baptized in 496, a move which some in France celebrate as the initiation of Catholic France. The decision to celebrate 1500 years since his baptism in 1996 led to a great deal of debate and outrage (Terrio 1999). In the series in the Panthéon, created between 1874 and 1875, he is depicted (1) at the battle of Tolbiac, (2) making a vow, and (3) being baptized.

¹⁹ Saint Denis lived in the first half of the third century is celebrated as a martyr. He is often depicted holding his own decapitated head. He served as Bishop in the region before it was known as Paris. At the Panthéon he is depicted (1) in the moment of his martyrdom, and (2) giving a sermon.

²⁰ Charlemagne (768-814) was not only the king of the Franks, but ruled over much of central Europe. He maintained power over the empire by, according to some historians, making use of the diversity found within that he could not quash (Davis 2015, 431-32). In the Panthéon, a series of paintings begun as early as 1840 and completed as late as 1904 depict (1) the ambassadors of the Caliph Haroun Al Rachid giving the keys of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem to Charlemagne, and (2) his coronation.

These figures are all significant for a particular kind of euhemerism they are made to enact through the paintings in the Panthéon. Euhemerus was a philosopher who lived in the 4th century BCE and he is generally celebrated for revealing the identity of a certain class of classical gods of antiquity as “nothing but deified cultural heroes” (Hickman 2015, 69), who could safely be set aside and distinguished from the eternal God. According to Hickman, early Church fathers used Euhemerus to “winnow[] the field of terrestrial gods to a single, exceptional example—the incarnate Christ—and, through the sleight of hand of trinitarianism, elevate[] this singular terrestrial god to the position of the eternal god” (Ibid, 70). This practice, however, then re-opened a path for other sorts of “divinized humans,” those who had followed Christ in some exemplary way—Christian saints and martyrs. At the Panthéon, these divinized humans are celebrated for expanding the terrestrial power of France, and its imagined antecedents and forebearers. These divinized humans are put to work in asserting the moral and cultural supremacy of Euro-Christian, by vanquishing foreign enemies, capturing Jerusalem, and defending the city of Paris and its inhabitants. These images amplify the ongoing cosmic battle begun in 1492 right at the moment when political parties in France and throughout Western Europe were arguing for the mass expansion of colonization in Africa. These divined figures, that is, were called upon to insist upon very moral and very Christian mission of modern colonial exploitation and expropriation. They are warriors for Church and state alike, with the distinction between the two effectively blurred.

Such efforts are made most explicit in a work such as that by Alexandre Cabanal, depicting “St. Louis at Jerusalem” (see Figure 3), where virtuous White Christians appear righteous in the face of imprisonment by the “Saracens.” But they are also evident in less obvious examples, such as the painting of St. Geneviève on her deathbed by Jean-Paul Laurens

(see Figure 4) found on the paintings in the Panthéon. According to information provided on information screens, the artist was “a fervent Republican,” and managed to find “a way around the clerical commission.” His representation of St. Geneviève at the moment of her death “removes any role from the saint, depicting her as no more than a simple woman, with no religious symbols.” Here, the reader is returned to the presumably central battle of the day—the clerical and secular debates of the fin-de-siècle period. It is a tension that is felt throughout the explanations that accompany the nation’s secular site of memoriam. In the image, however, the absolutism of the figures depicted in the painting is reasserted in a way celebrated since the Renaissance: the capacity of the artist to hand the world to the viewer, expressing immanent absolute power by allowing the viewer to effectively capture the world in their gaze. Indeed, at the Panthéon, it is in relation to this painting when, unusually for the relatively abundant information found within, the form, rather than the content, of the image is commented upon.

The painting, however, goes ever further in this assertion of supremacy. “The effect of the crowd gathered around her deathbed is strikingly dramatic,” continues the information panel. “The palette of colors in bright, contrasting shades, helps to set the scene. The realism of the figures is remarkable, in particular the pathos of some of the bodies: the children’s rounded bellies and the wrinkled skin.” This shift from the religious significance of the figure to the technical significance of the painting manages to maintain the universalist or absolutist gesture, I am arguing, by calling the viewer’s attention to the Whiteness of the bodies gathered around this woman who is no more—and no less—than the dominant human, overrepresented as the human itself. Indeed, the abundant White flesh in this image is striking. As the significance of the saintly figure fades to the background, the White bodies of those gathered to celebrate her pulsate in rich detail, as numerous figures are depicted in various stages of undress.

If what I am arguing here feels over the top, consider what was happening in France in the twenty-five years during which these paintings were completed. In 1879, Victor Hugo—the man for whom the Panthéon was ultimately created in its final form—gave a speech at an event celebrating the anniversary of the end of slavery in French colonies. He was introduced by the man widely credited for abolition, Victor Schoelcher. Hugo began his speech by reminding the room of this widely held narrative of abolition (as a gift from White men to Black men, rather than the result of the insurrectionary actions of the figures Barontini brought into the Panthéon). “The true president of a meeting like this, on a day like this,” Hugo declared, “would be the man who had the immense honor of speaking on behalf of the white human race to say to the black human race: ‘You are free.’ That man, you all name him, gentlemen, is Schoelcher” (as cited in Magnan 2019). Thinking in terms of differently racialized distinctions in humanity was, therefore, widely practiced at the time and would certainly have been among the categories and distinctions surrounding Laurens at the time of his commission.

I want to stay with Hugo’s speech for some time as it expresses—in shockingly explicit terms—precisely the cosmic battle that Wynter and Hickman have described. It is a battle, moreover, in which the tools of the Republic and the Church alike must be brought to bear. Hugo begins the speech itself by insisting that a new frontier must be crossed in order for the human race to develop further, acknowledging that this was the primary concern that united the audience gathered before him. In order to further develop the human race, he argues, Europe now needs to turn south. And what did he understand to lie to the south?

The Mediterranean is a sea of civilization; it is certainly not for nothing that the Mediterranean has on one of its shores the old world and on the other the unknown world, that is to say, on one side all civilization and on the other all barbarism. The time has come to say to this illustrious group of nations: Unite! Go south. Don’t you see the barrier? It’s there, in front of you, this block of sand and ash, this inert and passive heap

which, for six thousand years, has obstructed universal progress, this monstrous Cham that stops Sem by its enormity—Africa. [Ibid]

The seemingly abstract arguments of Wynter and Hickman touch the ground in startling clarity with these words. The inert (i.e., without life), passive, block of sand and ash cannot contain the human as it has instead blocked “universal” progress for six thousand years. He continues:

What a land Africa is! Asia has its history, America has its history, even Australia has its history; Africa has no history. A kind of vast and obscure legend envelops it. Rome touched it, to suppress it; and when it thought it was rid of Africa, Rome cast upon this immense dead thing one of those epithets that do not translate: *Africa portentosa!* [Applause] It is more and less than a wonder. It is what is absolute in horror. [Ibid]

The use of the term absolute to elaborate the concept of horror here is striking. It clearly stands in opposition to the unnamed absolute in beauty, civilization, and morality, that which is found on the other side of the Mediterranean.

Precisely in a moment devoted to acknowledging the end of Euro-Christian slavery—an institution upheld only through a violence and horror that was, undeniably, absolute—Hugo reconfigures the moral and cultural censure that might arise on such an occasion and instead, once again, doubles down. Rather than interrogating Euro-Christian slavery, Hugo works to contribute to the project of protecting and reproducing the morality and beauty of the Euro-Christian lifeways. Whether these lifeways be secular or Christian is entirely beyond and beside the point, even for Hugo, who concludes with the following:

Go, Peoples! Seize this land. Take it. From whom? From no one. Take this land from God. God gives the land to men; God offers Africa to Europe. Take it. Where kings would bring war, bring harmony. Take it, not for the cannon, but for the plow; not for the sword, but for trade; not for battle, but for industry; not for conquest, but for fraternity [prolonged applause]. Pour your surplus into this Africa, and at the same time solve your social issues, turn your proletarians into property owners. Go, do! Build roads, build ports, build cities; grow, cultivate, colonize, multiply; and let, on this land, increasingly freed from priests and princes, the divine Spirit assert itself through peace and the human Spirit through freedom. [Ibid]

At the end of the nineteenth century, five hundred years after 1492, Hugo describes a vast continent as existing purely to be given to Euro-Christians precisely so that they can expand the supremacy and life expectancies of Euro-Christians. It offers a space for Europe's poor and working-class to feel the delights of absolute power through expropriated property. Through this process, both the absolute power of the Christian god and the secular spirit will expand and, importantly, reduce the power of African priests and princes. Clearly Hugo is not in any denial about the goals and stakes of this cosmic battle, so why should we continue to obfuscate it behind questions that distract us from its significance? Spaces like the Panthéon can no longer be reduced to particularly paradoxical expressions of the "war between two Frances."²¹ It should instead be viewed as a space in which Euro-Christians' ongoing cosmic battle to maintain the world as primarily available for the reproduction of their lifeways at the expense of all others. The use of these saints to decorate the Third Republic's edification of its ongoing and violent participation in Euro-Christian domination and supremacy accomplishes two things. First, it points to the fact that Catholic figures as well as secular can advance this battle. Second, it refuses to make space for other divinized or heroic humans engaged in this battle, those whom Barontini forced into the space almost 150 years later. In this way, the religious-secular link is clarified as only being a Christian-secular connection. It is not that any gods may be called upon to defend Euro-Christian supremacy. Only Christian gods can be put to this task and, therefore, find their place in the pantheon.

Few would point to these paintings as the most significant in nineteenth-century French art, but many of the figures depicted have continued to play integral roles in the ongoing cosmic battle, such as in the late nineteenth-century celebration of Joan of Arc in art forms of all kinds

²¹ For an account of the space in these terms at the moment of the paintings' production, see a review essay by Alder Anderson in a 1904 edition of the magazine *The Cosmopolitan*.

throughout France, and her adoption by the far-right political party in the twentieth century (Oliphant 2007; Meltzer 2009). Each time, the use of these figures has returned most pundits to the wrong set of concerns: whether or not these Catholic figures can be celebrated by a secular state. The fact that public outcry against the celebration of the 1500th anniversary of Clovis was resolved by moving the event from the cathedral in Reims to a military base nearby (Terrio 1999, 439) highlights how their significance continues to reside in the cosmic battle I have described. By continuing to return to the question of whether Joan or Clovis uphold the French Republic through Catholic or secular heroic narratives, however, we avoid the more important question of how they uphold the absolute supremacy of Euro-Christian lifeways above others.

III.

Let me now return to the Carnival. I have been watching Fatiman's breath for several minutes, being sure to put down my phone and notebook and just observe and listen (see Figure 5). Now the ten figures are on the move again, shifting from single file to pairs as they exit the circle surrounding Foucault's pendulum and move toward the back of the nave and the doors—several stories high—that never open. An audible gasp rises from the crowd as a crack of sunlight cuts through the gray space. People around me look at each other in anticipation. Did they dream it? Are those enormous doors really going to open?

One enters the Panthéon through regular-sized doors to the right and exits through regular-sized doors on the left of the grand entrance in the center, in a fashion similar to most Roman Catholic churches in Paris. One does not have to spend too much time inside, however, before desiring the immense wooden arched structures to open, to bring light, warmth, and sound into a space in which one often struggles to know how to behave, where and how to orient any

sense of reverence or awe. To open the doors would offer a view out over the Luxembourg Gardens and further west to the Eiffel Tower, demonstrating how the Panthéon has been incorporated into the center of Paris's monumental geographies time and again. But closed they always remain. The only time they ever open, Barontini explained to me, is when someone is being pantheonized. The body (or some portion thereof) is accompanied by a procession that marches up the rue Soufflot (see Figure 6) and, just as they near the entrance, the doors open long enough to allow the procession to enter, before then being sealed once more. The ceremony is now televised, so there are no secret rites occurring within, but the closure, this sealing off from public view is significant to Barontini. In our conversation, he explained to me how, in his Carnival, the doors open at the end of the event, sending the heroic figures and their celebrants who have offered something to the space out into the streets.

Faces around me begin to look dismayed at the door's only partial opening. Will they really open? And then they do. And the effect is incredible. While we all know we are witnessing something special inside of this strange place, all of a sudden, we want to be out in the streets, to feel the thrill and astonishment of witnessing the Mamba of Kayiman, Sanité Belair, Delgrès, and others breaching out of the Panthéon and into the streets, accompanied by drums and conch horns. The crowd surges forward toward the sunlight, but the young officials allow only the performers to leave, and close the doors rapidly behind them. We laugh at our disappointment as the crowd explodes with delighted howls, expressing thrill at the momentous event we have just witnessed. Someone next to me points to an artist and filmmaker—both older Black gentlemen—who have their cameras out and have just caught sight of one another. They turn their cameras toward each other and capture their mutual presence in that moment. As their cameras move away they smile and shake their heads in appreciative awe. “That was so powerful” a young

woman next to me yells over the din to her companion. The two congratulate each other on having made the decision to come today because they have just witnessed something they could never have imagined.

Mona Ozouf, a widely celebrated historian of the French Revolution, has described the French Panthéon as a “‘disgrace of a place that has made more than one great man shudder at the prospect of one day being walled in there,’ a ‘harsh desert’ under the ‘dim light...where three tourists from Illinois shiver’” (as cited in Gardette 2013). The days I spent viewing Barontini’s exhibition within its walls were frigid indeed, a problem that, the Panthéon’s website warns, is as true in July as it is in February. When I explained to friends what I was up to, many asked to come along, taking the opportunity to view the inside of a space they had never before visited. Invariably, “cold” was the adjective used not only to describe the temperature, but the experience of encountering the past celebrated within.

Barontini did not only bring new people into the Panthéon, he offered up another means of engaging with divinized humans.²² His goal was not to “pantheonize” them, but to demonstrate just how varied are the means of living with the dead. In our conversation in December, Barontini and I discussed the limited repertoire of images and rituals found in Panthéon. “It is so typical of France,” he explained, when grasping for symbols, “to fall back on Catholic and monarchic” imagery and sensoria. He described how, when he announced that he wanted to celebrate these figures through two Carnivals, he encountered a great deal of pushback

²² Following a great deal of effort on the part of Black activists demanding a reassessment of France’s history of slavery, two insurrectionary figures from France’s Caribbean colonies were officially acknowledged in this resting place for France’s “great man.” A plaque acknowledging the heroism of Toussaint Louverture was placed in 1998 and another recognizing Louis Delgrès and those who committed suicide along with him in 2002. In contrast to most of those recognized at the Panthéon, however, they could not be pantheonized as their bodies were never properly buried and could not be exhumed. For more on these ceremonies, see Dubois 2009. Aimé Césaire’s body is also absent from the Panthéon because Martinicans preferred that his body remain on the island. The “righteous” of France, non-Jews who had sheltered French Jews during the Vichy reign, are the only other figures to have been memorialized without bodies. See Gensberger 2016 for an analysis of this event.

from those in charge of the Panthéon. Two aspects of the Carnivals in particular disturbed them: the opening of the doors, and the playing of the conch horn. “Oh no, the conch, *c’est pas possible*,” Barontini laughed, mimicking their shock in recounting the story to me. “This is a sacred place,” he was told.

He then explained the significance of the conch as an instrument that served to spread word of insurrections between plantations. In *Tacky’s Revolt*, a groundbreaking study of the insurrections of enslaved people in Jamaica and throughout the Caribbean, Vincent Brown points to how maroons also used them as a means of warding off attacks from White colonists. He cites the writings of James Knight, a White planter, who complained that, “when engaged directly, the maroons ‘constantly kept blowing Horns, Conch Shells, and other Instruments, which made a hideous and terrible Noise among the Mountains in hopes of terrifying our Parties by making Them imagine their Number & strength were much greater than it really was’” (Brown 2020, 112).

Why did those at the Panthéon react so viscerally to the idea of the conch being sounded in the “sacred space” of the purportedly secular nave? What if the conch did not profane the space, but, instead, asserted a competing sacrality? The conch played a vital role in amplifying non-Euro-Christian human strength and power in the cosmic battle against the overrepresented Euro-Christians’ insistence upon absolute domination over humans they had forcibly uprooted, transported, and enslaved. Might the discomfort be due to the fact that because this battle has not ended, despite the end of slavery?

In his contribution to the publication accompanying the exhibition, the Martinican novelist, Patrick Chamoiseau noted the significance of the fact that enslavers denied any form of representational mechanisms to those enslaved. “They quickly prohibited those they had damned

from any signs, symbols, sculptures, effigies, statuettes, assemblages, or indecipherable forms that could be related to allegorical projection.” Despite these efforts, however, the enslaved “never missed an opportunity...to display themselves with deities” through processions and celebrations he describes as “convoys.” These convoys are, in contrast to the efforts of Euro-Christian modes of representation, not aimed at absolute domination. In the Bois Caïman ceremony, for example, as mamba, Cécile likely experienced a form of spirit possession. According to Aisha K. Finch, citing the research of Colin Dayan, ““submission to these spirits was not another form of slavery.... Instead of being turned into a thing, you became a god.... The Iwa “rides” or “dances” or “descends,” but does not coerce....” (Finch 2020, 305). Thus, the cosmic battle, as both Wynter and Hickman highlight, was far from one-sided. In Finch’s terms, “for slave adherents...the living momentum of spirit possession ruptured many of the neat colonial binaries that sought to erase black humanity as slaves became masters, and humans—for all intents and purposes—became gods” (Ibid). Humans can become gods (or heroes), however, outside of the terms of the immanent or transcendent absolute. They can become gods in order to amplify human and divine multiplicity, rather than singularity. (This part of my analysis is one that I am only beginning to explore; I have only just begun the research required to fully flesh out this distinction.)

As An Yountae argues in *The Coloniality of the Secular*, because the term “religion” is a colonial category shaped through Christian efforts at absolute domination, numerous postcolonial writers (and, in particular for Yountae, postcolonial writers from the French Caribbean, including Aimé Césaire and Frantz Fanon) and use the figure of the sacred, both explicitly and implicitly, to describe the work of decolonial resistance.²³ This resistance is

²³ On religion as a colonial category, also see Masuzawa 2005 and Mendieta 2001.

expressed through the work of constituting new selves and relations in order to undo the violence of the colonial order. Living with the dead is a powerful component of this relational work (Lauro 2015). This is precisely the work, I argue, in which Barontini engaged. In his essay, Chamoiseau similarly celebrated the young artist's efforts, declaring, "I see Barontini as heir to the 'convoys'... a solitary artist but in solidarity with all imaginaries, who inhabits the world differently, who dreams of it differently, exercising the rallying cry of a general encounter that colonialism and imperial spirit have hitherto denatured...transforming this secular palace into a living, sparkling house."

As I move toward a conclusion, I want to ask one more question, especially to the participants in the ACHA Seminar. What role, precisely, does the Roman Catholic Church play in this battle? By pointing to the flexibility with which Catholic and secular symbols and rhetoric can be mobilized in this cosmic battle, I have not intended to imply that, in this case, Catholicism has been politicized and instrumentalized and that, therefore, there is nothing particularly Catholic or Christian occurring here—quite the opposite.

Christianity is a complex and multi-faceted religion that is difficult to define in any straightforward way. How Christians read their Scriptures,²⁴ which elements of the story of Jesus's life and death they emphasize,²⁵ and the practices and theologies they take to be primary differ so significantly across time, space, and denomination that any concise definition inevitably stands on unstable ground.²⁶ Rather than trying to reduce Christianity to any particular doctrine, I

²⁴ The Friday Masowe Apolistics in Zimbabwe, for example, see the Christian Bible as far more material and rigid a means by which to receive the Holy Spirit. Rather than reading from or referencing it in their worship services, the Friday Apolistics rely on prophets to bring the message "live and direct" into their outdoor worship spaces (Engelke 2007).

²⁵ Controversies over the celebration of Christmas from the seventeenth century onwards point to tensions between emphasizing the incarnation or the death and resurrection as key to appreciating the significance of the life of Jesus.

²⁶ While Eastern Orthodox Christians and the Church of Latter-Day Saints emphasize the possibility of achieving perfectibility in this world, Roman Catholics insist that one can never know whether or not one is saved, no matter the virtuous acts in which one engages while alive. In contrast to both positions, Evangelical Christians' confident

want to turn to some of the effects of two of its primary engines or motors in the modern period. I use these terms because I am interested in the expansion of Christianity as a key device in the overrepresentation of the Euro-Christian as the human itself. The first motor is its missionizing bent—the often strongly-held assertion that all people around the world must come into intimate and extended contact with the Christian message. The second motor is its exclusivity—the insistence that Christians can engage only one God.

Both of these motors have scriptural basis. The book of Matthew ends with the call to “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you” (Matthew 28: 19-20), and Christians have held tight to the Commandment restricting Jews from worshipping any God but the one God. Beginning in 1492, however, this combination of missionization and exclusivity began to take on a new and significant power that has resulted in the attempted annihilation of a host of complex lifeways. The insistence that all people should become Christian and, in so doing, must abandon all other Gods, spirits, and ancestors can produce a powerfully annihilative force. The decline of the Greek and Roman pantheon and the near total disappearance of Western European pagan practices speak to this process prior to 1492. But, under Euro-Christian Empires of the sixteenth to twentieth centuries, the destruction caused by these twin motors powered the project of the immanent absolute, resulting in the annihilation, as Jennifer Scheper Hughes (2021) recounts in the Preface to *The Church of the Dead*, of gods and peoples to such an extent that it is imprinted in the geological record.

Katharine Gerbner (2018) has demonstrated the varied ways in which different Christian groups engaged with and contributed to processes of racialization so vital to practices of Black

knowledge of their salvation arises from their faith in the power of the sacrificial act of Jesus, rather than to any virtues they might possess or enact.

chattel slavery, while aiming to missionize to the enslaved, with varying degrees of success, depending on the historical period, denomination, and institutional structure. In the broader project of which this paper is a part, I explore the role of the French Catholic Church in maintaining systems of exploitation in the French Caribbean after abolition. As I have described elsewhere (Oliphant 2024), as insurrectionary violence on the part of enslaved people in the 1830s and 1840s made abolition an increasing necessity, voices within the French Catholic Church pushed for gradual, rather than immediate abolition, arguing that extensive missionization would be necessary in order for the enslaved to “merit” their freedom. Members of the Church and state—empirical, Republican, and monarchical alike—all agreed on the necessity of the “moralization” of the enslaved as a precondition of emancipation. All agreed, moreover, that religious (by which they meant Catholic) instruction, along with marriage, basic elementary education, and a renewed commitment to work, would ensure the continued profitability of the colonies. Laws, such as that passed in September 1855 in Martinique, required the formerly enslaved to carry passports to demonstrate their employment, and put a variety of other measures in place to forbid “vagabondage.”

The formerly enslaved continued to battle against these ever-shifting ““modes of dispossession”” (Oudin-Bastide 2016, 345, citing Édouart Glissant), including ongoing insurrectionary violence, such as that enacted by agricultural workers in September 1870. In the wake of this powerful call to end dispossession and exploitation, the administrator of the diocese of Martinique wrote a letter to the curate expressing sympathy for the difficult times in which they lived. He told the priests to view the insurrectionaries as lost children, rather than strategic actors. “They do not know that they are thus destroying the hopes of the future, both by their speeches and by their actions,” he clarified. He then offered up a variety of tools to his brothers

in Christ to respond effectively in this ongoing battle. “Preach much,” he encouraged “about unity, charity, forgiveness of injuries, gentleness in relationships, resignation in the sorrows of this life; let us be, Sir and dear Colleague, simple as doves, prudent as serpents. Let us be firm on principles, but let us be discreet in promoting them, and let us be generous especially in their application.”²⁷ In his words, I see evidence of the recognition that the means by which this cosmic battle ought to be waged need to be honed and altered according to shifting contexts. In Paris, at the Panthéon, divinized humans could be called upon in the representational efforts required for this struggle. In pastoral work in the Caribbean, however, when faced with insurrectionary actions, those on the ground may need the “prudence of serpents” in order to more effectively engage in this battle. In each case, saints and priests can be viewed as *both* Catholic and secular actors whose efforts need to be analyzed in terms of how they furthered the cause of overrepresentation and the reproduction and expansion of the Euro-Christian immanent absolute. This is not to discount the fact that for many people, the primary means by which they engage with a figure like Joan of Arc may well be through sincere and prayerful Catholic devotion. But she inevitably exceeds that site and opens on to broader terrain, as do a number of other figures, such as Cécile Fatiman. For this reason, we need to shift our analyses of Catholic histories, traditions, and practices to address their role in the struggle that continues to define our present.

²⁷ Archives territoriales de Martinique. Cote 26J1/10: Administrations du diocèse par les vicaires Prudent Guesdon et Benjamin Blanger (1860-1871). Document 62: Lettre de l’administrateur donnant des conseils pour l’administration spirituelle des paroisses et encouragement les curés dans l’exercice de leur pastorat. 27 septembre 1870.

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Figures



Figure 1: *Le Mars Vaudou Dutty Boukman*, Raphaël Barontini, 2023 Acrylic, ink, silkscreen on canvas, dyed cotton lining, trimmings, aluminum pyramidal base, 311 x 180 x 35 cm



Figure 2: *La Convention Nationale*, François-Laurent Sicard, 1913, 6.4 m x 9.6 m



SAINT LOUIS A JÉRUSALEM (TABLEAU DE CABANEL)

Figure 3: *St. Louis at Jerusalem*, Alexandre Cabanel, 1898.



Figure 4: *La mort de Sainte Geneviève*, Jean-Paul Laurens, 1877-1880



Figure 5: La Mambo de Bois-Caïman Cécile Fatiman, Raphaël Barontini, 2023, Acrylic, ink, silkscreen on canvas, dyed cotton lining, trimmings, aluminum pyramidal base, 311 x 180 x 35 cm



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Figure 6: Procession carrying the heart of Léon Gambetta toward the Panthéon for his pantheonization on November 11, 1920