**Shaking Up the World?**

Global Effects of Haitian Tremors: 1791, 2010

August 10-12, 2017, Langelandsgade 139, room 1584-212, University of Aarhus

*The outbreak of the 1791 Haitian revolution shook the imperial powers of Europe and the US. Never before had the enslaved rebelled so powerfully and in the decades to come, the name of the once lucrative colony, Saint-Domingue, provoked anxiety and suspicion. In 2010, Western eyes again turned to Haiti as a devastating earthquake hit the island. Natural forces together with poverty and inadequate infrastructure caused a major humanitarian crisis. Taking its point of departure in the intersection of politics and aesthetics, this conference probes the global responses to and repercussions of these events within the frame of emergent and contemporary modernity.*





**Program**

**Thursday, August 10**

12:00-13:00 Registration and lunch

13:00-13:15 Welcome

13:15-14:45 Keynote: J. Michael Dash (New York University): “*Nous mourrons tous*: The Haitian Revolution goes Underground” (Chair: Mads Anders Baggesgaard)

15:00-16:45 Session 1

17-19 Reception (with food)

19:30-22 Film + talk. Screening of *Haiti, Untitled* (1996, dir. Jørgen Leth).

**Friday August 11**

9:30-11:15 Session 2

11:30-13:00 Keynote: Marlene Daut (University of Virginia): TBA (Chair: Jonas Ross Kjærgård)

13:00-14:00 Lunch

14:00-15:45 Session 3

16:00-17:45 Session 4

19:30 Dinner in town at

**Saturday August 12**

10:00-11:30 Keynote: Matthew Smith (The University of the West Indies, at Mona): “A Tale of Two Tragedies: Remembering and Forgetting Kingston and Port-au-Prince” (Chair: Jonas Ross Kjærgård)

11:45-13:30 Session 5

13:30-14:30: Lunch

14:45-15:30 Future collaborations and publication

15:45-16:00 Closing remark

**Session 1: Representations of Earthquake (Chair: Jakob Ladegaard)**

* Kasia Mika (KITLV (Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies)): “Twinning the Extremes: the Haitian Revolution and the 2010 January Earthquake in Nick Lake’s *In Darkness* (2012)”
* Carla Bascombe (University of the West Indies, Trinidad and Tobago): ”’Around us, history never stops’: Interrogating Évelyne Trouillot’s Narrative of Post-Quake Haiti”
* Tinuke Ola Peters (The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine (Trinidad)): “Representations of natural events in Haitian Literature”

**Session 2: Historical Remembrance (Chair: Astride Charles)**

* Kate Hodgson (University College Cork): “’*De pyé mwen nan chen*’: Gender, violence and slavery in nineteenth-century Haitian memory”
* Erin Dwyer (Oakland University, History department): “Epidemic and Empire in Haiti’s Long Revolution”
* Mads Anders Baggesgaard (Aarhus University): “Watching the Earth Move: Cinematic Images of Haiti after the 2010 Earthquake”

**Session 3: 19th Century Literary Representations of Revolution (Chair: Christina Kullberg)**

* Jonas Ross Kjærgård (Aarhus University): “Prussian Haiti, Haitian Prussia? Political Order and the Haitian Revolution in Heinrich von Kleist’s *Die Verlobung in Santo Domingo*”
* Michael Boyden (Uppsala University (Sweden)): “The Tremors of the Haitian Revolution in American and French Sentimental Race Fictions”
* Sine Jensen Smed (AU): “Henrik Hertz, Haiti and the rights of the "free coloured" in a Danish perspective”

**Session 4: Humanitarian Interventions (Chair: Karen-Margrethe Simonsen)**

* Jocelyne Sutton Franklin (University of Colorado Boulder): “Dehumanization Masquerading as Humanitarianism: A Reading of Concurrent Narratives in Makenzy Orcel’s *L’Ombre animale*”
* Roger P. Abbott (Research Associate in Natural Disasters, The Faraday Institute of Science and Religion, Benet House, St Edmund's College, Cambridge): ”Friendship without compromise? Exploring social cohesion between Protestants, Catholics, and Vaudissants in Haiti”
* Alessandra Benedicty-Kokken (CUNY): “Haiti’s Role in Shaping the Newest Utopia: ‘Ending Poverty’”

**Session 5: Aftershocks of Revolution (Chair: Mads Anders Baggesgaard)**

* Vanessa Mongey (Newcastle University): “The Back-to-Haiti movement in the 19th century”
* Fredrik Thomasson (Uppsala university, history department): “Sweden and Haiti 1791–1831”
* Florian Kappeler (University of Göttingen): “Revolutions of the Earth: Natural Tremors and Eruptions as Metaphors of the Haitian Revolution”

*All individual session talks are 20 minutes long and followed by approx. 15 minutes of discussion.*

Abstracts

J. Michael Dash: “*Nous mourrons tous*, The Haitian Revolution goes Underground”

This paper looks at the way the period 1791- 1804 has been unsilenced or more precisely unearthed in triumphalist, epic terms. Jacques Roumain’s *Masters of the Dew* is read as a re-enactment of the liberatory dream of the revolutionary past but one in which the figure of Delira remains defiantly opaque. Glissantian theories of the abyss and Dany Laferriere’s zombie narrators help us to connect her to the convulsive earthquake of 2010 which resists narrative mastery and helps us to see the origin myth of the Haitian state in a new light.

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Marlene Daut: TBA

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Matthew Smith: “A Tale of Two Tragedies: Remembering and Forgetting Kingston and Port-au-Prince”

## Session 1: Representations of Earthquake (Chair: Jakob Ladegaard)

Kasia Mika: “Twinning the Extremes: the Haitian Revolution and the 2010 January Earthquake in Nick Lake’s *In Darkness* (2012)”

The tremors of the 2010 earthquake in Haiti may have ended, but the experience of catastrophe is far from over with subsequent political-ecological events seemingly thrusting the country into a state of extremity; ‘the end of times’ with no end in sight. Yet neither the 1791-1804 Haitian Revolution nor the 2010 disaster are closed-off occurrences that simply start or end an epoch. Rather, they are entangled processes that unfold through time. Focusing on the figure of Vodou twins, *marassa*, the paper examines Nick Lake’s *In Darkness* (2012) and probes the significance of the novel’s twinned narrative strands and its analogy between the life of the narrator, a boy trapped in the post-earthquake rubble, and that of Toussaint L’Ouverture. The analysis problematizes the antithetical presentation of the events and examines whether the text frames the earthquake as offering an opportunity to claim political agency or whether it seeks to contrast the post-earthquake dynamics of disempowerment with the subjective and collective affirmation of the Revolution. The paper concludes with a discussion of the implications these parallel narratives might have for envisaging the coming of *dosou/dosa,* an even more powerful third child born after the twins, an anticipated time of change.

Biography:

Kasia Mika is a postdoctoral researcher at KITLV (Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies) and is currently working on a monograph entitled *Postcolonial Disasters: The 2010 Haiti Earthquake and the Limits of Narrative*. Before joining KITLV, Kasia was a Short-Term Postdoctoral Fellow at the Leeds Humanities Research Institute. She completed her PhD (2016) at the University of Leeds (UK).

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Carla Bascombe: “’Around us, history never stops’: Interrogating Évelyne Trouillot’s Narrative of Post-Quake Haiti”

My presentation seeks to highlight Évelyne Trouillot’s contribution to the corpus of post-quake narratives written by Haitian authors. Although she has published three novels since the 2010 earthquake, to date, there is a dearth of criticism on her 2013 novel, *Absences sans frontières*. The designation of her work as a post-quake novel is not only attributed its publication shortly after the earthquake, but also as its content sees Trouillot integrate the 2010 tremor into her narrative.

I begin by situating *Absences* as a post-quake narrative, in accordance with definitions put forth by scholars such as Martin Munro and through my own interpretation of this contemporary classification of Haitian literature. In so doing, I examine the value of Trouillot’s novel and challenge its exclusion from scholarly discussions. Nevertheless, the primary aim of my presentation is to respond to the following research question: how does Évelyne Trouillot interrogate history through her treatment of humanitarian and political responses to the earthquake in *Absences sans frontières*? Ultimately, I seek to demonstrate how, as a writer concerned with probing Haiti’s historiography in her fiction, Trouillot uses her 2013 novel to question history and to evaluate how it correlates with global reactions to the 2010 disaster.

Biography:

Carla Bascombe is a second-year doctoral student in at the University of the West Indies, Trinidad and Tobago. She holds both a B.A. in French and Latin American Studies and an M.A. in Languages, Business and European Management from the Université d’Orléans in France. She also received an MPhil from the University of the West Indies, where she completed a thesis on Haitian short stories. Her current research focuses on the prose of Haitian writers Lyonel and Évelyne Trouillot.

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Tinuke Ola Peters: “Representations of natural events in Haitian Literature”

On January 12, 2010 a magnitude 7.0 earthquake struck the southwest part of Haiti, near its capital Port-au-Prince. This resulted in the loss of approximately 200,000 lives, and the displacement and traumatization of many others. This disaster was the most devastating to affect the country before the more recent hazard, hurricane Matthew on October 4, 2016. For the purpose of this paper, consideration would be given to Dany Laferrière’s *Tout bouge autour de moi (The World is Moving Around Me, 2013)*, which pays particular attention to the earthquake of 2010.

Bearing in mind the unpredictability of natural disasters this paper will explore the trauma associated with the earthquake, and the role played by humanitarian relief organizations and missionary groups in response to disasters. This paper will also highlight literature as a critical agent in challenging disaster response and unearthing preconceived ideas towards Haiti.

Biography:

Tinuke Ola Peters is currently an MPhil candidate in French at The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad. Her focus is in Haitian literature. Her thesis investigates Haitian male traumatic experiences.

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## Session 2: Historical Remembrance (Chair: Astride Charles)

Kate Hodgson (University College Cork): “’*De pyé mwen nan chen*’: Gender, violence and slavery in nineteenth-century Haitian memory”

« Esclavage! que ce mot par lui-même est dur et repoussant! Combien il retrace de souvenirs amers! » (Juste Chanlatte, 1810)

The many hard and bitter memories of colonial slavery evoked in this early Haitian text had been shaped and ultimately transformed by the experience of revolution and war that culminated in Haitian independence. As memory is inextricably linked to power, so collective memories of key events that have shaped Haitian history, from the January 1804 declaration of independence to the January 2010 earthquake, have to be negotiated, and ownership of these memories contested. Collective sources relaying the ‘bitter memories’ of slavery have thus evolved in Haiti in sometimes unexpected ways. This paper will consider the collective memory of colonial slavery in 19th century Haiti through the prism of gender relations and violence, bringing written and oral culture (particular songs in Creole) into dialogue. One defining experience of ‘Haitianness’ – participation in the war against three major global powers that ultimately led to the independence of the first Black Republic – shaped, overlaid and sometimes obscured another collective experience, that of a population who lived through the zenith of cruelty, profits and extreme exploitation that was late eighteenth-century colonial Saint Domingue. This paper focuses on how underlying historic tensions linking gender, race, class, and slave status shaped the retrospective memory of slavery among former slaves and their descendants in nineteenth-century Haiti.

Biography:

Kate Hodgson is currently Lecturer in French at University College Cork, Ireland. Prior to that, she was a British Academy Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the University of Liverpool (2012-16), working on a project entitled ‘Haiti and the International Politics of Anti-slavery’. She is co-editor and contributing author of *At the Limits of Memory: Legacies of Slavery in the Francophone World* (with Nicola Frith, Liverpool University Press, 2015). She has recently published in journals including *Small Axe*, *Paragraph* and *Forum for Modern Language Studies* on Haiti, memorialization, slavery and abolition in the Caribbean.

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Erin Dwyer: “Epidemic and Empire in Haiti’s Long Revolution”

An epidemic devastates Haiti’s black population and unleashes a wave of death, conspiracy theories, and mass panic. Initially Haiti’s environment, its residents, and even its history of slavery are blamed for the outbreak, which is portrayed as further proof of the island’s intrinsic danger. However it is ultimately found that the source of the epidemic is likely foreign, rather than of domestic origins. This is the story of the cholera outbreak that followed in the wake of the 2010 Haitian earthquake, but it could also describe a supposed poison pandemic that threatened the island over 250 years before. That poison conspiracy is often compared to the Haitian Revolution, with its leader Macandal depicted as an inspiration for Toussiant Louverture. But it is more instructive to compare the poison conspiracy and the subsequent colonial response to the deadly cholera epidemic that plagued Haiti. Doing so reveals the impact of imperialism, fear, and scientific racism on how governments and citizens collectively respond to public health crises. By including the 1758 poison panic in the “long Haitian Revolution” the paper will examine a longer trajectory of anti-imperial struggle, with a focus on the relationship between environmental essentialism and economic exploitation.

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Mads Anders Baggesgaard (Aarhus University): “Watching the Earth Move: Cinematic Images of Haiti after the 2010 Earthquake”

## Session 3: 19th Century Literary Representations of Revolution (Chair: Christina Kullberg)

Jonas Ross Kjærgård (Aarhus University): “Prussian Haiti, Haitian Prussia? Political Order and the Haitian Revolution in Heinrich von Kleist’s *Die Verlobung in Santo Domingo*”

This talk presents a reading of Heinrich von Kleist’s short story *The Betrothal in St. Domingo* (1810-1811). Kleist’s narrative takes place in 1803 in the very last period of the Haitian revolution. Haiti is here presented as a place of vindictive violence but this reductive representation of the ambition of the revolutionaries is more ambivalent than it seems. A parallel between Haitian and French revolutionary violence suggests that the problem might not be Haitian revolutionaries but revolution as such and the use of an ironic narrative style greatly complicates the political “message” of the story. In presenting these dilemmas, my talk seeks to describe the fictionalized Haitian space of the story, a space which in the short story is described as a “general frenzy of vindictive rage.”

Biography:

Jonas Ross Kjærgård is assistant professor of Comparative Literature at Aarhus University. His PhD dissertation was a cultural history of French revolutionary human rights. He has edited the book "Discursive Framings of Human Rights: Negotiating Agency and Victimhood" (Birkbeck Law Press, 2016) together with Karen-Margrethe Simonsen and his dissertation will be published with Routledge next year in modified form. He is a member of the Reading Slavery research group and works on a comparative literary history of the Haitian revolution with readings of Charles Pigault-Lebrun, Leonora Sansay, Heinrich von Kleist, and Émeric Bergeaud.

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Michael Boyden: “The Tremors of the Haitian Revolution in American and French Sentimental Race Fictions”

This paper explores the emplotment of the Haitian Revolution in two early nineteenth-century race romances. The first is entitled *Zelica, the Creole*, written by “an American” and was published in London in 1820. This work is a rewriting of an earlier novel entitled *Secret History, or, the Horrors of St. Domingo*, published by Leonora Sansay in 1808. Contrary to the precursor text, which narrates the events in St. Domingo from the perspective of an American coquette, *Zelica* is probably the first American novel to put a mixed-race creole character front and center. However, unlike most mixed-race characters of her kind, Zelica is not a tragic, passive victim but an agentive protagonist who is highly ambivalent about the antislavery cause. I read this novel in conjunction with an earlier French sentimental race novel entitled *Zorada, ou la Créole*, which was published under a pseudonym by François Vatar Jouannait shortly before Napoleon’s invasion of Saint-Domingue in 1801. *Zorada* has been described as the first example of a novel with a mixed-race protagonist in the French context.

The two novels display a number of marked similarities: both draw on picturesque and oriental tropes to project a tragic mixed-race character who arouses the reader’s sympathy, and both thematize an interracial love plot between a mixed-race creole woman and a French soldier as well as a parallel plot of (cross-racial) female friendship. Most crucially, although both novels reflect contemporary antislavery rhetoric, they also evince an aversion to revolutionary violence, which they present fatalistically in terms of natural cataclysms. While *Zorada* explicitly links the excesses of the Haitian Revolution to the Jacobins’ violent repression of the Vendée rebellion, *Zelica*, written at a time of monarchic restoration and colonial nostalgia, highlights the cruelty of both the Napoleonic army and the Haitian revolutionaries. By exploring these intertextual connections, the paper contributes to the transnational genealogy of race fictions in a revolutionary context while cautioning against anachronistic readings of early interracial literature.

Biography:

Michael Boyden is a Senior Lecturer of American literature at Uppsala University (Sweden). Prior to his appointment at Uppsala, he worked at the universities of Leuven and Ghent (Belgium), and as a Fulbright scholar at Harvard University and the University of Pennsylvania. Boyden’s first book *Predicting the Past* (2009) drew on Niklas Luhmann’s social systems theory to analyze how literary histories create national narratives of belonging through a rhetoric of controlled negativity. His later work builds on these insights, branching out into questions of narrativity, migration and translation. Boyden has a new long-term project underway, provisionally entitled *Unnatural Revolutions*, which thematizes literary responses to foreign upheaval seemingly marginal to the nation’s self-definition. By drawing connections between domestic American debates and successive waves of Atlantic revolutions, the project reexamines the established consensus view that the United States lacks a tradition of reaction.

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Sine Jensen Smed (AU): “Henrik Hertz, Haiti and the rights of the "free coloured" in a Danish perspective”

## Session 4: Humanitarian Interventions (Chair: Karen-Margrethe Simonsen)

Jocelyne Sutton Franklin (University of Colorado Boulder): “Dehumanization Masquerading as Humanitarianism: A Reading of Concurrent Narratives in Makenzy Orcel’s *L’Ombre animale*”

One could argue that since its revolution, Haiti has served as the West’s ultimate Other, a dangerous Other that dared and succeeded in asserting its independence. Then and now the overwhelming Western response has been a negation of Haitians’ humanity. In his enigmatic 2016 novel L’Ombre animale, Makenzy Orcel writes the relationship between Haitian peasants and development organizations as a binary between predator (development workers) and prey (Haitian peasants). In so doing, Orcel troubles the white savior narrative and leads me, in this paper, to ask to what degree the rhetoric of humanitarian aid obfuscates the structures that keep our postcolonial world from healing the wounds of slavery. I will argue that in an attempt to play on the sympathy of potential donors, aid organizations represent the needy as sad eyes and hungry mouths. This appeal to universal humanity contributes to a denial of actual humanity by eclipsing the individual context and stories behind these faces. Not only is this rhetoric ontologically damaging to those represented, the images and attendant sympathetic responses inhibit our perception of the relational factors that lead to a tiresome (and reductive) narrative of need and tragedy in the Global South. In my excavation of these relational factors, I intend to show that both the narrative of the predator and that of the savior are predicated the weakness of the underprivileged subject, and thus reinforce a power differential as old as colonization.

Biography:

Jocelyn Sutton Franklin is a doctoral candidate at the University of Colorado Boulder. She researches representations of trauma in contemporary Haitian literature with special attention to the temporal and spatial relationships between traumas. Her dissertation focuses on the work of Makenzy Orcel, Marvin Victor, Kettly Mars, Yanick Lahens, and James Noël.

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Roger Abbott: ”Friendship without compromise? Exploring social cohesion between Protestants, Catholics, and Vaudissants in Haiti”

Arising from my ethnographic research conducted in Haiti between 2012-15, focusing on the influence of religious beliefs of different demographic groups in the worst earthquake affected regions, I found there are many reasons for Haiti being in the crisis status it has persisted in. A significant, but by no means the sole, reason is the nation’s capacity for self-harming catastrophically. Endued with hugely resilient character to their advantage, this advantage is so often overwhelmed by the lack of social cohesion. This lack can be found in different areas of society. For instance, the historic disjunction between the state and the nation –expounded by Michel-Rolph Trouillot, in his Haiti: State Against Nation. However, social cohesion is also
lacking severely at the arguably the most socially sensitive point in Haiti – religion.
I will present a model that has potential for addressing the issues confronting social cohesion in Haiti in the interests of bringing peace in the civic, public square between Voodooists, Catholics, and Protestants. This practical theological model is based on a theo-political approach called Principled Pluralism; on a sociological approach based on Adeney-Riskota’s concept of Taylor’s social imaginary; and on a particularist approach to inter-faith relations called Scriptural Reasoning.

Biography:

I am Research Associate for Natural Disasters at the Faraday Institute for Science & Religion, University of Cambridge, UK. Between 2013-15 I conducted ethnographic field work in Haiti, which explored the influences of religious beliefs on earthquake survivors' response to and recovery from that catastrophic event.
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Alessandra Benedicty-Kokken: “Haiti’s Role in Shaping the Newest Utopia: ‘Ending Poverty’”

This paper examines how the notion of nation – and notably the idea of the ‘failed’ nation – is predicated on ‘poverty.’ I examine at once a neoliberal tradition as well as Marxist scholarship. I am particularly interested in how Haiti figures into the construction of our present day considerations of poverty, and what I propose is today’s obsession with “ending poverty.”

The word “poverty” has come in and out of political and academic discourse in the twentieth century and has reemerged in twenty-first-century conversations, especially in the related contexts of global poverty, human rights, and humanitarianism. Whether it is the issue of *The Economist* (June 2013), whose cover reads “Towards the End of Poverty,” or the revised United Nations Millenium Development Goals, whose logo in June 2013 was “We can end poverty 2015,” the word “poverty” is positing itself as a term through which to think through inequality. My work looks at both poverty as a ‘domestic’ issue, and also as an international concern, and thus deals with the work of Karl Marx, Erica Sherover, Michael Harrington, J. Michael Dash, Michel-Rolph Trouillot, Daren Acemoglu and James Robinson, and most recently Yarimar Bonilla.

Biography:

Alessandra Benedicty-Kokken is Assistant Professor of Caribbean and Postcolonial Literatures and Director of the MA in the Study of the Americas at the City College of New York (CUNY). She is author of *Spirit Possession in French, Haitian, and Vodou Thought: An Intellectual History* (Lexington Books, 2015). She is co-editor of *Revisiting Marie Vieux Chauvet: Paradoxes of the Postcolonial Feminine* (2016), a special issue of *Yale French Studies*; and, co-editor of *The Haiti Exception: Anthropology and the Predicament of Narrative* (Liverpool University Press, 2016). She is also the Caribbean Series Editor of Brill.

## Session 5: Aftershocks of Revolution (Chair: Mads Anders Baggesgaard)

Vanessa Mongey: “The Back-to-Haiti movement in the 19th century”

This paper explores post-revolutionary Haiti as a magnet for migrants who moved to the island from France, the United States, and other locations around the Caribbean basin. From the onset of the Haitian Revolution in 1791 to the proclamation of the Republic of Haiti in 1804, many colonists left the French colony of Saint-Domingue and found refuge throughout the Atlantic World. While most of the research on the Haitian diaspora has focused on the impact of out-migration, tracing refugees who moved to Cuba, Jamaica, and the United States, this paper traces the itineraries of those who decided to return or move to Haiti after independence. These migration movements challenge the “isolation thesis” of nineteenth century Haiti, or this long-held consensus that Atlantic states and empires isolated the first black republic after 1804. This article aims to rethink the impact of these global migration movements on Haiti’s state-building process and on its status as peripheral to the international community. It shows the creation of transnational networks connecting Haiti to other locations around the Atlantic Ocean.

Biography:

I’m a teaching fellow at Newcastle University. I specialise in Atlantic work history with a focus on slavery, the Age of Revolutions, and Caribbean history. My book reconstructs revolutionary networks composed of men of different nationalities and ethnicities who attempted to create their own states in former Spanish colonies in the Greater Caribbean. I have also published several articles on print culture, exiles, and the Haitian diaspora.

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Fredrik Thomasson: “Sweden and Haiti 1791–1831”

During the three final years of the Haitian Revolution, 1802–1804, one of the major Stockholm newspapers published 276 articles/items about Haiti. Colonial issues, including slavery, were extensively debated in Sweden the decades around 1800. A Stockholm newspaper reader (and considering relatively high literacy rates these were a considerable part of the population) knew who Toussaint Louverture was, his name was frequently in the papers. A biography about him was published in Swedish in 1802. I will discuss the reporting in Sweden and compare it to that in the Swedish colony Saint Barthélemy where the revolution was seen in a very different light. I will present travellers’ reports from the new nation, Sweden attempted to sell arms to both the Haitian nations in the 1810s. Such reports include a hitherto unknown eyewitness report by a Swedish officer in King Henri Christophe’s service, describing the rebellion against his employer in 1820. As has been frequently proved during recent decades, the Haitian revolution was certainly not silenced in the past, and the Swedish case is an interesting testimony to the extent that the Revolution was world news and to that Haiti was not as isolated as has often been claimed.

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Florian Kappeler (University of Göttingen): “Revolutions of the Earth: Natural Tremors and Eruptions as Metaphors of the Haitian Revolution”