Cryptic Secrets:
Phantoms of the Haitian Revolution in the American Imaginary

Nicole Louise Willson

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of East Anglia
School of Art, Media, and American Studies

January 2016

Abstract

This thesis explores the Haitian Revolution and its multiple assaults upon the American imaginary. These assaults are understood to form part of a traumatic cultural inheritance. It envisages the Haitian Revolution not as one, singular event, but as a complex, multivalent, and polymorphous phenomenon, with a circular, repeating energy. This 'circular' revolution is shown to resonate with different 'American' anxieties—anxieties regarding race, class, gender, sexuality, creolization, nationhood, and diaspora. Drawing upon Abraham and Torok's theory of cryptonymy and the 'transgenerational phantom', this thesis traces the roots of these revolutionary traumas (or 'phantoms') and uncovers the 'encrypted' secrets that underlie the multiple layers of myth, obfuscation, and silence that characterize American representations of Haiti—secrets which reflect both the limits of Haiti's continual revolutionary power, and the transgenerational force of American cultural anxiety.

Using the American gothic tradition as a discursive springboard, this thesis sees fiction, and the creative arts more broadly, as an archive of creative possibilities. Examining a range of gothic 'texts' from the 1790s to the 1930s, including Herman Melville's 'Benito Cereno', William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*, Charles Brockden Brown's *Arthur Mervyn*, George Washington Cable's *The Grandissimes*, and the Halperin brothers' film *White Zombie*, it demonstrates the endurance of particular social, political, and cultural anxieties that are often occluded by the conventional American archive. In this sense, it responds to the concerns of Haiti scholars such as Michel-Rolph Trouillot, who have highlighted the limitations of the western archive, and confronts the need to read 'beyond' the text, using an assemblage of other sources that may offer clues into 'encrypted' histories. In so doing, it does not propose to offer a solution to Haiti's historical erasure, but demonstrates the unimagined revolutionary possibilities of creative interdisciplinarity.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

Thanks, first and foremost, are owed to my supervisors, Rebecca Fraser, Wendy Mcmahon, and Rebecca Tillett. I'd also like to thank Thomas Ruys Smith and Celeste-Marie Bernier for the diligence they showed in examining this thesis, and for their helpful and encouraging comments about my work. In addition, I'd like to thank the Faculty of Arts and Humanities for awarding me with a studentship to complete this research, along with the Arthur Miller Centre and the British Association of American Studies who awarded me grants to undertake fieldwork in the United States in 2013.

I have benefitted immensely from the assistance of field specialists, and am indebted to all library staff at the British Library, the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, the Library of Congress, the Howard-Tilton library at Tulane, the Hill Memorial library at LSU, the New Orleans Notarial Archives, and the Historic New Orleans Collection; along with the curatorial staff at the Louisiana State Museum and the New Orleans Museum of Art. Throughout this journey, I have also met some incredible individuals with shared subject interests, one of the most influential of whom has been the artist Leah Gordon. Leah has introduced me to important networks, activities, and scholarship within the Haitian Studies community and I would like to thank her for her support and encouragement.

Thanks are due to my academic peers, but especially to Joanne Mildenhall (for her unceasing creative energy), Ed Clough (for his insights into the South, Faulkner, and more), Mollie Le Veque (for her ability to tease out the intersections), Eilidh Hall (for her general support and advice), and Hannah Yelin (for her help with adopting a healthy working regime that admittedly involved a lot of cake). I'd also like to thank my fellow CESK alumna, Felicity Roberts, and all participating members of the CESK reading group, who have acted as a sounding-board for some of the concepts in this thesis and helped bring new ones to light. In addition, I'd like to thank Susan Castillo, who has been hugely supportive throughout the course of my graduate career, and helped lay the foundations for this research project; and Robert Clark, who has always had faith in my capabilities, and has pushed me to exceed my limits.

I would like to thank all of my friends, but especially Amy, Anthony, Rachel, and Moïse, who checked and corrected my translations of French for the purpose of this thesis; and Emily,

Katie, and Helena, who have been the best friends a girl could ask for. Our friendship has propelled us as individuals, and your strengths have informed my own.

Thanks to all of my family for their encouragement, support, and hot dinners, but to my parents in particular, who nurtured within me the importance and power of education. We will continue to fight the good fight for education and empowerment—always, always on our feet.

Finally, I'd like to thank my husband, Julian, for being the light to my shade, for constantly pushing and challenging me, for urging me to be the best that I can be, and for valuing my work as important. Above all, I want to thank him for his patience, for listening when he didn't understand, and for actively seeking a deeper understanding through me. Throughout this journey, he has been my mascot and my bulwark, coming along to museums, archives, and libraries, and driving me to conferences and symposia. Thank you, Julian, for drying my tears, for not questioning my moments of irrationality, and for supporting this enormous endeavour.

List of Figures

Figure 9: Santo Domingo Bandana (Tignon), Costumes and Textiles Collection, Item 07068.1. Reproduced with permission from the Louisiana State Museum, New Orleans, LA 70176-2448.

Figure 10: Santo Domingo Bandana (Tignon), Costumes and Textiles Collection, Item 07068.2. Reproduced with permission from the Louisiana State Museum, New Orleans, LA 70176-2448.

Figure 11: Louise Élizabeth Vigée Le Brun, *Self Portrait* (1800), oil on canvas, 30.9 x 26.8 inches. Courtesy of The State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg.

Figure 12: Luigi Marie Sotta, *Mrs Leonard Wiltz* (1841), oil on canvas, 31.9 x 25.5 inches. Reprinted with permission from The Louisiana State Museum, New Orleans, LA 70176-2448.

Figure 13: Louis Antoine Collas, *Portrait of a Free Woman of Color Wearing a Tignon* (1829), oil on canvas, 44 x 36 inches. Reprinted with permission from The New Orleans Museum of Art, New Orleans, LA 70124.

Figure 14: Cover Page from Perseverance Lodge Members List from 1808, Freemason records, Courtesy of Manuscripts Collection 895, Manuscripts Department, Howard-Tilton Memorial Library, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA 70118.

Figure 15: J. Tenasse, 'Plan of the City and Suburbs of New Orleans from an Actual Survey made in 1815' (New Orleans: P. Maspero, 1817). Courtesy of Library of Congress Geography and Map Division, Washington, D.C. 20540-4650.

Figure 16: Tombstone of Francois Meynier and his son Adolpe Meynier, St. Louis Cemetery No. 1, New Orleans, LA 70112.

Figure 17: Laura Plantation, River Road, Vacherie, LA 70090.

Figure 18: Whitney Plantation, River Road, Wallace, LA 70049. Reprinted with permission from Whitney Plantation.

Figure 19: Evergreen Plantation, River Road, Edgard, LA 70049. Reprinted with permission from Evergreen Plantation.

Figure 20: Edward Kemble, 'The Bamboula', from George Washington Cable, 'The Dance in Place Congo', *Century*, 31 (1886), 524.

Figure 21: Adalbert John Volck, *Free Negroes in Hayti* (1828-1912). Elliott Cross and James A. Cross Civil War Collection. Courtesy of Florida Atlantic University Digital Library, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton: FL.

Figure 22: Funeral procession (screenshot). Victor Halperin, Dir., *White Zombie*, Prod. Edward Halperin (United Artists, 1932), 1:39 / 1:06:46.

Figure 23: Murder Legendre's (Bela Lugosi's) hands (screenshot). Victor Halperin, Dir., *White Zombie*, Prod. Edward Halperin (United Artists, 1932), 1:00:59 / 1:06:46.

Introduction: Phantoms of Haiti in the American Literary Crypt

Revolutions, Circles, and Chaos

On 12 November 1997, UNESCO designated 23 August as the International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition,[1] symbolically immortalizing the moment that revolution broke out in the French colony of Saint-Domingue over two hundred years before. It was on this date in 1791 that a large group of armed black rebels rose up and launched their assault against the French colonists, whose insidious breed of slavery undergirded the most profitable plantation economy in the Americas.[2] The rebels set out to destroy the plantation economy, taking torches to the commercial crops that they had laboured to cultivate; within a few short hours, 'the finest sugar plantations of Saint-Domingue were literally devoured by flames.'[3] This event precipitated a tumultuous conflict that lasted for over twelve years. By the end of 1803, the struggle had reached its apex; accelerated by the epidemic spread of yellow fever, French forces—attended by a number of former colonists—were forced to retreat and seek sanctuary in nearby havens such as Cuba and the United States. On 1 January 1804, the rebel leader Jean-Jacques Dessalines issued a 'Declaration of Independence', signalling the end of slavery and colonial rule. The new nation that was forged was named 'Haïti', in homage to the pre-colonial site that the Taino Indian population had called 'Ayiti', meaning 'mountainous lands'.[4]

The deeply complex and intersectional struggle that is now remembered (in select scholarly circles if not in the cultural mainstream) as 'the Haitian Revolution' had many faces, the contours of which were defined by issues of race, class, gender, sexuality, creolization, and

---

[1] 'International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition', *Records of the General Conference: Resolutions*, vol. 1, 29th session (Paris: UNESCO, 1998), pp. 66-67.

[2] C. L. R. James notes that '[i]n 1789 the French West Indian colony of San Domingo supplied two-thirds of the overseas trade of France and was the greatest individual market for the European slave trade. It was an integral part of the economic life of the age, the greatest colony in the world, the pride of France, and the envy of every imperialist nation. The whole structure rested on the labour of half a million slaves.' See C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (London: Penguin Books, 1938; repr. 2001), p. xviii.

[3] Caroline E. Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1990), p. 97.

diaspora. In this sense, the 'revolution' was never simply one, singular phenomenon and cannot be neatly consigned to one, singular moment. Although UNESCO's 1997 resolution has helped to restore the powerful and far-reaching legacies of the Haitian Revolution, acknowledging its centrality to the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade and modern conceptions of human rights,[5] thereby presenting a direct challenge to western histories that, since the advent of the colonial project, have privileged the voices of elite white men, its historical valorization of 23 August as the original and most archaic point of the Haitian revolutionary struggle occludes other significant revolutionary narratives. Extending the historical trajectory of revolution might illuminate, for example, the story of Vincent Ogé, the free man of colour who lobbied the French National Assembly in 1789 and led a failed insurgency in the southern commune of Dondon in 1790 in an effort to secure 'universal rights' for all free citizens in the colony. Expanding these parameters even further brings to the foreground the revolutionary narrative of the priest and prophet François Makandal, the northern maroon convicted in 1758 for concocting and attempting to distribute poisons intended for white colonists via a network of rebel slaves.[6] Indeed, although it was 'historically premature', Makandal's act of insurgency was 'the first real attempt in the long history of slave resistance at disciplined, organized revolt aiming not only at the destruction of white masters and of slavery, but at the political notion of independence'.[7]

The colonial history of Haiti contains a multitude of similar narratives. Over the past three decades, scholars at the foreground of Haitian Studies have attempted to rehabilitate these lesser-known narratives in order to build a picture of a revolutionary history constructed of composites.[8] By looking beyond concerted acts of rebellion and toward the exchanges and migrations that shaped the local and global environment, they have shed light upon a colonial culture that was inherently revolutionary in its very nature, defying the bounds of historical and geographical circumscription. Viewed in this context, the symbolic veneration of 23 August over

---

[4] See Colin (Joan) Dayan, *Haiti, History, and the Gods* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), p. 3 and Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), p. 13.

[5] '23 August: International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and of its Abolition', *UNESCO Online* <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/dialogue/the-slave-route/right-box/related-information/23-august-international-day-for-the-remembrance-of-the-slave-trade-and-of-its-abolition/> [accessed 6 February 2013].

[6] Dayan, p. 252 and Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, pp. 59-63.

[7] Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, p. 62.

[8] While numerous scholars, such as James, Eugene Genovese, Sybille Fischer, Robin Blackburn, David Geggus, and John Garrigus frame the Haitian Revolution within the context of the bourgeois revolutions of the late eighteenth-century Atlantic World, others, such as Dayan, Fick, Michel-Rolph Trouillot, Sybille Fischer, and Marlene Daut probe other important cultural influences, challenging the hegemony of conventional historical paradigms.

and above any other date in the Haitian revolutionary calendar reduces the radical potentiality of a nebulous and perpetually transformative entity whose historical roots extend as far back as the colonial memory will permit, and reach deep into the present. In reality, there is no linear trajectory to which the Haitian Revolution neatly conforms; it openly flouts linearity, emerging, dissipating, splintering and converging. If such a phenomenon could be so neatly consolidated, it would not continue to grow in the recesses of its consolidation.

The nebulous character of the revolution stoked a number of anxieties across the Atlantic world, but especially in the United States where the history and persistent reality of slavery haunted the exceptional narrative of republican virtue; witnesses across America foresaw in the making of Haiti multiple destructive consequences. Marlene Daut suggests, for example, that while the fact of slave rebellion undoubtedly caused much consternation, particularly among slaveholders, it was rather the threat of 'mulatto/a vengeance' that resonated most forcefully in America.[9] Indeed, observers acknowledged that racial 'mixing' in Saint-Domingue had created a society dominated by powerful free blacks who presented a number of diverse challenges not only to whites, but to plantation society at large. The fear underwritten in this reproductive narrative thus pointed to a more encompassing fear about the legacies of contact and exchange in New World culture and society. Although the strictures of colonial law (established in the Antillean *Code Noir*) sought to maintain feudal hierarchies based on traditions of primogeniture, unbridled creolization had wrought unimaginable effects on Saint-Domingan colonial society that inadvertently subverted those strictures. Over time, slaves acquired freedom, property, and power; free, landowning people of colour obtained an elite education in the metropole; and, in spite of the constraints upon their bodies and personhood, both free and enslaved blacks subverted colonial law by exploiting what Paul Gilroy has termed the 'lower frequencies' of power.[10] Migrations between Europe, West and Central Africa, and Saint-Domingue effected intra-ethnic confrontations in the colony, shaping a diverse creolistic culture recognisable in architecture, music, food, and language, and opening new 'markets' of exchange wherein public interactions were extended to those beyond the conventional (white, male) bourgeois public sphere. Colonial whites were complicit in this cultural revolution, participating in the trade of

[9] Marlene L. Daut, *Tropics of Haiti: Race and the Literary History of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World, 1789-1865* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015), pp. 4-6.
[10] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London and New York: Verso, 1993), p. 37.

enslaved bodies, willing property to black kin, and forging intimate interracial alliances, or rather *mis*alliances. A culture of absenteeism also made way for the ascendancy of a free black planter class. Revolution in Saint-Domingue was thus wrought through the collisions, exchanges, fissures, and fusions that essentially made up its Creole society.

The revolutionary, creolistic culture that took shape in colonial Saint-Domingue was undoubtedly replicated in other societies across the colonial Atlantic, and showed its face(s) in the numerous acts of rebellion against colonial and neo-colonial authorities throughout the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries, extending into the present. However, this creolistic culture was ideologically anathema to the redemptive 'exceptionalism' of the nascent United States. In other words, republican America did not conceive of itself as a product of the same creolistic process. Admittedly, the cultural makeup of the United States differed from that of Saint-Domingue. For a start, its 'Creole' contours were not shaped by the same colonial plantation system. As Robin Blackburn highlights:

> The gap between the slave elite and the mass of slaves was here [in America] much narrower than on the Caribbean plantations. In North America slave drivers were usually white; in the Caribbean they were black. North American conditions fostered a somewhat greater homogeneity among the slave community, but inserted this community into a stronger, more defined and policed system of racial subjection. The slaves were a large minority of the population in the Southern plantation zone, not a majority [like they were in the Caribbean]. White males were armed and organized—under planter leadership—to hold down the slaves.[11]

American society also invariably differed from the Creole societies in the French Caribbean in other crucial respects, especially in terms of its language, religion, and its relationship to the law, property, and commerce. Yet in spite of these disparities, American society was built upon the same colonial infrastructures of other Creole societies—not least slavery. Although the United States did not see the rise of a large mixed-race planter elite in the vein of Saint-Domingue, interracial intimacies (both forced and consensual) resulted in the growth of a mixed-race population that would force an ideological confrontation with ideas of race and slavery. This confrontation was played out in American popular culture via the trope of the tragic

[11] Robin Blackburn, *The American Crucible: Slavery, Emancipation and Human Rights* (London: Verso, 2011), p. 123.

mulatto/mulatta, and brought to bear more viscerally in the written memoirs of mixed-race slaves such as Frederick Douglass.[12] Ultimately, though, the paradox between convention and practice was less openly acknowledged, feeding a culture of denial and exceptionalism; American slavery was seen as fundamentally 'different' to Caribbean slavery. This paradox haunts the legacy of Thomas Jefferson, the much-regaled 'founder' of independence, who fathered six children by his slave Sally Hemings, but wrote against the destructive consequences of 'amalgamation'.[13]

Republican America was evidently shaped by the 'revolutions' of its (darker) Creole history, but any confrontation with this fact would remain an unimaginable horror. As Sean Goudie notes, America

> labored to repress the inter-American cosmopolitanisms of many of its leading citizen-subjects. As the United States sought to substitute a liberating creole identity for an oppressive colonial one, creole uplift […] required ever-increasing sleights of hand in order to repress, through actual and epistemological violence, the formation of inter-American, cross-cultural identities inside and outside the nation's borders.[14]

'America' was thus, at heart, a 'Creole' entity, borne of a Creole revolution, and its Creole historicity would in practice constrain the limits of 'republican' democracy, 'radical' Enlightenment, and moral economics as the nation expanded conceptually and geographically.[15] In principle, however, America sought to preserve its self-image as a fundamentally democratic and liberal nation founded not on the multiple cultural collisions of a revolutionary 'creolization', but rather on the political conscience of a bourgeois-democratic revolution.

---

[12] Douglass acknowledged that '[m]y father was a white man. He was admitted to be such by all I ever heard speak of my parentage. The opinion was also whispered that my master was my father; but of the correctness of this opinion I know nothing; the means of knowing was withheld from me.' See Frederick Douglass, 'Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an African Slave', in *The Classic Slave Naratives*, ed. by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (New York: Mentor, 1987), pp. 243-331 (pp.255-256).

[13] The contested historiography concerning this relationship was scrutinized by Annette Gordon-Reed in her book *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings: An American Controversy*. Presenting strong evidence countering claims that denied Jefferson's paternity of Hemings's children, her narrative was vindicated when in 1998 a DNA Analysis linked Eston Hemings's DNA with that of Thomas Jefferson.

[14] Sean X. Goudie, *Creole America: The West Indies and the Formation of Literature and Culture in the New Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), p. 9.

[15] Israel identifies 'the mainstream of the American Revolution, and the constitution's Founding Fathers other than Jefferson, with Moderate rather than Radical Enlightenment.' See Jonathan Israel, *A Revolution of the Mind: Radical Enlightenment and the Origins of Modern Democracy* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009), p. 46.

As America sought to show, the Age of Modernity had given new meaning to the term 'revolution'. Deriving linguistically from astronomy, the term had always been used to describe circularity, repetition, and return.[16] The revolutions that occurred across the Atlantic world in the late eighteenth century nevertheless reflected an ideological break with this idea; subsequently, 'revolution' came to signify a radical social shift, or break with an established social order, largely effected through the repudiation of feudal hierarchies based on tradition and absolutism in favour of a social democracy founded on 'natural' rights and reason. However, the revolutionary 'cycles' that occurred in Haiti (or rather Saint-Domingue) demonstrated that the nature of revolution was much more complex. Social change was not always wrought through radical upheaval, but rather through an evolutionary process: through negotiation and adaptation. Despite the ideological shift taking hold in the late eighteenth century, reframing the concept of revolution in increasingly *linear* terms, the revolutionary creolizing 'motions' that were played out in Saint-Domingue demonstrated that this circular narrative was never quite superseded. This is because, as Sanja Perovic asserts, history 'was understood as a recapitulative circle, in which meaning is conserved over time rather than as an irreversible flow in which meaning is lost or transformed.'[17] Containing a heritage of multiple revolutionary 'cycles', Haiti represented a repeated, 'circular' threat that would keep coming back to haunt, especially in America, where a creolistic revolutionary circularity was categorically eschewed.

In this sense, Haiti fulfilled its symbolic reputation as a 'slumbering volcano'.[18] During the Age of Revolution, the idea of revolutionary return and repetition was often expressed through the trope of the volcano. After the excavation of Pompeii and Herculaneum in 1738, this trope became especially pertinent to contemporary concerns, reflecting a shift in understandings about history and time and anxieties about the unknown past and future.[19] As a metaphor, it contained the idea of social 'cataclysm', but also encompassed the unpredictable, shifting, and

---

[16] See Nicole Willson, 'A New Kanavalesque': Re-imagining Haiti's Revolution(s) through the Work of Leah Gordon', *Harts and Minds*, 1.1 (2013) <http://www.harts-minds.co.uk/#/11-spring-2013/4571887394>.

[17] Sanja Perovic, *The Calendar in Revolutionary France: Perceptions of Time in Literature, Culture, Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 240.

[18] Alfred Hunt draws upon this trope in the subtitle of his book, 'Sumbering Volcano in the Caribbean.' This volcanic analogy was in turn borrowed from Herman Melville's novella, 'Benito Cereno', who probably took it from Frederick Douglass's 1849 speech 'Slavery, The Slumbering Volcano'. See Alfred Hunt, *Haiti's Influence on Antebellum America: Slumbering Volcano in the Caribbean* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), p. 2.

[19] This event signalled the birth of European archeology. See Alain Schnapp, *The Discovery of the Past: The Origins of Archaeology* (London: British Museum Press, 1996), pp. 242-245.

repetitive nature of a more circular (or cyclical), constructive, and regenerative revolution.[20] The relationship between volcanoes, circularity, and revolution was realized in the French playwright Sylvain Maréchal's 1793 play, *Le Jugement Dernier Des Rois*, published the day after the execution of Marie Antoinette. In this play, a revolutionary volcano erupts 'with periodic regularity',[21] successively devouring each of Europe's individual monarchs.[22] Inhering the idea of revolution in nature, Maréchal's volcano 'align[s] a revolutionary time predicated on rupture' with 'a natural, geological time'.[23] In this way, revolution is understood not only as a 'blast', but also as a succession of 'shockwaves'.

The symbol of the volcano, with its multiple and recurrent revolutionary possibilities, reflected contemporary anxieties concerning Haiti and the unrealized limits of other revolutions. This was reinforced by the comte de Mirabeau, a French antislavery activist, who, prior to the 1791 slave rebellion, had forewarned that the French planters of Saint-Domingue were 'sleeping at the foot of Vesuvius'.[24] Several years after the abolition of slavery in Saint-Domingue, Thomas Jefferson would invoke similar 'volcanic' rhetoric to describe the recapitulative reach of the Haitian Revolution in slaveholding America as he prophesied that 'the day which begins our combustion must be near at hand'.[25] However, as this thesis attempts to demonstrate, this volcanic 'prophecy' was psychically repudiated in the American cultural mainstream. It was, in short, too great and too complex, completely incongruous with 'American' ideals of revolutionary change and transformation; whereas the American Revolution against British colonial rule had limits and boundaries, the Haitian Revolution was unpredictable and chaotic in its vast and seemingly endless potentiality. Haiti was a revolutionary polymorph, whose revolutions were enacted through multiple channels: through the discourses of democratic Enlightenment; through organized militarization; through grass-roots and guerrilla warfare;

---

[20] Mary Ashburn Miller, 'Mountain, Become a Volcano: The Image of the Volcano in the Rhetoric of the French Revolution', *French Historical Studies*, 32 (2009), 555-585 (p. 559).
[21] Perovic, p. 142.
[22] In the closing scene, the stage directions note that 'Le volcan commence son éruption: il jète [*sic*] sur le théâtre des pierres, des charbons brûlants etc. […] Une explosion se fait: le feu assiège les rois de toutes parts, ils tombent, consumés dans les entrailles de la terre entr'ouverte.' Translation: The volcano begins its eruption: it throws on the theater rocks, burning coals etc […] An explosion occurs: the fire besieges kings on all sides, they fall, consumed in the bowels of the opening earth. Sylvain Maréchal, *Le Jugement Dernier Des Rois: Prophétie en Un Acte* (Paris: [n. pub.], 1793), p. 36.
[23] Perovic, p. 142.
[24] Mirabeau, qtd. in Dubois, *Avengers*, p. 59.

through sex and reproduction; through canny mediations of colonial and metropolitan publics; through creolization; through spirituality; and through personal and communal acts of cultural circumvention. In its complex heterogeneity and circularity, this revolution confounded the linear revolutionary continuum to which America aligned itself.

In essence, the Haitian Revolution represented a recapitulative echo of the New World 'chaos' which Anotonio Benítez-Rojo suggests 'looks toward everything that repeats, reproduces, grows, decays, unfolds, flows, spins, vibrates, [and] seethes'.[26] Drawing on the mathematical field of Chaos Theory, Benítez-Rojo proposes the notion of a Caribbean archipelago that, while unified by commonalities of history, heritage and culture, is characterized by change, displacement, rupture and, above all, uncertainty. Haiti is configured at the locus of this Chaos—the pivot point of chaotic movement. At the same time, however, Haiti is reinforced and surrounded by other chaotic forces. It thus embodies the broader 'sociocultural fluidity [of] the Caribbean archipelago' (and indeed the wider Atlantic). It is 'an island that "repeats" itself, unfolding and bifurcating until it reaches all the seas and lands of the earth, while at the same time it inspires multidisciplinary maps of unexpected designs.'[27] The idea of 'Haiti' contains within itself the composite, creolistic memory of a colonial Saint-Domingue and the archetypal vision of revolution and independence; each successive act of revolutionary transformation calls for a new symbolic negotiation. While Haiti is only a fragment of a 'meta-archipelago' which, according to Benítez-Rojo, has 'neither boundary or center',[28] its imagined conception as a 'repeating island' that continues to elude circumscription dramatizes the pervasive horror that it has come to represent in western culture, and in American culture in particular, whose parameters are delineated (at least ideologically) by rigid historical boundaries that reject the possibility of a repetition or return that is not in some sense millennial. This repeating island was undoubtedly at the root of an emergent American 'tropology' of Haiti—of a narrative that conceived of Haiti as other.[29] Embedded in this construction of 'otherness', however, was the uncanny realization of America's sameness.

---

[25] Thomas Jefferson, 'Letter to St. George Tucker', in *Slave Revolution in the Caribbean 1789-1804: A Brief History with Documents*, ed. Laurent Dubois and John D. Garrigus (Boston and New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2006), pp. 159-160 (p. 160).
[26] Antonio Benítez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective*, trans. by James E. Maraniss (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1992), p. 3.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Benítez-Rojo, p. 4.
[29] Daut, p. 35.

Phantoms of Blackness: Haiti, America, and the History of Race

To better understand this filiation between Haiti and America, and the uncanny shadow that the former has cast over the latter, it is important to tease out the links between natural law and natural philosophy, and the ideological 'bridge' that facilitated their mediation through discourses of 'race'. Of course, the idea of 'race' compresses a radically complex set of issues that were by no means fully formulated in the late eighteenth century when revolutions erupted in Saint-Domingue and British North America. The symbolic metamorphosis that the term underwent during the Age of Reason speaks to this complexity, charting emergent fears of social instability.[30] For this reason, it is perhaps no surprise that the fabrication of racial 'taxonomies' coincided with the rapid expansion of the transatlantic slave trade; a need to categorize, and thereby vindicate, became the chief concern of eighteenth-century men of letters. In the preface to his translated edition of Carl von Linnaeus's natural history *Systema Naturae* (published first in 1735), which established a rigorous and detailed taxonomy of all known animals, vegetables and minerals, William Thurton wrote that

> In systematic arrangement, the student has this peculiar advantage that by immediately arriving at the name, the whole of its known qualities are immediately displayed to him: but without a systematic classification, he wanders in obscurity and uncertainty, and must collect the whole of its habits and peculiarities, before he can ascertain the individual he is examining.[31]

To classify, he posits, is to truly comprehend the discernible limits of the natural world, which, in turn, determines human interaction with each known species. In the absence of such a system of classification, humanity is threatened with internal collapse. Foregrounding the importance of

---

[30] The Oxford English Dictionary charts the etymology of the term 'race', referencing J. F. Blumenbach's 1775 *De Generis Humani Varietati Nativa* as a source for its modern association with skin colour and ethnicity. The term had nevertheless been employed from the sixteenth century onwards to circumscribe groups of people of common ancestry; in this sense, it was analogous in meaning to 'rank'. From 'race, n.6', in *OED Online* <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/157031?rskey=Vn3q2A&result=6&isAdvanced=false> [accessed 27 December 2012].

[31] Carl Von Linné, *A general system of nature through the three grand kingdoms of animals, vegetables, and minerals, systematically divided into their several classes, orders, genera, species and varieties, with their habitations, manners, economy, structure, and peculiarities, Translated from Gmelin's last edition, ... amended and enlarged by the improvements and discoveries of later naturalists, ... with a life of Linné, ... copperplates, and a dictionary explanatory of the terms which occur in the several departments of natural history*, trans. by William Thurton, 7 vols, vol. 1 (London: Lackington, Allen, and Co., 1806), p. vi.

Linnaeus's classification system to understandings of the world in general, Thurton dramatizes the shift in natural philosophical thinking away from 'tradition' towards a belief in the values of reason and rationality. His uncanny vision of the 'obscurity and uncertainty' located in the *un*classified world would chime with Edmund Burke's later reflections on sublime terror.[32] Locating obscurity at the root of this terror, Burke recognized that '[w]hen we know the full extent of any danger, when we can accustom our eyes to it, a great deal of the apprehension vanishes.'[33] Viewed in this aesthetic context, it is possible to understand how systematic formulae designating linguistic categories of 'race' in the late eighteenth century counteracted the sublime terror evoked by the 'obscurity' of uncertain heritage.

Indeed, Linnaeus saw it as 'the exclusive property of man, to contemplate and to reason on the great book of nature' which, personified as a woman,

> gradually unfolds herself to him, who with patience and perseverance, will search into her misteries; and when the memory of the present and of past generations shall be entirely obliterated, he shall enjoy the high privilege of living in the minds of his successors, as he has been advanced in the dignity of his nature, by the labours of those who went before him.[34]

Grafting 'the great book of nature' onto the female body, Linnaeus reflects the rhetorical interconnection between the emergent sentimental tradition and natural philosophy. Advancing a narrative of seduction, wherein nature solicits its own ravagement, his natural history reveals a culture obsessed with a need not merely to classify and to consign, but to dominate and plunder, thereby reinforcing (and essentially *naturalizing*) discourses of colonization and imperial domination. His 'natural system' represents one of the earliest known 'taxonomies' of race. This taxonomy subdivides 'homo sapiens' into five groups, which he delineates as 'Wild Man', 'American', 'European', 'Asiatic' and 'African'. To each type he ascribes certain physical characteristics but also particular mannerisms based on Hippocratic humourism.[35] Whereas the 'African' is labelled as 'phlegmatic', and is described as '*crafty*, indolent, [and] negligent', this is

---

[32] Burke wrote that '[t]o make anything very terrible, obscurity seems in general to be necessary.' See Edmund Burke, 'On Obscurity', in *Romanticism: An Anthology*, ed. by Duncan Wu (Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell, 1994; repr. 1996), p. 3.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Linné, p. 1.

contrasted starkly with his description of the 'European' who is not only 'sanguine' but '*gentle*, acute, [and] inventive'.[36] In this way, he presents a logical and scientistic argument for European domination of African peoples. For purveyors of natural history in the eighteenth century, Linnaeus's system thus inculcated a symbolic racial hierarchy that presented a 'rational' justification for racial slavery.

Building upon the earlier framework developed by Linnaeus, Johann Friedrich Blumenbach developed a system focusing specifically on human 'types', probing the scientific origins of racial difference. Drawing on the scholarly work of other 'eminent men',[37] he considers in his work the effects of climate, the size and shape of the human skull in different quarters of the world, and the relationship between humours and phenotypes. Like his contemporary Georges Louis Leclerc, the comte de Buffon, Blumenbach was a monogenist who believed in a single point of origin for all races and understood racial difference in essentially mutable terms; in other words, it was his belief that racial 'degeneration' could be effected by environmental factors.[38] In his doctoral thesis *De Generis Humani Varietate Nativa* (On the Natural Variety of Mankind), published in 1775, he observes that '[skin] colour […] is, at all events, an adventitious and easily changeable thing, and can never constitute a diversity of species'.[39] Despite this concession against racial 'essentialism', his framework nevertheless establishes a system that distinguishes the particularities of various world cultures, naturalizing ideas of difference and inculcating a potent vision of African inferiority.[40] These cultural differences are transferred to his understandings of racial mixing, which he presents via a taxonomy that enumerates and labels various forms of racial 'hybridity':

---

[35] Hippocrates understood that the body was composed of four 'humours' (blood, phlegm, black bile, and yellow bile).
[36] Linné, p. 9.
[37] Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, *On the Natural Varieties of Mankind/De Generis Humani Varietate Nativa: The Anthropological Treatises of Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, with Memoirs of him by Marx and Flourens, an account of the Anthropological Museum of Goettingen, by R. Wagner and a dissertation of John Hunter*, ed. and trans. by Thomas Bendyshe (New York: Bergman Publishers, 1969), p. 111.
[38] Buffon understood phenotypical differences to be effected by climate, for example. He wrote of blackness that 'there are many reasons for presuming, that as this colour is originally the effect of a long continued heat, it will be gradually effaced by the temperature of a cold climate; and, consequently, that if a colony of Negroes were transplanted into a Northern province, their descendants of the eighth, tenth, or twelth [*sic*] generation would be much fairer, and perhaps as white as the natives of that climate.' By this token, white people could 'become' black if they were exposed for a long enough time to a hot climate. This infused notions of the 'degeneracy' of the Americas. See George-Louis Leclerc, comte de Buffon, 'A Natural History, General and Particular', in Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), pp. 15-28 (p. 24).
[39] Blumenbach, p. 113.

> 1 The offspring of a black man and a white woman, or the reverse, is called *Mulatto*, *Mullaka*, *Melatta*; by the Italians, *Bertin*, *Creole*, and *Criole*; by the inhabitants of Malabar, *Mestiço*. The offspring of an American man and an European woman, *Mameluck*, and *Mestif*.
> 2 The offspring of an European male with a Mulatto is called *Terceron*, *Castiço*. The son of an European female from a *Mestif* is called a *Quarteroon*. The offspring of two Mulattoes is called *Casque*; and of blacks and Mulattoes, *Griffs*.
> 3 A Terceron female and an European produce *quarterons*, *postiços*. But the American quarteroon (who is the same degree as the black Terceron) produces from an European *octavoons*.
> 4 The offspring of a quarteroon male and a white female, a *quinteroon*; the child of an European woman with an American octavoon is called by the Spaniards *Puchuela*.[41]

Such taxonomies provided a basis for understanding the 'dilution' of the 'Caucasian' race. His emphasis on 'offspring' reveals a deep anxiety about the effects of sex and reproduction within the colonial environment, and the possible obfuscation of racial certainty.

As Daut notes, 'in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, such classifications were considered scientific and therefore *real*.'[42] Nevertheless, as Europeans, neither Blumenbach nor Linnaeus had a deep understanding of the lived realities of race in the Americas. In this regard, colonial observers presented a deeper and more authoritative insight, offering a contextual frame for understanding the cultural anxieties about various 'hybridities'. These observers articulated a vision of colonial society as stratified by the racial differences established therein. Such ideas were especially pertinent to arguments about free-coloured rights and colonial authority in the decades leading up to the Haitian Revolution. One of the most complex taxonomies of race and racial 'mixing' was offered up in the work of Médéric Louis Élie Moreau de Saint-Méry. Born in Martinique in 1750, Moreau published several prominent works of natural history offering a comprehensive insight into life in the colonial Caribbean, and into life in French Saint-Domingue in particular, where he served as a colonial minister in the Superior Council. Developing his racial 'cosmology' across these works,[43] he established a system that delineated the innumerable

---

[40] This is palpably clear, for example, in his chauvinistic comment that the physiognomical characteristics of 'Ethiopian and other southern women […] wants scarcely any testimony adduced.' Ibid., p. 125.
[41] Ibid., p. 112.
[42] Daut, p. 64.
[43] Dubois, *Avengers*, p. 70.

mathematical possibilities of racial 'mixture'.[44] Although, like Blumenbach, Moreau understood race as a mutable construct, this mutability was based on the inherently biological understanding that sexual reproduction, rather than environmental factors, promoted a racial 'degeneration'; although whites could in this way become black, *whiteness* could never be recuperated, owing to the 'pollution' of the dynastic blood line. As Daut suggests, these ideas of hybridity sustained 'the kinds of ambivalence, incongruity, and fear that accompanied taxonomic thinking about [mixed race] people in the literary history of the Haitian Revolution.'[45] By articulating the degenerative racial effects of blackness, such taxonomies solidified colonial hierarchies of whiteness.

Moreau's ideas were incredibly influential and reflected the limits of racial anxiety in contemporary slave-owning societies. In the nascent United States, however, these limits were as yet unrealized (at least on a conscious level). The rhetorical vagueness of early republican literature on the subject of race and slavery reflected an inability to reconcile racial thinking with ideals of natural law and republican democracy. Indeed, it is telling that 'race' does not enter the U.S. constitution until 1870, with the ratification of the fifteenth amendment, five years *after* the abolition of slavery.[46] Although luminaries such as Benjamin Franklin and Benjamin Rush pledged themselves to the cause of antislavery,[47] and policies of gradual emancipation took hold across the northern states in the wake of independence, the contours of the U.S. South were increasingly defined by a rapidly expanding slaveocracy. Efforts to mediate this disparity were reflected in legislation such as the Fugitive Slave Law and the Kansas-Nebraska Act, which made the 'free' North complicit in sustaining this slaveocracy. Moreover, America's exceptional vision of a 'free' society founded on 'natural' rights was confounded by the acquisition of the Louisiana territory, which stimulated what Blackburn has called a 'second slavery' in the South.[48] As a result, America became increasingly dependent on the colonial infrastructures it had rejected in its pledge of republican independence.

---

[44] A more detailed analysis of Moreau's writings will follow in Chapter 2.
[45] Daut, p. 67.
[46] See Amendment XV in 'Constitution of the United States: Amendments 11-27', *The Charters of Freedom* <http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/constitution_amendments_11-27.html> [accessed 7 June 2013].
[47] Israel, p. 42.
[48] Robin Blackburn, 'The Second Slavery and its Fate: The US South, Brazil, and Cuba 1808-1888' (paper presented for Institute of North American Studies Seminar Series at King's College London, London, UK: February 2, 2014).

The revolution(s) in Saint-Domingue thus highlighted the layers of obfuscation and silence insulating the American imaginary from the radical threat of racial retribution. Heretofore, America had been able to mediate the paradox of radical Enlightenment and racial slavery through the selective deployment of paternalist, rationalist, mercantilist, and culturally exceptionalist discourses.[49] However, the shadow of Haiti was not so easily effaced. Unlike Britain or France, America was unable to displace the problem of race onto remote colonial 'satellites'. The lived reality of an expanding plantation economy and the encroaching threat of slave insurgency (exacerbated by migrations of Saint-Domingan refugees fleeing the 'horrors' of revolutionary war) undercut opportunities for ideological disavowal. In short, the complex and polymorphic nature of Haiti's inter-racial revolutionary reverberations highlighted the unacknowledged secrets that lay beneath the veneer of American republicanism, which would continue to haunt the national imaginary throughout successive generations.

Phantoms, Archives, and Afterlives

It is the contention of this thesis, then, that American anxieties about race, slavery, and creolization—which reflect its unconscious self-perception—are buried beneath layers of cultural and political silence. These anxieties can be located via the haunting 'spectre' of Haiti. This is better understood through Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok's model of transgenerational haunting. In his Editor's Note on the theory of the transgenerational phantom, Nicholas Rand observes that '[t]he phantom represents the interpersonal and transgenerational consequences of silence'.[50] Conceptualized in a series of essays and seminars by Abraham and Torok in the 1970s, the phantom emerges from a theory of 'cryptonymy' that advances the idea of a psychic 'crypt' as a burial space for ancestral secrets. Drawing upon psychoanalysis and phenomenology, Abraham and Torok extend beyond the realm of the individual, locating the source of phobias, traumas and pathologies within ancestral forebears, who ultimately hold the key to the crypt. Put simply, the theory of the transgenerational phantom posits that the unconscious burial (of secrets, fears, and traumas) can be reproduced from generation to

[49] The concept of American 'exceptionalism' will be explored in greater depth in Chapter 1 and Chapter 3.
[50] Nicholas T. Rand, 'Secrets and Posterity: The Theory of the Transgenerational Phantom', in *The Shell and the Kernel: Renewals of Psychoanalysis*, ed. and trans. by Nicholas T. Rand (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), pp. 165-169 (p. 168).

generation; the legacy that one inherits is effectively determined by these inherited secrets, which perpetuates an intergenerational cycle of psychological anxiety. According to this model, the various incarnations of revolutionary Haiti can be understood as 'phantoms' of national secrets 'encrypted' within the American cultural imaginary.

Deviating from Freudian psychoanalysis, which locates the origin of psychic neurosis in the primal scene, Abraham and Torok postulate that neuroses are the products of 'inherited' secrets and are thus pre-Oedipal. Although Abraham and Torok's ideas about 'inherited' neurosis were not essentially new,[51] their theory of the phantom and of transgenerational haunting provides a specific model for understanding the transference of buried *family* histories (which may translate to cultural histories); unspoken family secrets leave their imprint upon, and stoke unconscious anxieties within, those left behind. This is because the dead take with them to the tomb their secrets and descendants of the dead continue to guard these secrets as they continue to guard their family crypt. In a sense, then, this crypt represents the archive: it is the place where things are buried, but in a precise order. Descendants of the dead, who, in their turn, are also buried in this space, map the topography of this crypt. As Derrida reminds us, the archive is not an internal space, but an external and prosthetic one.[52] It is a repository for what cannot be contained in memory, and, so, a forgetting space.[53] However, archives and crypts command the continuing work and guardianship of living relatives. In this way, the secrets, silences, and innermost fears of the dead 'haunt' like phantoms.

Denied access to this crypt, these beneficiaries are left with only a shadow, or 'phantom', of secreted anxiety. As Abraham notes:

---

[51] Lane articulates, for example, that 'it would be wrong to assume that Abraham and Torok formulated this approach', pointing, presumably, to Freud's work on phylogenesis. (See Christopher Lane, 'The Testament of the Other: Abraham and Torok's Failed Expiation of Ghosts', in *Diacritics*, 27.4 (1997), 3-29 (p 27). Indeed, Freud also considered the bearing of inheritance over the origins of neurosis. (See Sigmund Freud, *A Phylogenetic Fantasy: Overview of the Transference Neuroses*, ed. by Ilse Grubrich-Simitis, trans. by Axel Hoffer and Peter T. Hoffer (Cambridge and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987).) However, Freud's theory concerns the evolution of a fantasy developed in response to a historic filial anxiety (stemming from the son's banishment from the patriarchal community in the Ice Age), rather than the transference of encrypted anxiety, and relies heavily on Lamarckian principles. Moreover, it is important to recognize, as Esther Rashkin has importantly highlighted, that 'Abraham and Torok did not conceive their theories as a response to others but as an internally coherent system of thought that grew out of their clinical experience and philosophical reflections.' See Esther Rashkin, 'Psychoanalytic Literary Criticism: The Work of Abraham and Torok', *Diacritics*, 18.4 (1988), 31-52 (p. 31).

[52] Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. by Eric Prenowitz (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 19.

> The phantom is a formation of the unconscious that has never been conscious—for good reason. It passes—in a way yet to be determined—from the parent's unconscious into the child's … The phantom's periodic and compulsive return lies beyond the scope of symptom-formation in the sense of a return of the repressed; it works like a ventriloquist, like a stranger within the subject's own mental topography.[54]

While phantoms offer 'clues' to this anxiety, the source of fear is locked deep within the crypt, and so these clues remain 'encrypted'. In this regard, Haitian 'phantoms' express what cannot be admitted to the level of American consciousness.

Derrida describes the process of encryptment by elucidating the dichotomy between self ('safe') and crypt: '[t]he inner safe (the Self) has placed itself outside the crypt, or, if one prefers, has constituted "within itself" the crypt as an outer safe.'[55] In effect, encrypted anxiety is both living and dead, because although the anxieties we entomb are dead, they are preserved by virtue of transgenerational inheritance, and thus have a living agency. In Schwab's analysis, what is buried in the crypt remains living, but is at the conscious level dead, because testimony to its burial has been adduced.[56] In each respective case, the site of agency is transformed; whereas Derrida locates agency within the repressive 'self', Schwab locates it within the encrypted object that haunts. This tension of agency is reflected in the psychic interplay between Haiti and America. Indeed, although Haiti's 'encryptment' is sustained by each new generation of (American) archivists, forming new 'layers' within the body of the crypt and creating a maze of impenetrable tombs, the Haitian revolutionary phantom sustains itself, constantly evolving and reproducing itself in these sub-crypts so that it no longer exists a singular entity that can be sought out and circumscribed, but transforms to take on a polymorphous identity that constantly eludes purgation.

Haitian phantoms in this sense not only emerge *from*, but root themselves *in* the anxieties locked in the American family 'crypt'. As dual products of revolutionary modernity and New World republicanism, Haiti and the United States share an important and yet often repressed

---

[53] Derrida, qtd in Douglas Booth, 'Sites of Truth or Metaphors of Power? Refiguring the Archive', *Sport in History*, 26 (2006), 91-109 (p. 101).
[54] Nicolas Abraham, 'Notes on the Phantom: A Complement to Freud's Metapsychology', in *The Shell and the Kernel*, Cf., pp. 171-176 (p. 173).
[55] Jacques Derrida, '*Fors*: The Anglish Words of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok', trans. by Barbara Johnson, *Theory and History of Literature*, 37 (1986), xi-xlviii (p. xix).
[56] Gabriele Schwab, *Haunting Legacies: Violent Histories and Transgenerational Trauma* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), p. 4.

fraternal connection. Haiti resonates with the secrets buried in the American crypt because it represents an uncanny echo of America's unrealized revolutionary limits. As Blackburn stresses, while '[t]he American Revolution launched an idea of popular sovereignty', Haiti represented '[t]he first major breach in the hugely important systems of slavery in the Americas.'[57] In 1776, America symbolically broke from the British metropole, extending to its citizenry the 'common sensical' freedoms denied to them under colonial rule;[58] yet, when in 1804 Haiti became the second independent nation in the New World, these freedoms were granted without caveats—'universal' liberty was realized in the most radically expansive sense. Indeed, as Buck-Morss notes, '[t]he Haitian experience was not a modern phenomenon *too*, but *first*.'[59] America looked to Haiti as in a mirror, but what was reflected back was a monstrous and radical vision of itself—of the unprecedented depths of democratic Enlightenment and 'universal' liberty. The apogee of gothic doubleness, Haiti represented America's black twin. This fraternal connection sustains the family romance narrative articulated by Abraham and Torok.

The 'crypt' is thus a hiding place for America's tumultuous and traumatic racial history and the social, cultural, and political effects thereof, which is brought to bear by 'phantoms' of the Haitian Revolution. However, these phantoms harbour the memory of a deep interrelationship *between* Haiti *and* America. Haiti is not only a symbolic projection of America's internal fears, but is also deeply connected to those fears. Of course, the 'phantom' is only a shadow of a fear, and a more palpable articulation of Haiti's revolutionary power thus remains locked in the crypt. In this way, the 'crypt' can be seen to replicate the same 'formulas of erasure' and 'formulas of banalization' which Michel-Rolph Trouillot suggests have led to 'a powerful silencing' of Haiti and its revolutionary lives in histories of Atlantic modernity.[60] Attributing this culture of silence to the authors of the historical archive,[61] Trouillot has attempted to redress the failures of his predecessors. Of course, Trouillot wrote about a silence

---

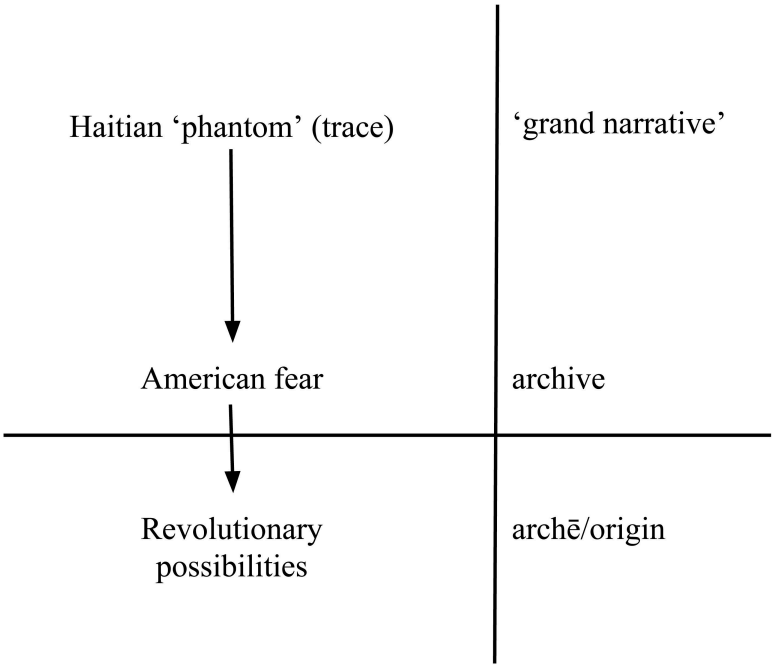
[57] Robin Blackburn, 'Haiti, Slavery, and the Age of the Democratic Revolution', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, 63.4 (2006), 643-674 (p. 643).
[58] Thomas Paine's treatise, *Common Sense*, published in Philadelphia in 1776, criticized the authority of the British monarchy and advocated a split between the thirteen British colonies in colonial North America and the British metropole. This spurred revolutionary republicanism and inspired the subsequent fight for American independence.
[59] Susan Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009), p. 138.
[60] Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), p. 97.
[61] There is, of course, no singular archive of Haitian history, but constellations of competing archives. Certain archives dominate over others: a domination which has led to obvious narrative distortions about Haiti and its history. Ferrer, like Trouillot, interrogates the (predominantly white and androcentric) western archive.

that he knew to have wrought destruction in his own contemporary reality. As a scholar of global modernity who was born and raised in Haiti, he had insider knowledge of an entirely different archive: not of texts, but of the experiential reality of Haiti's perpetual global isolation. His theory of silencing is thus more broadly about control, and, specifically, about colonial and neo-colonial controls over Haiti's polymorphous revolutionary identities. His intervention is thus crucial, as it urges historians to question what lies beneath the accepted historical discourse, who recorded the original history, who archived that record, and what happened in the process of transcription. Extending on this argument, Ada Ferrer notes that the archive allows historians to 'trace the processes by which certain silences and narratives are created, reformulated, sustained, [and] broken.'[62] The archive is not a wholly reliable source of 'authentic' information, but its very existence points to depths which may, or may not, include authentic narratives. In this sense, the archive contains the clues (or 'phantoms') to encrypted narratives that do not reach the level of archivization. As a result, any attempt to recuperate histories of Haiti or histories as they *relate* to Haiti must adopt a critical methodology that looks beyond, or rather, *beneath* the conventional archive. This methodology must incorporate media that is creative, artistic, and allusive, which allow for the imaginative possibilities of Haiti to be borne out from the American crypt.

While this thesis thinks about an American 'imaginary', and the larger cultural anxieties that are manifested therein, it thus strives to get as close as possible to archival truth—to the origin, or, in Derrida's terms, to the '*archē*'—to discover Haiti's polymorphous revolutionary identity and its relationship to America.[63] In this sense, the phantom is only a starting point for excavation. It is important, in other words, to look *beneath* the phantomogenic fear that the Haitian revolutions (in its various incarnations) represents, because it is at this 'root level' that Haiti's *real* significance, and, America's *real* anxieties are located. Diagrammatically, this might be elaborated in this way:

---

[62] Ada Ferrer, 'Talk About Haiti: The Archive and the Atlantic's Haitian Revolution', in *Haitian History: New Perspectives*, ed. by Alyssa Goldstein Sepinwall (New York and London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 139-156 (p. 151).
[63] Derrida, *Archive Fever*, p. 1. Derrida uses the Greek term *archē* to describe the origin or starting point of the archive—the thing from which the archive is generated, or the thing that existed before the archive (which represents s a historical shadow of that original thing).



It is important to consider, in other words, not just how Haiti is imagined and reconfigured phantomogenically, but also how it existed (and exists) in an unimagined and unrealized capacity in the silences of histories and archives. Locating the 'traces' of unarchived material is methodologically difficult, and the line between archive and *archē* in the diagram above represents this sometimes-impenetrable divide. By tracing phantomogenic clues, however, I hope to locate secreted fears; it is here, in the archive of narrative allusion, that Haiti exists most powerfully. In this sense, while Haiti is located at the root of cryptic burial, it is possible to see how Haiti's polymorphous revolutionary history has a powerful agency of its own, and makes itself both visible and apparent *through* these silences. In this way Haiti embodies the dualistic idea of 'secretion'. Lending itself perfectly to 'cryptonymic' analysis, secretion speaks to ideas about hiding and burial, while at the same time representing things that 'seep' or 'bleed'.[64] In spite of Haiti's transgenerational burial, its revolutionary history continues to 'seep' unnoticed in the American imaginary. By tracing the course of these revolutionary phantoms, the

[64] At a conference held at the Nottingham Contemporary in December 2012 on '1804 and its Afterlives', I was explaining my research project to the Haiti scholar Colin Dayan, and described it to her as a literary study that sought to apprehend how Haiti had been 'secreted' in American texts, by which I meant disguised, hidden, or buried. Dayan misheard me, thinking that I said 'seepage', a subject on which she had previously been speaking. When I repeated myself, she posited that seepage was like secretion. While I had not considered this, it made realize the important dualism embedded within the term, and the agency of the Haitian phantom, which actively 'secretes' itself at the same time that it is 'secreted'.

task that I undertake is not merely one of exhumation but of 'stemming the flow', transforming what seeps subliminally into something that is absorbed into consciousness.

Excavating the Crypt; Exorcizing Phantoms

In order to expand the cryptic possibilities of Haitian 'phantoms' and penetrate the secrets of the American imaginary, this thesis thus turns to the American literary canon, and, specifically, to the gothic tradition, where a number of Haitian 'phantoms' locate themselves. Indeed, what the American gothic romance lacks in crumbling ruins, it makes up for in an abundance of 'ghosts'. As Jeffrey Weinstock notes:

> Part of the American national heritage is a supernatural inheritance—but each generation puts this inheritance to use in different ways and with differing objectives. This is to say that ghosts do "cultural work," but that the work they perform changes according to the developing needs of the living.[65]

Ghosts are not merely shadows of the dead whose mission is to remind the 'nation' of its previous misdemeanours before passing into another realm; the phantom is not satisfied to exact retribution on the author of its misfortune, but must pursue the descendants of that malefactor. Following the ancestral trail through the American romantic tradition brings to light a number of 'spectral' anxieties in the American family crypt, such as 'illegitimate' sexuality (in the form of homosexuality, incest, or 'miscegenation'), untameable wilderness, physical massacre, and cultural genocide, along with a host of cultural 'others', including women, Native Americans, African slaves, and 'foreign' aliens. These narratives demonstrate that phantoms are produced by wilful acts of cultural silence, or, more precisely, by the secretion (or burial) of cultural anxieties within the (national) family crypt.

The phantoms of American fiction offer an imaginative route to encrypted truths, reflecting historical anxieties and speaking to contemporary ones. As Leslie Fiedler notes, 'behind the gothic lies a theory of history'.[66] The association of phantomogenic clues enables the

---

[65] Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock, 'Introduction: The Spectral Turn', *Spectral America: Phantoms and the National Imagination*, ed. by Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), pp. 3-17 (p. 8).
[66] Leslie Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel*, rev. edn (New York: Stein and Day, 1966), p. 136.

reader to unlock the crypt to American fears that are contained deep within. This 'literary' archive thus provides an imaginative starting point to access what is lost, what is encrypted and hidden, in the conventional historical archive. Certainly, this addresses the limitations of the archive brought to bear by Trouillot. Moreover, it also looks beyond the historiographical solutions that his narrative seeks. That is not to say that in an attempt to purge national crypts we cannot learn a great deal from Trouillot's globalized, intersectional approach that 'merge[s]' the 'historiographical traditions […] of Haiti and […] the "foreign" specialists'.[67] However, this thesis looks beyond the historical and historiographical, drawing on a predominantly literary, artistic archive. By pursuing the phantomogenic traces in these texts, the critical reader is able to penetrate the depths of the American family crypt. In this way, they facilitate alternative revolutionary possibilities and provide routes to effective 'exorcism'.

According to Abraham and Torok, phantomogenic 'exorcism' can be effected through a process of 'introjection'.[68] Introjection offers psychic resolution for the effects of transgenerational 'trauma'. Although analogous to the Freudian principle of 'working through', in which therapy works 'to fill the gaps in the patient's memory' in order for the subject 'to overcome the resistances brought about by repression,'[69] introjection has a greater scope of application in the sense that it 'extends beyond the purgative release of bottled-up emotions and the admittance of repressed sexual instincts or desires into consciousness' and 'designates the driving force of psychic life in its entirety.'[70] Given the elusive, cryptic nature of anxiety and the penetrative reach of the transgenerational phantom, the process of 'working through' is inadequate. In contradistinction, the introjectory process necessitates that the 'haunted' subject addresses traumas that predate the primal scene, going back multiple generations. In a study of literary 'phantoms', it becomes the prerogative of the critical reader to enact this 'introjectory' process, probing the transgenerational origins of phantoms, and assembling the sources that might unlock the key to encrypted anxiety. In Rand's assessment, it is a 'constant process of acquisition and assimilation' that enables 'the active expansion of our potential to accommodate

---

[67] Trouillot, p. 106.
[68] Nicholas Rand, 'Introduction: Renewals of Psychoanalysis', in *The Shell and the Kernel*, Op. Cit., pp. 1-22 (p. 12).
[69] Sigmund Freud, 'Remembering, Repeating, and Working Through', in *The Penguin Freud Reader*, ed. by Adam Phillips (London: Penguin Books, 2006), pp. 391-401 (p. 392).
[70] Rand, 'Introduction', p. 8.

our own emerging desires and feelings as well as the events and influences of the external world.'[71]

However, as Schwab demonstrates, purging 'family' crypts where the 'family' represents a 'nation' can pose significant problems, and does not always go far enough in rehabilitating secreted voices. Speaking of her own experience of growing up in postwar Germany, she suggests that it is all too easy, in fact, to fall into a 'wound culture', whereby the 'haunted' subject develops 'an involuntary attachment to injurious states as well as the fallacies of seemingly exculpating narratives of perpetration.'[72] The limitations of this process are brought to light in American gothic romance, where Haitian revolutionary phantoms encrypt a larger anxiety about racial revolutions in America; although purging these 'phantoms' invariably forces a confrontation of America's indelibly traumatic racial history, this does not change the lasting effects of that history. As Homi Bhabha notes, '[r]emembering is never a quiet act of introspection and retrospection. It is a painful re-membering, a putting together of the dismembered past to make sense of the trauma of the present.'[73] While this confrontation acknowledges the 'trauma of 'race', it does not highlight how this trauma has disproportionately impacted African-American communities—a fact that is reflected in prevailing structural inequalities across the United States. In other words, while introjection may assuage inherited guilt, it does not offer restitution.

In attempting to address the limitations of this process, Schwab instead proposes a 'culture of memory' which recognizes the 'heterogeneity' of inherited phantoms to one's own history while acknowledging their continuing relevance. In other words:

> To facilitate a collective mourning, communities and nations develop the need to establish a culture of memory. Recognizing the psychic life of our ancestors in our own psychic life means uncovering their unspoken suffering and secret histories, as well as their guilt and shame, their crimes—hence the importance of a family's, a community's, or a nation's 'secret' histories.[74]

---

[71] Ibid., p. 9.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Homi Bhabha, 'Foreword', in Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, trans. by Charles Lam Markmann (London and Sydney: Pluto Press, 1967), pp. xxi-xxxvii (p. xxiii).
[74] Schwab, p. 79.

In establishing the Haitian Revolution as a polymorphous entity with a continuous, circular energy that pervades the unconscious of white America, this thesis demonstrates a commitment to this 'culture of memory', rejecting the notion that such a phenomenon can be contained, circumscribed, or even 'introjected', while observing the fuller, transverse, and continually resonant ways in which it might be understood. Building this 'culture of memory' will thus invariably necessitate a deconstruction of encrypted narratives by adopting an approach that is both critical and *creative*. Sara Johnson, for example, advocates a methodology that 'involves speculation,' a process that she describes as being 'contingent on close reading of textual sources, visual prompts, and sonic sources.'[75] That is not to say that we simply create our own imaginary fantasies to fill the silence, although there is certainly a danger that such an approach will, as Sybille Fischer suggests, 'become a vehicle for the reproduction of hegemonic ideas of history, liberty, and progress', by 'insisting on what might be veiled'.[76] However, literature, and the gothic in particular, invites its readers to interpret—to read between the lines and *beyond* the literal to find a route to hidden anxieties. It also comes out of a specific historical and cultural context. Indeed, writers of fiction are historical agents that, in creating art, create a monument to the inherited past. This is especially true of American fiction, which speaks to so many complex cultural anxieties. Phantoms are by no means accidental products of narrative, but are a conscious reflection on an (as yet) unrealized cultural unconscious (and the anxieties manifested therein).

This approach therefore speaks directly to Nicolas Abraham's belief that '[t]he phantom may […] be deconstructed by analytic construction'.[77] The notion of 'construction' is particularly useful as a critical approach, and reflects the imaginative process of interpretative analysis that this thesis seeks to establish as a critical methodology. Abraham and Torok also inaugurate a vocabulary that helps us to probe and reconstruct previously accepted discourses of history and trace the diffusion of memory through fictional texts. It is through the extension of this linguistic framework, above all, that the most penetrating exploration of the American crypt can be sought. The linguistic possibilities offered up by 'phantoms' and 'crypts', for example, allow critical readers opportunities to envision and re-envision the secreted revolutionary lives of

[75] Sara E. Johnson, *The Fear of French Negroes: Transcolonial Collaboration in the Revolutionary Americas* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2012), p. 124.
[76] Sybille Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed: Haiti and the Cultures of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004), p. 21.

Haiti. In this way, I do not propose a dogmatic theoretical reading; I am not a psychoanalyst or psychotherapist who proposes to heal the wounds of historic secretion, but rather suggest that we can read fictional texts to trace anxieties and voice possibilities. Like Schwab, I will draw on a variety of sources in order to build an interdisciplinary understanding of 'trauma-anxieties' of racial revolution in the American imaginary and propose creative ways of exorcizing the Haitian phantoms that have been generated therein.

Gothic texts secrete unconscious fears that create different imaginative possibilities. They manufacture symbols and motifs that beg critical deconstruction and imaginative (re)construction; as Charles L. Crow testifies, the gothic performs a crucial function 'in making the invisible visible.'[78] More specifically, the gothic offers 'a tradition of oppositional literature, presenting in disturbing, usually frightening ways, a sceptical, ambiguous view of human nature and history.'[79] In this way, they offer an effective 'vehicle' for achieving a 'culture of memory'. Tracing the 'phantoms' of revolutionary Haiti within the American gothic tradition, this thesis considers different intergenerational concerns which are exhumed from the multiple symbolic, allusive, and metaphorical layers of American narratives. These symbolic 'layers' represent a process of symbolic 'encryptment'. Purgation of the phantom and rehabilitation of the lost narrative is thus achieved in the very process of analytical reading.

In this sense, although this thesis extends on the important recent work of Haitian Studies scholars such as Philip Kaisary and Marlene Daut, who attempt to rehabilitate narratives of the Haitian Revolution by examining the literary histories of the Atlantic world, this project looks *beyond* literary figurations to excavate the *un*written anxieties which underlie a multitude of revolutionary phantoms. Indeed, while Kaisary's study of the Haitian Revolution in the literary imagination 'branches out from texts discussed in academic debate', it focuses exclusively on texts with a definitive authorship.[80] By contrast, this study uses the literary archive only as an analytical starting point, mining phantomogenic traces and clues to find hermeneutic truths in a multidisciplinary crypt embedded with unarticulated and speculative voices. Moreover, while Kaisary, like the majority of Haiti scholars, consigns the revolution to a singular 'event' in

---

[77] Abraham, 'Notes on the Phantom', p. 174.
[78] Charles L. Crow, *American Gothic*, *History of the Gothic* (Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 2009), p. 10.
[79] Ibid., p. 2.
[80] Philip Kaisary, *The Haitian Revolution in the Literary Imagination: Radical Horizons, Conservative Constraints* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2014), p. 4.

Atlantic world history,[81] this study views it as a repeating, polymorphous phenomenon with a continuous, circular energy. In this way, it seeks to expand the rigid chronological parameters imposed by the literary-historical archive, adopting a thematic—perhaps even *creolistic*—orientation. This thematic outlook forms the core axis of analysis and informs the structural breakdown of chapters and the corresponding selection of texts. The texts under study thus encompass a broad, transgenerational trajectory, channelling transgenerational phantoms that speak directly to these thematic concerns; although each text reflects cultural anxieties that speak to specific historical moments, they also encrypt the prevailing anxieties of a culture continually haunted by Haiti, and the variegated faces of its revolution. While recognising the importance of a historical frame of reference, this thesis is therefore decidedly *anti*-linear in its analytical approach, echoing the centripetal, concurrent, and circular energy of Haiti's revolutions.

These 'revolutions', stimulated and exacerbated by migrations (to and from colonial Saint-Domingue and independent Haiti), colonizations (of land, bodies, and languages), and exchanges (of sex, labour, and commodities), cast a lingering shadow over the American imaginary, and each text thereby offers a phantomogenic route to previously unrealized revolutionary possibilities. This study attempts to excavate these revolutionary possibilities, drawing on a combination of sources—literary, visual, and material—thereby embracing a multidisciplinary methodology. In this regard, it builds on the work of scholars such as Caroline Fick, Colin Dayan, and Melissa Adams-Campbell, who each examine alternative 'strands' of revolutionary agency and utilize different contextual lenses in an attempt to build a fuller understanding of the various types of 'Haitian Revolution' that took place in the colonial setting and beyond. Rather than focusing narrowly on one particular revolutionary story, or privileging one particular story over another,[82] this thesis nevertheless attempts to build an expansive, multidirectional archive of stories, looking at multiple revolutionary discourses side by side to demonstrate both their common threads and their disjunctures. In short, this study posits that by envisioning the Haitian Revolution as a 'polymorph' that assumes a multitude of forms (some of

[81] Ibid., p. 1; p. 12.

[82] Adams-Campbell, for example, differentiates between the 'macrorevolutions' precipitated by military insurgency and the 'microrevolutions' enacted by women of colour who participated in more subtle arts of subversion. However, I prefer neither to make such binary distinctions nor to suggest that a particular act of revolution was more colossal than any other (as the prefixes 'macro' and 'micro' invariably denote). See Melissa M. Adams-Campbell, *New World Courtships: Transatlantic Alternatives to Companionate Marriage* (Lebanon: Dartmouth College Press, 2015), p. 72.

which extend beyond the scope of this study), the possibilities generated by the process of excavation become increasingly attainable.

The first chapter traces the 'phantom' of slave rebellion and black (inter)nationalism in Herman Melville's 1855 novella 'Benito Cereno'. It looks to Melville as a maritime novelist whose tales of voyaging and discovery offer meditations on the expansive and expan*ding* borders of America and the military conflicts and revolutionary diffusions that occurred both within and beyond its circumscribed borders. Although his narrative compass focuses predominantly on dramas in and around the Pacific, these dramas are deeply interconnected with a global, slaveholding Atlantic that is constantly in flux. While his entire corpus of work examines America's role in the corporeal exploitation that drives industrial production and global exchange, and dramatizes the disastrous consequences thereof, 'Benito Cereno' highlights the encrypted fears of black retribution that cut to the core of the slave system in America. As a seafaring man who travelled widely across the western hemisphere and occupied numerous public offices, Melville was highly sensitized to the volatility of slave economies and the threat of revolt and its diffusion, especially in light of the successful slave-led ship revolts on board the *Amistad* in 1839 and the *Creole* in 1841. Writing at midcentury, at a time when the debates over slavery and abolition were at their height in America (and corresponding with the 'imperial' reign of Haiti's Faustin Soulouque), Melville forces a gothic confrontation with the spectre of Haiti and the legacies of its revolutionary heritage—especially as it relates to free and enslaved African Americans. Revolutionary motifs are shown to resonate with multiple revolutionary stories, uniting the history of the 'black Republic' and the ideological aspirations of black Americans. In this way, it considers the ideological force of 'revolution' within black and enslaved communities across the slaveholding Americas and explores the possibility of its 'diffusion' through oral protest, literacy, and collective military insurgency. It seeks to expand the possibilities of 'Atlantic' revolutions, whose ideals continued to resonate long after the 'Age of Revolution' and the 'event' of the Haitian insurgency, extending into the period of independence, which saw the ascendancy of Haitian 'republics', 'monarchies', and 'empires'. It probes the ideological significance of key 'revolutionary' figures such as Toussaint Louverture and their phantomogenic echoes in characters such as Babo. In so doing, it seeks to demonstrate how such revolutionary figures confounded contemporary discourses of 'race' and 'rational' arguments in favour of slavery, presenting an apocalyptic vision of the untrammelled 'limits' of

America's own revolution. It also explores the complexity of diplomatic isolationism in an age of global exchange—a theme that is embedded at the heart of Melville's narrative. It highlights the ambivalence in American public policy throughout the antebellum era which, on the one hand, publicly rejected claims for Haitian sovereignty, and, on the other, pursued a mercenary opportunism that sought to maintain and exploit trading possibilities between the two entities. Exploring the function of news media in the 'silencing' of Haiti, it demonstrates how America mediated between the challenge of suppression and diffusion during an age of black militancy and revolutionary idealism.

The second chapter demonstrates the haunting legacy of Haiti's 'sexual' revolution and its larger societal repercussions (both local and global) in William Faulkner's 1936 novel *Absalom, Absalom!*. It probes the phantomogenic traces of this revolution through an examination of the unwritten relationship between the white Virginian, Thomas Sutpen, and his first wife Eulalia Bon, a 'Haitian' Creole of (purported) black ancestry. In so doing, it locates Faulkner at the heart of a peculiarly 'southern' narrative about race and lineage, and envisions his fictional geography of Yoknapatawpha as a metonym for a white, southern mind-state that is deeply and ideologically bound up with inherited, transgenerational anxieties about racial dissolution and degeneration in America at large, but in the South in particular. These anxieties are shown by Faulkner to have been compounded by the recurrent spectre of Haiti's racial revolution, but most especially by the discourses of sex, race-mixing, and reproduction that permeated Saint-Domingan society and other societies across the 'larger South'. In part fuelled by a pervasive mythos of colonial libertinage and 'tropical temptresses' propagated by colonial commentators such as Moreau de Saint-Méry, this phantom of sexual degeneration haunted racial thinking in America, especially during the age of slavery, but also during the postbellum era, when anxieties about the future of 'the South' were increasingly aligned with fears of racial mixing and 'miscegenation'. This phantomogenic narrative was also compounded by the Saint-Domingan migrations that took place in the first decade of the nineteenth century, which distorted the ethnic makeup of North American societies, and reaffirmed certain patterns of social and cultural diversity in regions such as Louisiana where a comparable sexual culture and gender dynamic already existed. The transgenerational cycles of narrative inheritance in Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*, which partake in a hermeneutic accumulation that never quite succeeds in erasing the spectre of Eulalia Bon, demonstrate the numerous and far-reaching

cultural legacies of these migrations. By penetrating to the depths of this phantomogenic narrative, this chapter attempts to show how the intimacies forged in colonial Saint-Domingue led to a social 'revolution' that complicated the system of matrilineal slavery across the Americas, and inadvertently empowered the women that such a system sought to debase. It postulates that taxonomies of 'race' and racial 'amalgamation' reflected efforts to contain this revolution and repress the structural complexities of New World publics shaped by global markets, especially in America. Looking beyond the textual archive in an attempt to seek out the voices of the women of colour located at the heart of this phantomogenic narrative, it participates in a close reading of the 'hidden transcripts' embedded in alternative 'texts' such as textiles and dress that signify the performative identities of those who operated outside of the conventional (white and male) bourgeois public sphere. In reading the signification of textiles and the language of materiality in *Absalom, Absalom!*, it lays new ground in Faulkner scholarship, and presents possibilities for reading the metamorphic and revolutionary agency of women such as Eaulalia Bon, Clytemnestra Sutpen, and Charles Bon's unnamed 'octoroon mistress'. In so doing, it demonstrates southern America's transgenerational fears about alternative revolutionary publics and the death of patriarchal inheritance.

The third chapter extends on the idea that revolutionary phantoms evolved from fears of 'amalgamation' in America, exploring the effect of cultural crossings and Haiti's 'Creole' revolution on the American psyche and its 'echoes' in North America. It considers, in particular, how the Creole cultures of Saint-Domingue and Louisiana were imagined as 'degenerate',[83] and distinguished from U.S. 'American' culture as 'other'. It posits that fears of 'Creole' culture lay at the heart of counter-discourses of American nationhood and exceptionalism, and examines the effects of the Saint-Domingan diaspora sparked by revolutionary conflict on projects of 'Americanization' in the long nineteenth century. The spectre of revolutionary creolization looms large in Charles Brockden Brown's 1799 novel *Arthur Mervyn, or, Memoirs of the Year 1793* whose republican Philadelphia is 'infected' by the pestilential spectre of Saint-Domingan migration and contamination, and in George Washington Cable's 1880 novel *The Grandissimes*, whose New Orleanian Creoles channel the spirit of a Saint-Domingan 'circumvention' which inhibits the cultural diffusion of Anglo-Americanness in the post-Purchase era and reemerges in the wake of the Civil War and Reconstruction. Situating Brown at the foreground of an

[83] This is an idea that is explored in Goudie's *Creole America*.

'American' romantic tradition that dramatizes the challenges of asserting a peculiarly 'American' identity in a paradoxically creolizing world, it challenges the resilience of the nation's ideological foundations, and demonstrates how concurrent revolutions and circulations across the Atlantic worked to unseat paradigmatic views of American exceptionalism at the time of the nation's founding. In this way, it reaffirms Peter Kafer's assertion that Brown 'was the only man in 1790s America with the requisite Gothic imagination to sense the dark histories already weighing down on the American republic.'[84] Throughout this period, Brown also worked as a journalist, and drew frequently on the example of the Haitian Revolution to expose and counter the 'politics of fear and loathing' that underlay the democratic-republican ideals that had shaped independent America.[85] As such, he had an acute understanding of Haiti's centrality to America's own gothic narrative. In this sense, Brown is seen as an important witness to the construction (both literal and figurative) of a 'republican' infrastructure that sought to eviscerate its Creole inheritances by suppressing confrontations with Creole 'others' (as manifested in the form of Saint-Domingan phantoms). As a writer born and raised on the fringes of 'Creole' New Orleans, Cable's fiction offers comparative insights into the implications of 'revolutionary' creolization on the American imaginary. Writing almost a hundred years after Brockden Brown, his retrospective 'Story of Creole Life' nevertheless contains a number of revolutionary sediments which chart the *de*construction of exceptional Americanisms through the repeated 'creolistic' convulsions of the nineteenth century. Having lived through secession and the Civil War, Cable was attuned to the various cultural forces that had worked to counteract ideological and conceptual unity throughout America's history—especially in the 'lower South', where Creole histories would maintain a pervasive cultural influence throughout the period (a fact that was evidenced by the Creole upsurge that forced Cable to retreat from his Louisiana homeland in 1885). Like Brown, Cable also had a journalistic background, and utilized his investigative skills to peel back these sediments, mining the stories of the Saint-Domingan migrants that had contributed so forcefully to these convulsions. Looking back to the decade that followed the Louisiana Purchase (a decade simultaneously characterized by successive waves of Saint-Domingan migration), *The Grandissimes* reveals the powerful historical legacies of republican

[84] Peter Kafer, *Charles Brockden Brown's Revolution and the Birth of American Gothic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), p. xxi.
[85] Robert S. Levine, *Dislocating Race and Nation: Episodes in Nineteenth-Century American Literary Nationalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), pp. 31-32.

mechanisms of occlusion masking the irrepressible connections of Creole worlds throughout the course of the nineteenth century. By following the phantomogenic traces of revolutionary creolization within these texts, this study therefore seeks to demonstrate how Creole migrations contributed to what Nathalie Dessens has called a 're-creoliz[ation]' of American culture.[86] In order to do so, it will explore a multitude of cultural media, including architecture, language, and performance culture, to reflect how Saint-Domingan migrants affirmed and reinvigorated the cultural landscape of 'Creole' America and 'circumvented' the ideological spread of 'Americanness' at the time of the nation's founding, and during successive moments thereafter.

The fourth chapter examines the diasporic and 'routed' origins of the Haitian Revolution and the phantom of syncretic spirituality in the popular American imaginary. This phantom is especially pervasive during and immediately after the American Marine occupation that lasted in Haiti from 1915-1930, when confrontations between elite white and poor black cultures fuelled a market for 'exotic' cultural 'others'. Concentrating on this period of cultural production, it seeks to show how the appropriation and consumption of Haiti's revolutionary spirituality, and narratives of Vodou and 'zombies' in particular, reflected an attempt to contain the revolutionary threat they posed to imperial conquest. By unpacking the metonymic significance of 'Bois Caïman' (the purported site of the Vodou ceremony that inaugurated the slave insurgency of 1791), it demonstrates how spiritual narratives, and Vodouistic narratives in particular, reflect 'lower frequency' routes to resistance in Haiti and across the Atlantic diaspora.[87] It follows the phantomogenic traces of these 'routes' in William Seabrook's 1929 ethnographic novel *The Magic Island* and Victor and Edward Halperin's 1932 film *White Zombie*, wherein the trope of the 'zombie', whose 'routed' identity is subsumed by allusive conceits, encrypts the powerfully metamorphic and continually resistant power of the Haitian lower classes against elite hegemonies. In an effort to rehabilitate the connections between spirituality, performance and resistance among Haiti's lower classes, it explores a range of visual and aural texts which reflect the creative limits of America's imperial crypt.

In attempting to excavate this cultural crypt and build an effective culture of memory, I acknowledge the dangerous possibility that I, in turn, create a crypt of my own making by unintentionally co-opting occluded voices or hidden narratives. In negotiating this precarious

---

[86] Nathalie Dessens, *From Saint-Domingue to New Orleans: Migration and Influences* (Gainsville: University of Florida Press, 2007), p. 167.
[87] Gilroy, p. 37.

position, and in an effort to curtail 'fantastical' readings, I build interpretative analysis by reading other cultural texts and contextual sources, always striving to look beyond the conventional textual archive. As Daut suggests, filling the silence 'does not require powers of invention', but rather 'strategies of *inter*vention [my emphasis] that call into question the assumptions in dominant histories of war and revolution'.[88] The literary, visual, material, and sonic texts upon which this analysis pivots share vital similarities, each demonstrating how the 'trauma' of the Haitian Revolution generates a culture of phantomogenic ellipsis, but, at the same time, providing an 'imaginative' route through the multiple layers of the historical and archival silence to multiple revolutionary possibilities and creative afterlives. Each text encourages its reader to engage in an act of excavation that will lead them to a hermeneutic truth. Purging these phantoms in this way leads the creative reader to 'the innermost chamber with a series of inter-reflecting mirrors which present [America] with a thousand visions of [its] own face.'[89] Ultimately, it is not Haiti that 'haunts', but rather the sublime American horror that Haiti uncannily embodies.

Of course, 'America', like 'Haiti' encompasses a multitude of complex meanings. As Toni Morrison observes in her critical study of the American literary canon, *Playing in the Dark*, '[d]eep within the word "American" is its association with race.'[90] This complex interrelationship is confounded by a monolithic cultural assumption that conflates 'Americanness' with white, Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant interests in the 'United States'. This monolith has become a dominant global metanarrative, shaping a pervasive (white) 'American' imaginary whose mythological power continues to undergird ideas of 'America' both within the United States and beyond.[91] The texts that shape this study reflect the tensions inherent within this imaginary space, but are also complicit in its mythological diffusion (as the products of white, Anglo-Protestant men). In this way they reflect what Morrison calls the 'Africanist' bias of 'American' writing, which imagines everything that is nonwhite as 'other'.[92] By exploring the phantoms that pervade an ostensibly *white* gothic tradition, I do not seek to reproduce this

---

[88] Daut, p. 217.
[89] Fiedler, p. 27.
[90] Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 47.
[91] For example, on the campaign trail for Donald Trump (the Republican presidential hopeful and business mogul) in 2015, Sarah Palin famously stated that all immigrants should learn to 'speak American' (meaning English). See Nolan Feeney, 'Sarah Palin Wants Immigrants to "Speak American"', *Time* (Time Inc., 7 September 2015) <http://time.com/4024396/sarah-palin-speak-american-energy-department/> [accessed 10 September 2015].

monolith, but rather confront it as a fact, and confront the critical discourses that have failed to fully excavate the cryptic secrets that it harbours, thereby demonstrating the traumatic and transgenerational force of these secrets. This thesis thus represents a series of confrontations—with the white literary canon and with the archives and scholarly infrastructures that have for so long upheld it. By engaging in a critical 'exhumation' of this undisturbed tomb, I therefore seek to reveal the complex inter-American*isms* that lie beneath the white American literary canon; after all, the 'American' crypt is imbedded with the voices of a multitude of 'other' Americans that have largely been unheard and unvoiced, particularly to those that do not conform to the white 'American' monolith.

The power of these inter-Americanisms was actively upheld by a catalogue of black writers and orators throughout the course of the nineteenth century. Such activists, such as the *Freedom's Journal* editor John Browne Russwurm, harnessed the symbolism of the Haitian Revolution to propel the abolition campaign in America, hoping that Haiti would 'extend the fame of her riches and glory to the remotest borders of the globe'.[93] To others, Haiti represented the bulwark of black nationalism, which, as a fully realized 'democratic' republic, offered a sanctuary for African Americans who could never hope to find 'true' sanctuary in the United States. In short, Haiti not only promised a 'better' way of life, but opened a gateway to the 'ideal' way of life.[94] Those that subscribed to this belief heeded David Walker's advice to 'go to […] the Haytians'.[95] The Episcopalian bishop James Theodore Holly, for example, was at the foreground of an emigration movement which oversaw the resettlement of 111 African American men, women, and children from New Haven to Haiti in the decade leading up to the Civil War.

As Leon Pamphile has demonstrated, this emigration campaign, like others that preceded it, was largely unsuccessful in encouraging wholesale African American migration to the 'black republic', and the numerous instances of reverse-migration that followed reflected the structural

---

[92] Morrison, pp. 6-7.
[93] John Browne Russwurm, 'The Condition and Prospects of Hayti', in *African Americans and the Haitian Revolution: Selected Essays and Historical Documents*, ed. by Maurice Jackson and Jacqueline Bacon (New York and London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 167-169 (p. 169).
[94] Sara Fanning, *Caribbean Crossing: African Americans and the Haitian Emigration Movement* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2015), p. 23.
[95] David Walker, *Walker's Appeal, in Four Articles; Together with a Preamble, to the Coloured Citizens of the World, but in Particular, and Very Expressly, to Those of the United States of America, Written in Boston, State of Massachusetts, September 28, 1829* (Boston: [n. pub.], 1829), pp. 62-63.

complexities of adapting to 'free' life within a developing nation.[96] Such emigration movements were also repudiated by a number of black antislavery activists who viewed them as a vehicle for white supremacists keen to displace the encroaching 'threat' of a multiracial America. Such was the focus of the argument put forward by Frederick Douglass in 1849 when he gave a speech condemning the actions of the American Colonization Society.[97] As far as Douglass was concerned, African Americans needed to harness the power of Haitian independence to create their own 'nation within a nation'.[98] African American activists on both sides of the divide nevertheless laboured to advance the cause of Haiti both inside and outside of America. Douglass was among a litany of African American statesmen who served as the United States' ambassador to Haiti in the latter half of the nineteenth century. He was preceded in this appointment by Ebenezer Bassett, John Mercer Langston, George Washington Williams, and John E. W. Thompson. Langston was the great uncle to the poet Langston Hughes, whose work in the 1920s and 1930s would draw heavily on the motif of Haiti, confirming the transgenerational force of Haiti's symbolism within the African American imaginary.

In this way, this thesis does not seek to diminish the efforts of African Americans who endeavoured to exorcize the secreted spectres of Haiti in the nineteenth century, but posits that these concerted acts of voicing operated in concert with a pervasive and unrelenting culture of white silence. Indeed, as Douglass conceded in a speech that he gave at the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893, America had not been able to 'forgive […] Haiti for being black'.[99] Even after the United States had granted Haiti formal diplomatic recognition in 1862, it would continue to discredit and assault Haiti's sovereignty throughout the duration of the nineteenth and into the twentieth century. To that end, this project draws a (semi-permeable) line under the 1930s, which saw the rise of a black literary modernism that spanned the Americas, reaching its apotheosis in the Harlem Renaissance. The Harlem Renaissance gave rise to an artistic culture of re-appropriation, rendering Haiti visible and tangible for millions of Americans, establishing through a multitude of creative and dialectic practices a powerful 'culture of memory'.

---

[96] Leon D. Pamphile, *Haitians and African Americans: A Heritage of Tragedy and Hope* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2008), pp. 55-57.
[97] Frederick Douglass, 'Slavery, The Slumbering Volvano: An Address Delivered in New York, New York, on 23 April 1849', in *The Frederick Douglass Papers, Series One: Speeches, Debates, and Interviews*, ed. by John Blassingame, 5 vols, vol. 2 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), pp. 148-158.
[98] Pamphile, *Haitians and African Americans*, p. 11.

America's forced retreat from Haiti following the end of the Marine occupation compounded the psychic rupture that this cultural revolution created within the American imaginary. This rupture was a decisive reflection on the ultimate failure of America's imperial conquests and the triumph of Haiti's revolutions; indeed, although Haiti could never be 'forgiven', it could now no longer be ignored. That is not to say that Haiti was entirely rehabilitated or America 'healed' by these cultural confrontations, but rather that this period represents another important study that emerges out of, and simultaneously departs from the present one (a study whose foundations have in part already been laid by Kaisary). Haiti's revolution undoubtedly continues to repeat, and America continues to reproduce phantoms of anxiety and mechanisms of silence in the face of each successive revolutionary 'cycle'. However, by choosing to end my enquiry at this point while acknowledging that this by no means represents an 'end point', I recognize the importance of interventions led by griot-like countercultures throughout North America, the Caribbean, and beyond at this decisive moment in Atlantic history.

[99] Douglass, qtd. in Glen McClish, '"The Spirit of Human Brotherhood," "The Sisterhood of Nations,' and "Perfect Manhood": Frederick Douglass and the Rhetorical Significance of the Haitian Revolution', in *African Americans and the Haitian Revolution*, Cf., pp. 123-139 (p. 130).

Chapter 1 | Phantoms in the Hull: Haiti, America, and the 'Unthinkable' Fact of Revolutionary Universalism

> Mais non, la même main qui a brisé nos fers ne nous enchaînera pas de nouveau. […] Mais si, pour rétablir la servitude à St-Domingue, il l'était, je vous déclare que ce serait tenter l'impossible: nous avons su affronter les dangers pour obtenir notre liberté, nous saurons braver la mort pour la conserver.
>
> — Toussaint Louverture, *Lettre de Toussaint au Directoire* (1797)[1]

Limits of Revolution

Michel-Rolph Trouillot was at the vanguard of a movement confronting the spectral absence of the Haitian Revolution in histories of Atlantic modernity. It is perhaps overstating a cliché to say that 'the Haitian Revolution […] entered history with the peculiar characteristic of being unthinkable even as it happened.'[2] The initial slave uprising of 1791 sent shockwaves across the slaveholding Americas; the reverberations of this trauma were aptly summarized in the subtitle to Leonara Sansay's *Secret History*, 'The Horrors of San Domingo'. However, slave unrest often brought the volatility of the slave system to bear, and the 1791 rebellion was by no means a unique example of calculated black resistance in the New World. The slaveholding Americas had seen numerous instances of slave insurgency, large and small, both on land and at sea, prior to the events of 1791. Anxieties concerning incendiary race warfare were underwritten in efforts to extend colonization programmes for free blacks, in legislative proscriptions on the freedom of movement and the right to education, and in the harsh, retributive punishments dispensed against rebels in slaveholding societies, whose mutilated bodies were often displayed publicly to deter mutinous behaviour. Such fears were at the root of Thomas Jefferson's paradoxical views on slavery, who portended, several years prior to the Haitian Revolution, that the slave system would eventually collapse in on itself, 'produc[ing] convulsions' that would 'probably never end

---

[1] Qtd. in Sylvia Musto, 'Portraiture, Revolutionary Identity and Subjugation: Anne-Louis Girodet's Citizen Belley', *Canadian Art Review*, 20 (1993), 60-71 (p. 63). Translation: But no, the same hand that has broken our irons will not enchain us again. […] But if, to restore slavery in Saint-Domingue, it were so, I declare to you that it would be to attempt the impossible: we have faced dangers in obtaining our liberty, we will brave death to keep it. [All translations, except where otherwise indicated, are my own.]

[2] Trouillot, p. 73.

but in the extermination of one or the other race.'[3] In the case of Haiti, he was not entirely wrong.

Therefore, while the slave rebellion in Haiti brought the visceral reality of race warfare to the foreground, the fact of its occurrence was not entirely 'unthinkable'. In fact, as Alyssa Sepinwall highlights, anxieties 'about an impending revolt indicate that it was all too imaginable'.[4] Saint-Domingue alone had a long history of slave agitation that predated the events of 1791. One of the most famous rebel plots was led by a maroon by the name of Makandal, who was executed in 1758 for attempting to overthrow the colonial regime by disseminating poisons through a network of slaves. Makandal's story was well documented in contemporary literature, and his 'memory,' as Fick notes, 'was sufficient to nourish the long and bitter struggle that would one day lead to […] emancipation.'[5] Indeed, the story of Makandal became rooted in folk culture, where it was nurtured by each successive generation of Saint-Domingan slaves who aspired to follow his rebellious route to freedom. In this way, Makandal became a magical vessel for fantasies of independence. Certainly, his 'magic' symbolism was compounded by the fact that, according to legend, Makandal evaded execution by transforming into a mosquito, thereby escaping to freedom. Sustained in folklore, Makandal thus lived on in memory, reflecting the enduring power of rebel narratives and their subtle countercultural power against colonial infrastructures.

Given the climate of anxiety in which fears of revolution were stoked, Trouillot was undoubtedly sensitized to the traumatic effects that the revolution had upon the western imaginary. In this sense, his idea of 'silence' should not be interpreted as 'the actual absence of utterance or conversation', but rather, as Daut infers, as the 'reinforce[ment of] certain perceptions of the Revolution at the expense or sublimation of other perceptions'.[6] According to this frame of thought, although the violence wrought through slave insurgency was not entirely 'unthinkable', there was no readily applicable language to convey the magnitude of the race and class conflict that it signalled; this, inevitably, led to the propagation of certain ideas over others. In other words, it was the 'revolutionary' character of the conflict, which sustained a twelve-year

[3] Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (Richmond: J. W. Randolph, 1853), p. 149.
[4] Alyssa Goldstein-Sepinwall, 'From Saint-Domingue to Haiti', in *Haitian History: New Perspectives*, ed. by Alyssa Goldstein-Sepinwall (New York and London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 13-32 (p. 18).
[5] Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, p. 63.

struggle for Haitian independence, that was so incongruous. The idea of black 'revolution' was ideologically and fundamentally incompatible with contemporary racial thinking, especially in America. While Enlightenment taxonomies delineating a 'natural order' were able to dissipate claims for the 'natural rights' of those at its lowest rungs, the Haitian Revolution highlighted the fundamental paradox of such systems, demonstrating the incontestable humanity of people of African descent, and holding the moral economy of slavery up to scrutiny. As Trouillot explains in his own terms:

> The Haitian Revolution […] challenge[d] the ontological and political assumptions of the most radical writers of the Enlightenment. *The events that shook up Saint-Domingue from 1791 to 1804 constituted a sequence for which not even the extreme political left in France or in England had a conceptual frame of reference*. They were "unthinkable" facts in the framework of Western thought.[7]

The Haitian Revolution presented a vision of revolutionary universalism previously unrealized by either France or America, whose aspirations for liberty and equality set the standard for an emergent revolutionary republicanism. Of course, the limited scope of republican 'virtue' was underwritten in the contemporary writings of women such as Olympe de Gouges and Abigail Adams, who demonstrated that appeals for 'universal' citizenship in the Age of Revolution were often restricted to men.[8] Antislavery advocates such as Benjamin Rush and the Abbé Raynal also began to question why such 'universal' rights were not extended to people of colour in New World societies. Nevertheless, the abolition of slavery would remain a point of contention in the constitutional provisions of new revolutionary republics. Moreover, even some of the Enlightenment's most 'radical' antislavery activists advocated a gradual emancipation over any

---

[6] Daut, p. 2. Mitch Kachun makes a similar point in 'Antebellum African Americans, Public Commemoration, and the Haitian Revolution: A Problem of Historical Mythmaking', in *African Americans and the Haitian Revolution*, Cf., pp. 93-106 (p. 105).

[7] Trouillot, p. 82.

[8] Anticipating the omission of women's rights from the Declaration of Independence, Abigail Adams wrote in a letter to her husband John Adams, 'If perticular care and attention is not paid to the Laidies we are determined to foment a Rebelion.' See 'Abigail Adams to John Adams, 31 March 1776', in *The Oxford Book of Women's Writing in the United States*, ed. by Linda Wagner-Martin and Cathy N. Davidson (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 491. Olympe de Gouges wrote the *Déclaration des droits de la femme et de la citoyenne* (Declaration of the Rights of Woman and of the Female Citizen) in response to the French Constituent Assembly's *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen* (Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen) in 1791. See Olympe de Gouges, 'Declaration of the Rights of Woman and Citizen', in *Women's Political and Social Thought:*

radical overhaul of the slave system, and although the majority condemned the immorality of slavery, some also persisted in the belief that African peoples constituted an inferior 'race'.[9]

Haiti's revolutionary struggle, which occasioned a total break with Old World systems, thus highlighted the conservatism of the revolutionary age more generally. Ultimately, France conceded the limitations of its universalist vision, and granted universal emancipation in its colonies in 1794 (a concession which was nevertheless reversed by Napoleon in 1802). Republican America, however, resisted a widespread programme of emancipation. Although a number of northern states embarked on a programme of gradual abolition which spread in the wake of independence, the sustained, oppressive, and burgeoning practice of slavery in the South—especially after the acquisition of the Louisiana territory—inhibited the advancement of a more comprehensive programme. Furthermore, despite the increasing divide between the regional interests of the 'free North' and 'slave South', the area North of the Mason-Dixon line would continue to benefit from the commercial exploits of slavery, which remained very much a part of its 'urban landscapes' for several decades after independence.[10] When Haiti declared itself as an independent 'black' state in 1804, America was confronted with the gothic apotheosis of a radical revolution it had yet to realize, and would not begin to realize until the beginning of Civil War in 1861. This is supported by the fact that America did not recognize Haiti as a sovereign state until 1862. A year into its own violent national conflict over slavery, it was evidently no longer possible for America to deny the existence of the 'black republic'.[11]

Written in 1855, at the pinnacle of a racial crisis that culminated in Civil War, Herman Melville's 'Benito Cereno' harbours phantoms which speak directly to these contradictions. Probing the limits of America's revolution, these phantoms consolidate the 'unthinkable' phenomenon of Haitian independence, universal freedom, and black nationalism. The short story charts an encounter between an American sailor, the righteous Captain Amasa Delano of Duxbury, Massachusetts, and a South American trader—the eponymous hero of the narrative,

---

An Anthology, ed. by Hilda L. Smith and Berenice A. Carroll (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), pp. 150-152.

[9] Sylvia Musto notes, for example, that despite Raynal's advocacy on behalf of slaves, his 1785 pamphlet *Administration sur la colonie de Saint-Domingue* 'maintained that Africans lacked the ability to manage freedom, and he argued that until there appeared among them a Montesquieu, they would be better off working as labourers for the whites in the overseas colonies than staying in their own countries in Africa'. See Musto, p. 62.

[10] Ashli White, *Encountering Revolution: Haiti and the Making of the Early Republic* (Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), p. 17.

[11] For more on the effects of America's sustained disavowal of Haitian sovereignty see Fanning, *Caribbean Crossing*.

Don Benito Cereno. The drama plays out off the coast of Chile, where Delano spots Cereno's ship, the *San Dominick*, in a state of disrepair and in desperate need of basic supplies. Unbeknownst to Delano, Cereno's ship has fallen into the hands of rebellious slaves, and it thus falls to Delano and his men to recapture the ship and its mutinous 'cargo'. This encounter is principally narrated from Delano's perspective. Through Melville's skilful use of free-indirect speech, he brings Delano's solipsistic attitudes about race and slavery to the fore. Moreover, the demonstrable signs of unruliness that Delano fails to interpret serve only to magnify this solipsism. However, while the credulous Delano represents the butt of Melville's collusive joke with the reader, he also serves as the pivot on which the narrative's gothicism turns. It is not, after all, the fact of slave mutiny that makes this tale gothic, but rather the voracity with which Delano represses it. Certainly, Delano is neither fearless nor infallible; he senses that the *San Dominick* may indeed be a 'haunted pirate ship', but ascribes his fear to the 'horrible Spaniard',[12] Cereno, rather than to the suspicious behaviour of the slaves on board Cereno's ship and the unusual circumstances that follow. Deeply conflicted, and unable to confront the locus of his fear, Delano is in this sense a metaphor for America's conflicted relationship with the black nationalist motif of Haiti and its revolutionary echoes in early-nineteenth-century America. By unravelling the mysteries that Delano fails to uncover (and consciously evades) through a complex strategy of filtration, inversion, and displacement, the reader unlocks the door to an American crypt nurturing wider anxieties about a black revolutionary consciousness that was embodied by the Saint-Domingan slave insurgency, Haitian independence, and the enduring spectre of the 'black republic'.

This chapter therefore seeks to challenge the critical perspectives of Melville scholars such as Carolyn Karcher, who perceive the Haitian Revolution as an 'abstraction' that masks other more prominent discourses of racial retribution within the text.[13] Indeed, it seeks to affirm the idea that Haiti represents a central and compelling force within the narrative—one that unifies the collective interests of other insurgent voices across multiple geographies; it is seen, in this way, not only as a military act, but as an ideological pillar within black Atlantic communities. In this sense, it extends on the work of Jonathan Beecher, whose analysis of the

[12] Herman Melville, 'Benito Cereno', in *The Piazza Tales* (New York: Dix and Edwards, 1856), pp. 109-270 (p. 184).
[13] Carolyn L. Karcher, *Shadow Over the Promised Land: Slavery, Race and Violence in Melville's America* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1980), p. 137.

'echoes' of Toussaint Louverture in Melville's novella restore Haiti to a more prominent position within the critical discourse on Melville. Whereas Beecher's work stresses the iconicity of revolutionary figures and the singularity of the revolutionary 'moment', this discussion nevertheless seeks to penetrate the ideals of universalism and black nationalism that underlie the shadows of revolutionary personalities and events. It thus aligns itself more closely with the critical perspectives of Eric Sundquist, John Haegert, Sandra Zagarell, and Susan Gillman and Kirsten Silva Greusz, who consider the intersections of wider geographies and chronologies of revolutionary Haiti to build a fuller understanding of the anxieties about race, nationhood, and freedom at play in 'Benito Cereno'. These studies place Haiti at the centre of a revolutionary world to which America shares an inextricable connection. However, this analysis pushes the boundaries of this debate further still to consider the types of doublethink that allow Melville's Delano (as a metaphor for white America at large) to variously repress the persistent spectre of a diffusive black nationalism and mediate the opportunities for trade and exchange yielded by a sovereign Haitian state. As a member of the literary establishment at the vanguard of the American romantic movement, Melville was uniquely positioned to comment on the vagaries of white America at midcentury, and 'Benito Cereno' offers an insight into the contradictions and disjunctures between the politics of race and nationhood in an era that straddled the divide between 'democratic' republicanism and racial slavery.

Burn Before Reading: Stemming the (Revolutionary) Flow

Melville's gothic novella was based on the factual account of a slave mutiny that was relayed in the real Amasa Delano's *Narrative of the Voyages and Travels in the Northern and Southern Hemisphere* published in 1817. The plot echoes closely the sequence of actual events, but Melville makes several important changes which bring the spectre of revolutionary Saint-Domingue to the foreground. Indeed, as Beecher highlights, '[w]e know that Saint-Domingue was in Melville's mind when he wrote "Benito Cereno" [because] he changed the name of the ship on which the revolt occurs from the *Tryal* to the *San Dominick*.'[14] Certainly, Melville's contemporaries, who were perhaps more familiar with the colonial nomenclature, would have

[14] Jonathan Beecher, 'Echoes of Toussaint Louverture and the Haitian Revolution in Melville's "Benito Cereno"', *Leviathan*, 9.2 (2007), 43-58 (p. 44).

understood the allusive gesture to Saint-Domingue. The various linguistic mutations to which 'Saint-Domingue' was subjected was reflected in numerous English language texts, not least in Leonora Sansay's *Secret History, or, The Horrors of St. Domingo*.[15] This nomenclature was pervasive, and remained so long after independence. By reverting to this nomenclature, and rejecting the sovereign name of Haiti, such writers reverted ideologically to a time in which 'Haiti' did not exist either literally or conceptually. Encrypted in Melville's *San Dominick* is thus a memory of Haiti's colonial history and a confrontation with the culture of silence by which it was sustained in the American imaginary throughout the nineteenth century. In this way, Melville acknowledges the symbolic potency of a Haitian independence which dares not speak its name, thereby replicating the strictures of what Ferrer calls 'archival power', which, as she argues, determines 'the archival use or absence of the very term *Haiti*.'[16] This culture of silence is embodied by the character of Amasa Delano, the 'good American',[17] whose 'generosity and piety' renders him 'incapable of sounding [the] wickedness' of insurrection.[18]

As a sailor who frequently drew upon maritime themes in his writing, Melville was also conscious of the literal and conceptual instability of the ship, and exploited the dualism between the *San Dominick*'s symbolic certainty (as a familiar emblem of capital and enterprise) and its uncertainty (as an embodiment of misrule). In 'Benito Cereno', the ship serves as a conduit for American anxieties about racial warfare and the diffusion of black revolutionary ideals across the New World after the events of 1791. In a more general sense, it operates as a motif for transatlantic modernity and the multiple 'revolutions' bound up with it. As a vessel of transportation and commerce, it facilitates the movement of people and cargo across vast geographical distances. It also plays a central role in discourses of voyaging and discovery, trade, empire, climate, and warfare, yielding a wealth of imaginative possibilities. The opportunities presented by this motif are compounded by the name of Delano's ship, *The Bachelor's Delight*, which contains inherent connotations of conquest, discovery, and sated desire. However, the ship also lends itself perfectly to gothic romance, exposing the 'limits' of modernity and revolution. While there are no crumbling battlements, or labyrinthine passageways that lead to concealed

[15] These standardizations have inevitably led to some confusion concerning geography, as 'Santo Domingo' was the designation for the Spanish colony on the eastern side of Hispaniola and the capital city thereof. Such standardizations have nevertheless filtered through to more contemporary writings, including James's *The Black Jacobins*, which is subtitled 'Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution'.
[16] Ferrer, p. 151.
[17] Fiedler, p. 400.

chambers, the ship is always uncertain, facing the threat of internal mutiny and external attack. As John Haegert notes, Melville's symbolism is far from subtle, and he notes that the *San Dominick* contains many 'emblems and portents' which present the reader with 'a series of visual prolepses: promissory images suggesting an eventual understanding of her innermost secrets'.[19] Moreover, the liminality of the ship is compounded by the statelessness of the sea, which leaves it exposed to unruly elements, violent assault, and plunder. What is contained within the body of the ship cannot be fully discerned to the outsider, rendering it all the more unpredictable. Even the credulous Delano, who repeatedly fails to pick up on the 'visual prolepses' to which Haegert alludes, contemplates the possibility that a renegade army might be secreted in the hold of the *San Dominick*, plotting his murder.[20] 'Benito Cereno' thus explores the full scope of such gothic potentialities, and employs a range of gothic devices, from pathetic fallacy to the figure of the dopplegänger, to uncanny effect, rendering palpable the danger that remains undetected by Delano.

The anxieties bound up with this gothic motif and the phantomogenic shadow that Haiti cast over it were invariably sustained by the culture of information transmission that took root in America and elsewhere across the Atlantic world in the late eighteenth century. As Gilroy stresses, while colonial infrastructures attempted to dissolve African *roots*, they were unable to impede diasporic *routes* or the diffusion of ideas that occurred across these routes.[21] Fears of ideological diffusion were grounded in an acute awareness of the rapidity with which information could be disseminated within this Atlantic nexus. Indeed, print culture was a major driving force of America's own revolution, helping to galvanize dispersed communities and propagate ideas of 'nation'.[22] The *Declaration of Independence* was printed as a broadside on 4 July 1776, and thereafter disseminated to the colonial presses to be reprinted in 'newspapers, magazines, broadsides, and pamphlets'.[23] Working on board ships, attendant at the markets and ports where sea-traders exchanged their goods, and forcibly moved as chattel or exiles, free and enslaved blacks across the Americas were at the very heart of this diffusive culture in which

---

[18] Melville, p. 261.
[19] John Haegert, 'Voicing Slavery through Silence: Narrative Mutiny in Melville's *Benito Cereno*', *Mosaic*, 26.2 (1993), 21-38 (p. 25).
[20] Melville, p. 162.
[21] Gilroy, p. 19.
[22] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 1991), pp. 61-62.

information circulated. The knowledge that they acquired was in turn disseminated across other black and slave communities. Within this culture, the Haitian Revolution represented a powerful ideological symbol that had the capacity to inspire appeals for natural rights, citizenship, and power. This is supported by the fact that, as Jeffrey Bolster highlights, 'thousands of black seamen voyaged to St. Domingue and Haiti between 1790 and 1830' and compounded by the fact that 'Americans carried on a brisk trade there both before and during the uprising.'[24] Routes between Saint-Domingue and the United States therefore created opportunities for discourse across (and, more importantly, *beyond*) borders between the legally voiceless. Consciously aware of the prevalence of such exchanges, and of their effects, states along the eastern seaboard of America sought to inhibit the diffusion of information through a raft of proscriptive legislation that denied domestic slaves certain privileges and freedoms (especially in relation to movement and literacy) and prevented black Saint-Domingans from entering ports (or forced those already resident to leave).[25] As Julia Gaffield and Philip Kaisery note, however, '[n]ews of Haiti's revolution spread across America as fast as it happened.'[26] The challenge, then, was not just how to prevent contact and exchange, but how to stem the flow of information once it had arrived.

With strong trade links to Saint-Domingue, South Carolina became a renowned site of information transference and a sanctuary for those fleeing the colony. Offering daily accounts of the incoming and outgoing movements of a variety of ships, from brigs and schooners, to sloops and frigates, the newspaper presses of late-eighteenth-century South Carolina were thus favourably positioned to intercept news from overseas. Reports from this period reflect the challenges of monitoring information transmission and demonstrate, in their cautious response, an attempt to stem the flow of news entering the North American mainland from revolutionary Saint-Domingue. Allowing for delays in transmission that sea travel inevitably effected, news of slave rebellion in the nearby colony is relayed in Charleston's *City Gazette* on 12 September 1791, three weeks after the outbreak of the slave insurgency, when the following account is given:

---

[23] James N. Green, 'English Books and Printing in the Age of Franklin', in *A History of the Book in America*, 5 vols, vol. 1, ed. by Hugh Amory and David D. Hall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 295.
[24] W. Jeffrey Bolster, *Black Jacks: African American Seamen in the Age of Sail* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 145.
[25] White, *Encountering Revolution*, p. 149.
[26] Julia Gaffield and Philip Kaisary, '"From freedom's sun some glimmering rays are shed that cheer the gloomy realms": Dessalines at Dartmouth, 1804' (paper presented for *After Revolution: Versions and Revisions of Haiti*

> Saturday evening arrived here from Cape Francois, in 15 days passage, the sloop Polly, capt. Newton, by whom we have received information that a very alarming insurrection of the mulattoes and negroes, took place in St. Domingo on the 22^{d} ult. The sugar-works on 64 plantations were totally destroyed, and murder and devastation marked their progress. Their ravages were, however, put a stop to in a few days by the white inhabitants and soldiery at Cape, who indiscriminately put to death all the negroes who fell in their way, amounting, by the Friday following, to the number of 15,000.
>
> Capt. Newton sailed on Sunday, the 27th, when tranquility appeared again to be restored.[27]

Certainly, the early traces of an emotive language later made commonplace in contemporary accounts of the revolution are present here in the hyperbolic allusion to 'murder and devastation', yet the gravity and scale of the insurrection (which has necessitated the execution of 15,000 slaves) is mediated by the assurance of its suppression. This is framed within a context of slave unruliness which was effectively constrained by the rigorous controls of southern plantation society. Indeed, as Michael Mullin notes, '[i]n the mainland South whites were too numerous, and too well armed and organized on the frontiers as well as the seaboard for revolts to pose a serious threat .'[28] Even though South Carolina could testify to the disastrous effects of more local slave rebellions (the most notable of which was the Stono River Rebellion of 1739), their suppression invariably validated the prowess of the southern plantation system. For Americans in the South, and for Carolinians in particular, this was the only frame of reference for processing this 'alarming insurrection'. Despite the fact that the report anticipates 'more […] intelligence' to follow,[29] the editors of the *City Gazette* doubtless anticipated that the conflict would be brought to an end by the 'restor[ation]' of 'tranquility' in the colony and the suppression of the initial mutiny.

The suggestion of a more pervasive and ideological 'revolutionary' threat is also elided through a reversion to the tropes of animalism that were frequently deployed in the service of contemporary taxonomies of race. The use of the term 'ravages', here, emphasizes the brute

---

conference at the Institute of Black Atlantic Research, University of Central Lancashire, Preston UK: July 9-10, 2015).

[27] *The City Gazette, or the Daily Advertiser*, IX.1880 (12 September 1791), p. 2.

[28] Michael Mullin, *Africa in America: Slave Acculturation and Resistance in the American South and the British Caribbean* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), p. 43.

[29] *The City Gazette, or the Daily Advertiser*, IX.1880 (12 September 1791), p. 2.

violence of the 'mulattoes and negroes' at the helm of the insurrection. In 'Benito Cereno', Delano's reliance on animalistic tropes has a similar rhetorical effect. For example, the reader learns that Delano has a 'congenial' relationship with slaves, whom he regards as 'Newfoundland dogs'.[30] Delano thus draws heavily on fictions of African docility and, in this way, inverts the revolutionary threat embedded in slavery. On board the *San Dominick*, Delano reverts to these familiar and comforting images to discredit the looming spectre of rebellion and reassure his own sense of preeminence. This is particularly pointed in his observations of a 'slumbering negress' on board the *San Dominick*, whom he notices

> partly disclosed through the lace-work of some rigging, lying, with youthful limbs carelessly disposed, under the lee of the bulwarks, like a doe in the shade of a woodland rock. Sprawling at her lapped breasts was her wide-awake fawn, stark naked, […] its hands, like two paws, clambering upon her […][31]

The analogy that Delano draws here between the 'negress' and her child and the principal conquest of the hunt—the deer—negates their subjectivity and validates their enslavement (as 'spoils' of empire). As Nelson notes, it is clear that 'Delano enjoys the anthropological dissymmetry of looking on the African woman with her child because it fills out and confirms his whiteness and his manhood' (and, by extension, his legal personhood).[32] Certainly, Delano's observations echo the 'rationalistic' hubris of eighteenth-century African ethnographers, which is borne out in his invocation of the African explorer John Ledyard.[33] However, the dichotomy that he creates between himself and the slaves that he observes on the *San Dominick* is offset against persistent allusions to the 'enigmas and portents'[34] which signify the unmistakeable threat of the revolutionary diffusion that Delano is unable to see. By reverting to such animalistic tropes, he is thus able to sustain his parochial vision as an anthropological 'outsider', and discredit the pervasive spectre of slave unrest.

Such animalistic analogies reflect a strategic ploy to undermine the connection between slave 'insurrection' and the powerful rhetoric and ideology of *revolution* that pervaded

---

[30] Melville, p. 201.
[31] Ibid., p. 174.
[32] Dana D. Nelson, *Nationalist Manhood: Capitalist Citizenship and the Imagined Fraternity of White Men* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), p. 3.
[33] Melville, p. 175.
[34] Ibid., p. 161.

contemporary writings about black revolt, and about the Haitian saga in particular. Although there is a disjuncture between the types of animalistic imagery deployed by the *City Gazette* and Melville, both have the same rhetorical effect, serving to undermine the agency of the mutineers and the ideological scope for a black 'revolution'. The active suppression of revolutionary discourse is also demonstrated in the codification of language in news reports about the sustained conflict in Saint-Domingue. Indeed, after the initial report of insurrectionary activity printed on 12 September, an eerie silence descends over the *City Gazette* which is nevertheless punctuated by accounts of ships arriving from Saint-Domingue and its neighbouring colonies—vessels that may proffer the kind of 'intelligence' that the *City Gazette* had intended to relay.[35] While a report is issued on 9 November documenting the arrival of 'Monsieur Bugnet', who is acknowledged as a member of the Saint-Domingan General Assembly, in Kingston, Jamaica on 3 September, this report is decidedly elliptical. It reports that Bugnet 'has brought letters from M. Blanchelande, the commander in chief, and M. de Cadusch, the president of the colonial assembly, to his excellency the governor; and also a letter directed to "the hon. members of the general assembly of Jamaica"',[36] but nevertheless obscures the content of these letters. It summarizes that:

> His excellency the governor was yesterday in this town, in consultation, as we are informed, with admiral Affleck and major general Williamson, at which M. Bugnet, and some other French gentlemen were present, in consequence of which, it is reported, that permission is given to M. Bugnet to purchase arms, ammunition and provisions. What further assistance will be given from hence, we are not informed.[37]

Though no direct reference is made to the continuing state of unrest in the colony, and although there is no recollection of the 'ravages' detailed in the previous report, the prevalence of violence is the inevitable inference taken from this account. Calls for overseas 'assistance', and for ammunitions in particular, secrete evidence of a conflict that has been protracted and destructive enough to warrant foreign intervention. This information is channelled via an allusive, codified medium; the fact of slave revolt features only as subtextual phantom which encrypts the fear of its diffusive ideological potential.

---

[35] On October 31, there are reports of 'Schooner Swift, Pratt' arriving from Port au Prince in 18 days and 'sloop Experiment, Dill' arriving from 'Cape' François in 13 days. See *City Gazette*, IX.1722 (31 October 1791), p. 2.
[36] *City Gazette*, IX.1730 (9 November 1791), p. 2.
[37] Ibid.

A series of similar reports follow, which relay news from the colony but offer no further information extending upon the initial account of insurrection. In fact, no specific allusion to insurgent activity is again made until the following February. Given that the reader is able to trace the circulations of merchant ships as they move in and out of Saint-Domingue in almost every other edition of the newspaper, this occlusion of information was presumably not for want of its lack. The reticence to convey specific detail about the conflict, or consider the possibilities thereof, thus highlights the general consternation of slaveholding societies in the South who were unable to process the ideological force of the unfolding events in Saint-Domingue. Without an existing frame of reference to help deal with such an 'unthinkable' phenomenon, and anticipating the incendiary effects of such information, it inevitably took time for the editors of the *City Gazette* to develop an effective strategy of discursive mediation.

Admittedly, South Carolina's wider-reaching *State Gazette* compensates for some of the Charleston *City Gazette*'s omissions. Nevertheless, accounts are marked by similar instances of prevarication and ellipsis. In October of 1791, the *State Gazette* alludes to an embargo that has been laid on the city of Cap François (Cap Français).[38] The port was, at this moment in time, a locus of frenetic activity, harbouring the refugees of ransacked plantations, which is subtly acknowledged in accounts of merchants' ships becoming 'crouded [*sic*] with women, children, and the effects of the inhabitants.'[39] However, although this evocative image of displaced peoples crowded into Saint-Domingue's principal trading port offers a more palpable insight into the state of unrest in this part of the colony, the reader's access to detailed information remains limited. The nature of the embargo might reasonably explain this obstruction; if, for example, ships had been prohibited from making transactions at certain ports, then access to such information would have been inhibited. However, Gordon Brown notes that embargoes rarely had any effect on transactions that occurred in this region.[40] Given too that this occurred during an era in which piracy was rife—a fact that was reinforced during the Quasi-War with France several years later,[41] it also seems unlikely that transactions would have been completely

[38] *State Gazette*, LIIIL.4015 (3 October 1791), p. 2.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Brown suggests that American ships were often able to get round such proscriptions. See Gordon S. Brown, *Toussaint's Clause: The Founding Fathers and the Haitian Revolution* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2005), p. 51.
[41] This was, primarily, a war against shipping cargoes wherein each side plundered the other's ships. See Ronald Angelo Johnson, *Diplomacy in Black and White: John Adams, Toussaint Louverture, and Their Atlantic World Alliance* (Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 2014), p. 15 and Brown, p. 144.

circumvented. Despite the prevalence of exchanges which most likely took place both at the source of unrest and within the vessels harbouring refugees who sought to escape the conflict, there are no specific references to ongoing conflict in the colony.

Silence is in this sense not only a disavowal, but a subtle mechanism for voicing; that is to say that absence, in this case, serves as a sign for what is not there.[42] The scale of the larger problem is hinted at through references to the purchase of ammunition and supplies, calls for aid, and trade embargoes, but the 'unthinkable fact' of continuing black militancy is never confronted. Like the Spanish knotter on board the *San Dominick* who hopes that the unsuspecting Delano will probe the apparent peculiarity of his actions as he casts out his 'knot' for him to 'undo',[43] it is possible that the editors of the South Carolina presses sought to secrete the encroaching phantom of black insurgency within these coded references. In this way, the subtleties of information that may have been lost on the less literate (or illiterate)—which included the majority of slaves and labouring free blacks—would hypothetically reach the white slaveholders and merchants whom such information was most likely to benefit.[44] Reading the ways in which news of the Haitian Revolution was transmitted (or, rather, secreted) in the South Carolina presses offers another context for understanding the 'secretion' of slave insurrection in 'Benito Cereno', which, though hinted at throughout, is only brought to light at the end of the narrative. This is set in contrast with Amasa Delano's original *Narrative*, in which knowledge of the event precedes the account of its relation.[45] Nevertheless, Melville's multiple allusions to the 'enigmas and portents' that Delano is 'pressed by' encourages the reader to probe beneath the surface action relayed via the free-indirect observations of Delano, and read between the lines of symbolic obfuscation—obfuscation that is underwritten in allusions to 'hatchet-polishing', 'whispering', and 'motion' in 'hatchways'—[46]connecting the clues that point to the secreted spectre of slave unrest. In this sense, the suppressive impulse is borne out not only in Delano's disavowal, but is also seen in these acts of symbolic encryptment by the Spanish crewmen on board the *San Dominick*. The silence thus serves a dual function; whereas one type of silence

[42] Anderson, p. 63.
[43] Melville, *Benito Cereno*, p. 182.
[44] Brown postulates that southerners 'feared the spread of radical egalitarian ideas from Haiti' because they had 'the most to lose'. See Brown, p. 5.
[45] Delano, pp. 318-319.
[46] Melville, pp. 157-160.

attempts to shut down the conceptual possibility of black revolution, the other attempts to bring it to light via guided, controlled, and codified channels.

The need to operate controls upon the flow of information was rooted in the rising tide of black nationalism in America and beyond in the wake of the Haitian Revolution. Haiti became a bastion of hope for those that had been subjected to the injustices of slavery in America and thus became grafted to a vision for independence that was anchored in 'a black nation state rather than a return to Africa.'[47] Anxieties concerning the diffusion of revolutionary ideals among free and enslaved African Americans (particularly in the South) were thus by no means unfounded. Indeed, both literate and illiterate African Americans drew information from accessible media sources to obtain, channel, and spread knowledge of the Haitian Revolution and the message of black nationalism embedded therein. As Scott notes, the editor of Charleston's *City Gazette* discovered that 'slaves working in his offices had long made a practice of taking for their own use as many as 200 copies of each issue for undisclosed purposes.'[48] Such accounts are illustrative of how, despite low literacy rates, the diffusion of the printed word among free black and enslaved communities in the antebellum South occurred through a multitude of channels. This was undoubtedly facilitated by the nature of exchange in the public sphere. Speaking of the diffusive impact of David Walker's incendiary *Appeal*, Amy Reynolds notes that 'literate blacks […] would read aloud to large groups of illiterate slaves and free blacks' and could thus 'facilitate revolt as well as foster the spread of information through underground channels.'[49] Such underground exchanges were acknowledged by Richard Caton Woodville, whose 1848 painting *War News from Mexico* envisages how information that white authorities sought to regulate could be transmitted to black communities on the peripheries of these publics (see Figure 1).

---

[47] Sarah C. Fanning, 'The Roots of Early Black Nationalism: Northern African Americans' Invocations of Haiti in the Early Nineteenth Century', in *African Americans and the Haitian Revolution: Selected Essays and Historical Documents*, ed. by Maurice Jackson and Jacqueline Bacon (New York and London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 39-56 (p. 39).

[48] Julius S. Scott, 'Afro-American Sailors and The International Communication Network: The Case of Newport Bowers', in *African Americans and the Haitian Revolution*, Cf., pp. 25-38 (p. 28).

[49] Amy Reynolds, 'The Impact of *Walker's Appeal* on Northern and Southern Conceptions of Free Speech in the Nineteenth Century', in *Communication and the Law: Multidisciplinary Approaches to Research*, ed. by Amy Reynolds and Brooke Barnett (Mahwah and London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2006), pp. 301-328, p. 319. James Sidbury also speaks in greater depth about the links between literacy and revolt. See James Sidbury, *Ploughshares into Swords: Race, Rebellion, and Identity in Gabriel's Virginia, 1730-1810* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1997), pp. 61-83.

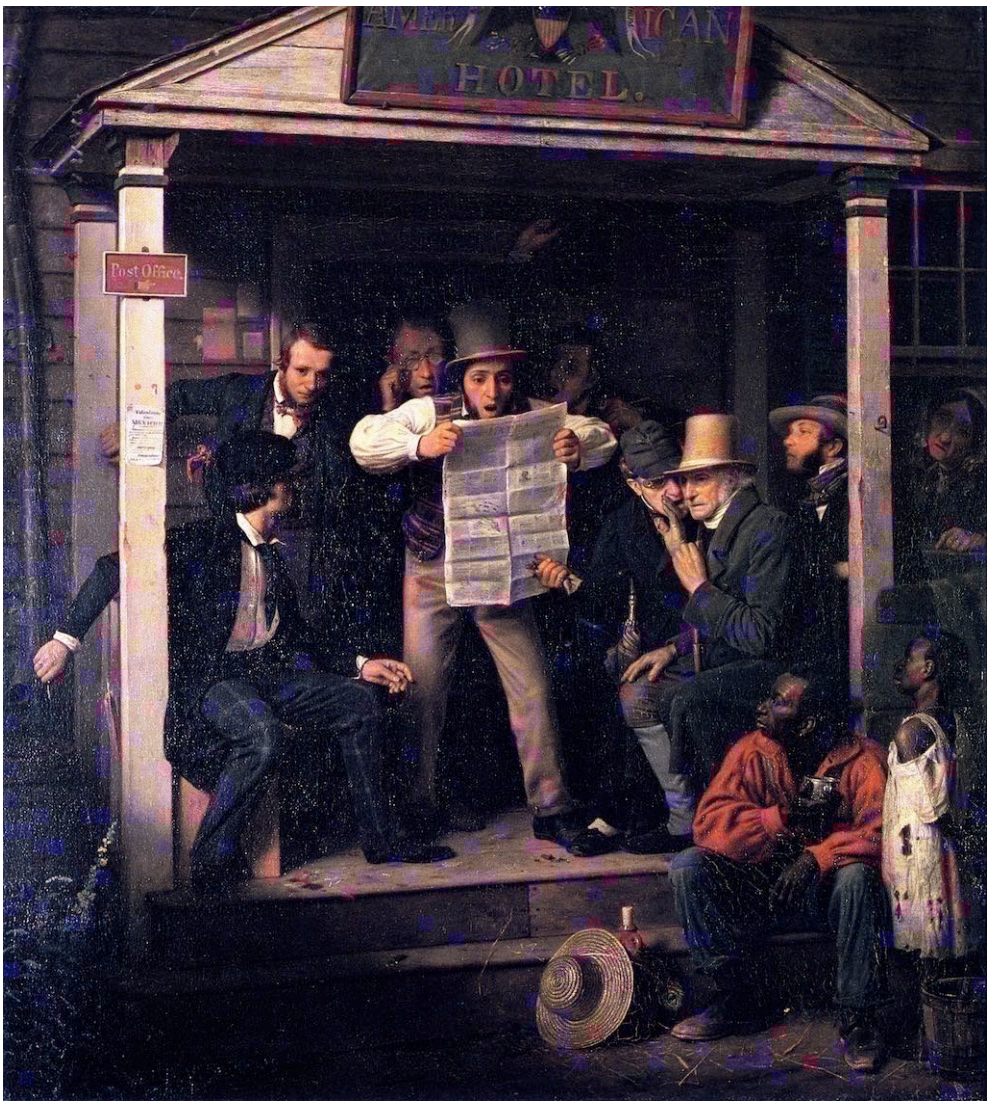


Figure 1: Richard Caton Woodville, War News from Mexico (1848), oil on canvas, 27 x 25 inches. Courtesy of Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, AR 72712.

Engaging the viewer to follow the line from the centre, which features a man in a top hat reading aloud the much-anticipated war news, to the periphery, where an assembly of curious bystanders crowd around him to obtain a snippet of information, Woodville evokes a sense of circulatory motion. The cacophony in the image reinforces the instantaneousness of transmission, highlighting the ease and rapidity with which information is able to flow. Depicted in tattered clothing and situated beneath the viewer's line of sight (and, perhaps more importantly, beneath the white men and women assembled on the porch of the America Hotel), the black man and child featured at the bottom right of the painting are rendered subordinate and socially powerless. However, it is clear that they, too, play a crucial part in this circulation, as

they incline their bodies toward the centre of the action to hear the news that is being read.[50] This iconic image substantiates Eugene Genovese's assertion that 'slaves always saw and heard more than they were supposed to, even though the slaveholders determined that there would be as little as possible to see and hear.'[51] Although literacy was often the preserve of a limited few, this did not inhibit diffusion.

The spectre of black literacy nevertheless haunted an antebellum America that bore witness to a rise in printed texts authored by blacks, not least by the leading agents of the Haitian Revolution, stoking anxieties concerning the power of the written word among black communities. Literacy was seen as an important vehicle of communication and collusion, and restrictive state legislation prohibiting slave literacy, the education of free and enslaved blacks, and communal gatherings where knowledge could be transmitted were passed in a number of slaveholding states in response to these attendant anxieties, and were tightened in the wake of southern slave rebellion plots.[52] Indeed, the fact that a number of rebel leaders could attest to a literary heritage was a particular cause for concern and intensified fears of black education across the South. Roger Ransom and Richard Sutch draw particular attention to the case of Denmark Vesey, the freed slave who plotted an armed rebellion in Charleston in 1822, who 'was […] inspired by his readings of abolitionist literature.'[53] Literacy was also regarded as one of the most important influences upon Nathaniel Turner, who led a slave insurgency in Virginia in 1831 that resulted in the deaths of 60 whites and precipitated a reign of white supremacist terror across the South. Indeed, Turner's literacy gave him access to the writings of David Walker, an educated man of colour and antislavery activist who purportedly inspired his insurrectionary campaign.[54] A community of readers and writers united by revolutionary principles thus fostered an impulse

---

[50] In artistic terms, this can be viewed as a triangular composition, which creates, as Rudolf Arnheim notes, 'a single dynamic center of a higher structural order'. According to Arnheim, '[t]he combined effect of the overall [triangular] structure is to strengthen action in certain directions and discourage it in others.' This certainly supports the hierarchy that is being created in this image. See Rudolf Arnheim, *The Power of the Center: A Study of Composition in the Visual Arts*, rev. edn (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982), p. 5.

[51] Eugene D. Genovese, *From Rebellion to Revolution: Afro-American Slave Revolts in the Making of the Modern World* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), p. 26.

[52] Such as, for example, the Slave Code of 1740, passed in South Carolina after the Stono Rebellion of 1739. Despite the fact that anti-literacy laws were not widespread across the South, a number of states adopted increasingly prohibitive legislation in the early decades of the nineteenth century. See Janet Cornelius, '"We Slipped and Learned to Read": Slave Accounts of the Literacy Process, 1830-1865', in *Literacy and Historical Development: A Reader*, ed. by Harvey Graff (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2007), pp. 315-333 (pp. 330-331) for details of states that passed anti-literacy and anti-schooling laws.

[53] Roger L. Ransom and Richard Such, *One Kind of Freedom: The Economic Consequences of Emancipation*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 15.

to learn, and to fight back against the repressive legislation that sought to prohibit them from doing so.

The circulation of revolutionary narratives among free and enslaved blacks in antebellum America was therefore sustained by, and in turn helped to sustain, an emerging black nationalism, or perhaps, rather, a black *inter*nationalism as Michael West and William Martin posit.[55] It is significant to note, for example, that Walker's *Appeal*, published in 1829, called upon African Americans to '[r]ead the history […] of Hayti'.[56] The report from Vesey's trial also indicates that his insurrection plot was spurred by the prospect of escaping to 'St. Domingo with his principal adherents'.[57] In his earlier life, Vesey had served as a slave to a Bermudian sea captain who had well-established trading connections with Saint-Domingue and spent a brief period enslaved on a sugar plantation in the colony.[58] This connection is highlighted as an important fact in the trial report, which notes that he 'commanded a ship that traded between St. Thomas and Cape Francais (San Domingo)' in his earlier life.[59] The suggestion of Vesey's continued (literary) exchange with the leaders of an independent Haiti is nevertheless foregrounded as a source of anxiety in this report, which observes that Vesey wrote 'two letters to St. Domingo on the subject of [his] plot'.[60] Despite the implausibility of this contention,[61] the possibility of such an exchange evidently caused his jurors considerable consternation.[62] In an attempt to mute the incendiary idealism that Vesey's revolutionary narrative conveys, the report

---

[54] Ibid.
[55] See Michael O. West and William G. Martin, 'Haiti, I'm Sorry: The Haitian Revolution and the Forging of the Black International', in *From Toussaint to Tupac: The Black International Since the Age of Revolution*, ed. by Michael O. West, William G. Martin and Fanon Che Wilkins (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009), pp. 72-106.
[56] David Walker, *Walker's Appeal, in Four Articles; Together with a Preamble, to the Coloured Citizens of the World, but in Particular, and Very Expressly, to Those of the United States of America, Written in Boston, State of Massachusetts, September 28, 1829* (Boston, [n. pub.], 1829), p. 21.
[57] Ibid., p. 41.
[58] Douglas R. Egerton, *He Shall Go Out Free: The Lives of Denmark Vesey* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2004), pp. 16-26.
[59] Lionel H. Kennedy and Thomas Parker, *An Official Report of the Trials of Sundry Negroes, Charged with an Attempt to Raise an Insurrection in the State of South-Carolina: Preceded by an Introduction and Narrative; and an Appendix, A Report of the Trials of Four White Persons, on Indictments for Attempting to Excite the Slaves to Insurrection* (Charleston: James R. Schnenck, 1822), p. 42.
[60] Kennedy and Parker, p. 40.
[61] Haiti's incumbent President Boyer had just launched an emigration campaign that sought to entice free African Americans to settle in Haiti and thereby gain diplomatic recognition from the United States. Such an act of collusion would likely have thwarted these efforts. See Fanning, *Caribbean Crossing*, p. 39.
[62] Sidbury also notes that transcripts from conspiracy trials 'rarely noted other slaves' skills or occupations. Instead they mentioned attributes — like literacy and the privilege of self-hire — that other sources indicate were more often acquired by skilled slaves', suggesting that these attributes were worthy of consideration. Sidbury, p. 61.

actively co-opts the literate black voices of Vesey and his co-conspirators, reflecting a prevailing culture of anxiety surrounding ideological exchanges between slaves and free blacks in independent Haiti (which is once again encrypted in the motif of a colonial, pre-revolutionary 'St. Domingo') and America.

Writing in an era characterized by a burgeoning black press and a growing abolition movement that was undergirded by the testimonial narratives of former slaves such as Frederick Douglass, Melville was no doubt attuned to the power that such networks conferred.[63] The motif of the 'slumbering volcano', deployed to compound the reader's sense of gothic melodrama in 'Benito Cereno', is a testament to this awareness, recalling the same motif that Douglass had used in his 1849 speech repudiating the actions of the American Colonization Society, an organization which sought to encourage freed slaves to emigrate to Liberia (and also, later, Haiti).[64] In this speech, Douglass articulates the revolutionary threat presented by the black masses, and champions the prospect of freedom in a truly independent America. Invoking the spirit of rebellion, he declares that he 'would greet with joy the glad news […] that an insurrection had broken out in the Southern States.'[65] Building upon the revolutionary motif of the 'slumbering volcano', Douglass celebrates the wider legacy of slave resistance in the Americas, and draws heavily on the example of the ship insurrection on board the *Creole* in 1841.[66] Connecting such stories of black resistance to the revolutionary history of America, which is nurtured by the memory of 'the fathers of '76',[67] Douglass asserts his right to a revolutionary heritage, and voices a communal goal for black citizenship. Such rhetorical interventions demonstrated that knowledge, and the spread of *revolutionary* knowledge in particular, unified disparate black communities, and solidified the power of an internationalist revolutionary discourse that resonated across black communities in the slaveholding Americas.

The enduring possibilities of a black (inter)nationalist discourse rooted in revolutionary ideals were also sustained by the memory of Toussaint Louverture and other leading black agents who were central to the discursive exchanges that were taking place during the Age of

---

[63] In 1847, Douglass launched his own paper, *The North Star*, after breaking away from the Garrisonian faction of the abolition movement.
[64] Douglass, 'Slavery, The Slumbering Volvano', p. 151. Gleason suggests that Melville lifted the metaphor from Douglass's speech. See William Gleason, 'Volcanoes and Meteors: Douglass, Melville, and the Poetics of Insurrection', in *Frederick Douglass & Herman Melville: Essays in Relation*, ed. by Robert S. Levine and Samuel Otter (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008), pp. 110-133 (p. 119).
[65] Ibid., p. 153.
[66] Ibid., p. 156.

Revolution. Indeed, as Genovese notes, 'the revolutionary ideology that emerged in the 1790s was fed from both sides of the Atlantic.'[68] In other words, figures such as Toussaint and Dessalines were not only 'caught up' in the revolutionary moment, but actively fed and shaped its contours, disseminating a revolutionary message deeply grounded in Enlightenment philosophy. The revolutionary rhetoric of Toussaint in particular reflected a deep immersion in the ideals of natural rights philosophy. The epigraph at the beginning of this chapter offers an insight into Toussaint's revolutionary philosophy at perhaps its most radical, but his amendment to the new colonial constitution, drawn up by Napoleon in 1800, affirms his affiliation to the ideals of democratic Enlightenment. The third article of this document, for example, states that '[a]ll men who are born here live and die free and French',[69] which echoes the first article of the *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen.*[70] The wider revolutionary resonance of this rhetoric points to an extensive literary-philosophical education. According to Charles Elliot's biography, Toussaint was an apparent purveyor of 'Raynal, Epictetus, Cesar, Saxe, Herodotus, Plutarch, [and] Nepos'.[71] There is, furthermore, a whole body of evidence which suggests that Toussaint 'subscribed to the French newspapers.'[72] This literary education undoubtedly fostered, as C. L. R. James acknowledges, 'some idea of politics and the military art and the connection between them' and also gave him 'a thorough grounding in the economics and politics, not only of San Domingo, but of all the great empires of Europe which were engaged in colonial expansion and trade.'[73] In other words, Louverture's early grounding in classical philosophy and Enlightenment thought, and his prevailing connections with Atlantic currents of literary exchange, have been understood as the fundamental basis of his revolutionary campaign and his later drive towards administrative autonomy. Certainly, the eyewitness observer, Michel-Etienne Descourtilz, a French naturalist who served as a physician in Saint-Domingue in the late 1790s, supported this view, noting that he

---

[67] Ibid., p. 152.
[68] Genovese, p. 90.
[69] Toussaint Louverture, 'Constitution of the French Colony of Saint-Domingue', in Dubois and Garrigus, *Slave Revolution in the Caribbean 1789-1804*, Cf., pp. 167-170 (p. 168).
[70] 'Declaration of the Rights of Man', *The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History, and Diplomacy* (Yale Law School, 2008), <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/rightsof.asp> [accessed 9 August 2015].
[71] C. W. Elliott, *St. Domingo: Its Revolutions and its Hero, Toussaint Louverture, an Historical Discourse Condensed for the New York Library Association, Feb. 26, 1855* (New York: J. A. Dix, 1855), p. 27.
[72] Deborah Jenson, 'Toussaint Louverture, Spin Doctor?', in *Tree of Liberty: Cultural Legacies of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World*, ed. by Doris L. Garraway (Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 2008), pp.41-62 (p. 46).
[73] James, p. 74.

> watched [Toussaint] condense the substance of his addresses in a few spoken words, rework awkward or misunderstood sentences, and deal with several secretaries who took turns presenting him with their versions. He would cut unnecessary phrases, transpose pieces to arrange them better, and he showed that he was worthy of being considered that natural genius forecast by Raynal, whose memory he revered, considering as his predecessor.[74]

Although his skills in written French remain a subject of contention among scholars,[75] it is clear that his contemporaries saw him as a man with rhetorical skill, able to wield significant influence through the written word. Moreover, Toussaint rose to prominence as a secretary to the revolutionary leader Georges Biassou.[76] He thus located himself at the centre of Atlantic revolutionary exchanges, processing the flow of vital information, and in turn using this information to gain ascendancy and influence.

Dessalines's 'Declaration of Independence' was an even more forceful assertion of black (inter)nationalism, transforming Enlightenment philosophy into something that could be described as uniquely 'Haitian'. The first incarnation of the Declaration that emerged in November 1803, appearing in newspapers across fifteen American states in the early months of 1804,[77] extended the filial hand of friendship to 'men who do [..] justice' to the Haitian cause, and reasserted the universal right to liberty, which is represented as the 'dear[est]' of 'blessings'.[78] However, the rhetoric of the Declaration that was issued several months later would appear much more vitriolic, renouncing this filial sentiment and creating a dichotomy between 'Haitian' liberty and the 'false' liberty espoused by republican France.[79] While the wider Atlantic discourse of revolution and rights thus inevitably filtered through to revolutionary agents in Saint-Domingue, these agents also contributed to a new and more *radical* vision of universality that built upon the existing framework of natural law. As the violent retributive

---

[74] Michel-Etienne Descourtilz, 'Voyages d'un naturaliste', in *Facing Racial Revolution: Eyewitness Accounts of the Haitian Insurrection*, ed. by Jeremy D. Popkin (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 277.
[75] Deborah Jenson, *Beyond the Slave Narrative: Politics, Sex, and Manuscripts in the Haitian Revolution* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011), p. 55.
[76] Jenson, 'Toussaint Louverture', p. 47.
[77] Deborah Jenson, 'Dessalines's American Proclamations of the Haitian Independence', *The Journal of Haitian Studies*, 15 (2009), 72-102 (pp. 84-85).
[78] *Poulson's American Daily Advertiser*, XXXIII.8447 (5 January 1804), p. 2.

actions of Denmark Vesey, Gabriel Prosser, and Nathaniel Turner illuminated, people of colour from across the slaveholding Atlantic were in turn inspired to appropriate this radical discourse of universal liberty. Despite efforts to stem the flow of information, these ideas thus filtered outwards.

Given the intensity of black internationalist sentiment generated by the revolution and extending into the nineteenth century in America, Melville no doubt understood the symbolic potency of these discourses. Of course if, as Beecher suggests, Melville was familiar with Charles Elliott's work on Toussaint Louverture,[80] then he also would have known that Louverture and his contemporaries were party to these ideological exchanges. Although this vision of black intellectualism contradicted racial thinking in nineteenth-century America, which deflected anxieties about the impact and spread of revolutionary discourses, and justified the prevalence of American slavery, Melville's motif of the 'slumbering volcano' thus encrypts a pervasive fear of such radical revolutionary ideologies and their diffusive force. Like volcanic lava, this ideology threatens to 'erupt', and spread, and, while it may lie dormant, its destructive potential remains a pervasive threat owing to the revolutionary 'magma' embedded within. This threat is embodied by the chief mutineer Babo, who represents the revolutionary exchange network that binds, as Susan Gillman and Kirsten Silva Gruesz suggest, 'Haiti and revolutions both past and prospective'.[81] The potency of this network is encrypted in the motto that the reader learns is '[r]udely painted' on the side of the ship, '"Seguid vuestro jefe," (follow your leader)'.[82] As an imperative command, and one with distinctly militaristic overtones, this message incites agitation. However, the discursive resonance of this message is only borne out in the 'deposition' that follows, when the reader learns that it was Babo who 'traced [this] inscription',[83] reinforcing the connection between slave literacy, ideology, revolution, and power.

Clues that point to Babo's ability to galvanize revolutionary sentiments and channel the flow of discursive diffusion of course abound throughout the narrative. At all times, Babo

---

[79] 'The Haitian Declaration of Independence', in Dubois and Garrigus, *Slave Revolution in the Caribbean 1789-1804*, Cf., pp. 188-191 (p. 188).
[80] Beecher notes that Joshua Dix, who published *The Piazza Tales* in 1856 (which included Melville's revised version of 'Benito Cereno') published Elliott's book in 1855. See Beecher, p. 51.
[81] S. Gillman and K. S. Gruesz, 'Worlding America: The Hemispheric Text-Network', in *A Companion to American Literary Studies*, ed. by C. F. Levander and R. S. Levine (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2011), pp. 228-247 (p. 232).
[82] Melville, p. 116

maintains a pervasive presence, superintending Delano's private convocations with Cereno, navigating the subject of conversation, and exploiting Delano's naiveté by playing into his assumptions about black inferiority. However, his many displays of ingenuity and guile work in concert with a subtle militarism that links him to a network of slaves that help him to effect his mutiny. Indeed, as the deposition reveals, 'Babo was […] the ringleader', but the slave 'Atufal […] assisted him'.[84] This militarism is encrypted in the spectre of the 'hatchet-polishers', whose regimented 'cymballing',[85] reflects the 'harmony' of all component elements. This persistent image invariably unsettles Delano, but his unflagging belief in the intellectual inferiority of the slaves that he encounters on Cereno's ship nevertheless undercuts any visible signs to the contrary. Moreover, his assertion that Babo is 'an *un*commonly intelligent fellow [my emphasis]'[86] reflects a fundamental inability to connect him, or indeed any of the other black slaves on board the *San Dominick*, with a broader network of black intellectual exchange. Although he momentarily perceives 'a sudden indefinite association in his mind of Babo with Atufal',[87] he ultimately represses this cryptic link, and, in so doing, negates the ideological force of their revolutionary network.

When he finally acknowledges this diffusive spectre and the threat that it poses to his own crew, he launches a counterattack to subdue the mutineers. However, his efforts to rehabilitate Cereno after the event prove futile. Unlike Delano, Cereno is unable to perceive the revolt as an isolated incident, and the diffusive force of 'the negro' penetrates to the core of his psyche. His subsequent death, brought about (the reader is led to assume) by this psychic trauma, offers a prolepsis for the fate that awaits Delano, and America at large, if they do not heed the revolutionary warning encrypted on the side of the *San Dominick*. In Melville's own time, mounting racial tensions and a burgeoning black (inter)nationalist movement had proven that efforts to contain the diffusive spectre of Haiti had failed and that, if America did not respond to pleas for universal liberty then it, too, would 'follow' Haiti's 'lead'.

---

[83] Ibid., p. 260.
[84] Ibid., p. 250.
[85] Ibid., p. 139.
[86] Ibid., p. 215.
[87] Ibid., p. 223.

Plundering the 'Jewel(s) of the Antilles': Inversion and Opportunism

The Haitian Revolution and the diffusive force of a 'Haitian' revolutionary ideology thus precipitated a radical reevaluation of well-established and historically ingrained fictions about people of African descent. As a public intellectual, Thomas Jefferson had always sustained his position on slavery through recourse to accepted paradigms of racial difference. However, as Blackburn notes, the Haitian Revolution forced him to re-conceptualize 'people of color as protagonists of history'.[88] Notwithstanding efforts to contain the diffusive force of Haitian revolutionary narratives, the reality of maintaining these efforts was rendered increasingly problematic by successive rebel victories over the colonial authorities. By 1794, the ultimate victory had been won when the National Convention ratified the revolutionary commissioner Léger-Félicité Sonthonax's decree abolishing slavery in Saint-Domingue.[89] As Gwendolyn Hall notes, '[t]his decree was published in English and French and was widely distributed throughout the Caribbean.'[90] As such, its diffusive reach extended to black communities across the Americas. The ideological force of the revolution, sustained by the accepted mandate of universal rights, accelerated the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade (which occurred in the United States in 1808), gave voice to a number of black rights activists, and inspired the insurgent conspiracies of Gabriel Prosser, Denmark Vesey, and Nathaniel Turner. The revolutionary symbolism of Haiti had thus, by the beginning of the nineteenth century, penetrated to the political and cultural core of the North American mainland.

Encrypted anxieties concerning black internationalism were nevertheless mediated through popular appeals to the opportunities that an independent, but as yet unrecognized, black state presented. These opportunities were acknowledged in American public policies toward Saint-Domingue in the late 1790s. Indeed, such policies circumnavigated the looming threat of Haitian independence by forging beneficial diplomatic relations while surreptitiously repudiating the liberty, and eventual sovereignty, of Saint-Domingue's black citizen-subjects. The figure of Toussaint, whose outward-looking complaisance rendered him 'safe' in comparison with his

---

[88] Blackburn, 'Haiti, Slavery, and the Age of the Democratic Revolution', p. 658.
[89] James, p. 114. Slavery was abolished by public decree in Saint-Domingue in 1793, but this was ratified by the National Convention and extended to all colonies in 1794.
[90] Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana: The Development of Afro-Creole Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), p. 346.

successor Dessalines, who was seen as a 'warrior all too keen to embrace race war',[91] thus represented an opportunity to mediate the antagonism between a progressive Atlantic universalism represented by the Haitian Revolution and a slaveholding America, especially given Toussaint's ambitions to reinvigorate the Saint-Domingan plantation economy.[92] As the revolution progressed, and the radical repercussions of the conflict became increasingly apparent, America adopted a strategy of inversion, capitalizing on the economic alliances forged beyond its borders in order to defray the ideological threat of black internationalism *within* and secure its own future mercantile interests.

As Gaffield and Kaisary note, Toussaint was seen by Americans as someone with whom they could 'do business'.[93] As such, he was able to reconcile southern (and wider American) anxieties of a diffusive black radicalism with larger commericial interests. This reconciliation manifests itself in various spectral guises in 'Benito Cerino'. Beecher posits, for example, that Melville 'changed the year in which the events [of Delano's original narrative] took place from 1805 (when the Haitian revolution was over and Toussaint was dead) to 1799 (when Toussaint was the ruler of Saint-Domingue).[94] Toussaint's canny ingenuity as an international diplomat no doubt casts a decisive shadow over the text, and especially over the character of Babo, who Beecher notes is 'incredibly resourceful and endowed with a penetrating mind' like Toussaint.[95] Descourtilz's memoir recalling his experiences in revolutionary Saint-Domingue offers an insight into the depths of this 'penetrating mind', describing how Toussaint would throw lavish dinner parties for foreign emissaries to help seal negotiations, especially for supplies and munitions.[96] Babo is likewise shown to employ cunning and insight to manipulate the crews of the *San Dominick* and *The Bachelor's Delight*—qualities which are frequently commended by Delano. Although, to Melville's contemporaries, the story of Babo's merciless butchery of Don Alexandro Aranda (which is brought to light in the 'deposition' section) perhaps resonated more forcefully with popular images of Louverture's successor, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, this is offset

---

[91] Gaffield and Kaisary.
[92] Toussaint endeavoured to rebuild the plantation economy that had made Saint-Domingue so lucrative as a colony prior to the revolution. As Fick notes, his 'overriding economic objective was to make the colony produce for an export market, and to produce enough to put it back on the road to economic prosperity.' He would later impose a rural code that conscripted labourers to work on plantations and restricted certain privileges that came with emancipation. See Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, pp. 207-208.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Beecher, p. 44.
[95] Ibid., p. 45.
[96] Descourtilz, p. 280.

by the dichotomy that Delano establishes throughout the main narrative between Babo and Atufal, the 'mulish mutineer'[97] whose 'savage [and] colossal' figure emphasizes his physical corporeality.[98] In contradistinction, Babo is recognized as a valuable asset that Delano 'should like to have'.[99] In addition, whereas the 'mutineer' Atufal is secured in chains, Babo is given free rein to do as he pleases on board the *San Dominick* (or so it appears to Delano), assuaging any anxieties that Delano may have about the threat that he presents and compounding his 'value' as a 'loyal' slave trusted by his master. By creating this dichotomy, Melville diffuses the threat of radical revolutionary violence, and demonstrates how Babo serves Delano's immediate economic interests. This parallels America's diplomatic relationship with Saint-Domingue in the late 1790s.

Indeed, that Melville set the drama in the year 1799 is especially pertinent, corresponding with the year when a trade agreement was brokered between Toussaint Louverture and Alexander Hamilton following the initial embargo that was imposed after the slave insurrection of 1791.[100] The statement that formalized this agreement, issued by John Adams on 26 June 1799, acknowledges the 'expedien[ce]' and 'interest' in 'renew[ing] a commercial intercourse' with Saint-Domingue.[101] In an earlier letter sent to Thomas Pickering in February 1791, Hamilton nevertheless evinces anxiety about the nature of this relationship, firmly stating that under no circumstance should any agreement be used to signify America's endorsement of black claims to independence in the colony. He writes:

> The provision in the law is ample. But in this, my dear sir, as in everything else, we must unite caution with decision. The United States must not be committed on the independence of St. Domingo. No guarantee—no formal treaty—nothing that can rise up in judgement. It will be enough to let Toussaint be assured verbally, but explicitly, that upon his declaration of independence a commercial intercourse will be opened, and continue while he maintains it, and gives due protection to our vessels and property. I incline to think the declaration of independence ought to precede.[102]

---

[97] Melville, p. 147.
[98] Ibid., p. 220.
[99] Ibid., p. 168.
[100] John Adams, 'Proclamation of June 26, 1799 Regarding Commerce with St. Domingo', *The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy* (Yale Law School, 2008) <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/japroc02.asp> [accessed 8 August 2013].
[101] Ibid.
[102] Alexander Hamilton, 'Letter to Pickering, Feb 9, 1799', in *The Works of Alexander Hamilton*, ed. by John C. Hamilton, 12 vols, vol. 6, (New York: J. F. Trow, printer, 1850-51), p. 395.

Despite the fact that Hamilton was a supporter of Haitian independence, a fact made clear in this passage and in his later purported involvement with the drafting of the Saint-Domingan constitution issued by Toussaint in 1801,[103] he evidently hesitated to make such support publicly known. His arbitrary position in this letter betrays America's precarious position on the world-stage. Indeed, Hamilton was no doubt acutely aware that such a forthright vindication of independence would likely elicit retaliative action by either France (who were at this time engaged in a quasi marine war with America) or Britain (whose naval forces had only retreated from Saint-Domingue in 1798, and who had been spoiling for another war since the Treaty of Paris had ended the American revolutionary war in 1783).[104] Navigating these diplomatic dilemmas and mediating forces that might 'rise up in judgement' was thus key to preserving America's own fledgling sovereignty.[105] By drawing up a trading scheme that conspicuously avoided the subject of the independence that revolutionaries in Saint-Domingue were then in a bloody process of negotiating, Hamilton was able to elide such diplomatic quandaries. The resulting compact between Saint-Domingue and the United States proffered economic benefits while suppressing the ideological affinity between the 'revolutionary' republicanisms in America and Saint-Domingue. Set within this contextual frame, Delano is a fictional analogue of Alexander Hamilton, recognizing the 'value' of a Toussaint-like Babo, while consciously refusing to engage with the notion that such a 'value' should translate to universal freedoms.

At the time that this trade agreement was being brokered, the treasurer of Saint-Domingue, Monsieur Peries, documented his observations concerning the transactions between foreign governments and the colonial administration. Offering an insight into the exploitative and opportunistic nature of the trading relationship between Saint-Domingue and the United States, his manuscript, entitled *Revolution de St. Domingue*, relays that:

> L'interêt de nos Ennemis etait de nous voir sacrifier nos Colonies par cette inconséquence qu'ils nous avaient innoculée et que leur politique à parfaitement soutenu,

[103] Thomas O. Ott, *The Haitian Revolution, 1789-1804* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1973), p. 119.
[104] In between this time and the American Civil War, relations between Britain and America would remain strained, and the tension was only temporarily dissipated by the Jay Treaty of 1794. See *The Early Republic and Antebellum America: An Encyclopedia of Social, Political, Cultural, and Economic History*, ed. by Christopher G. Bates, 4 vols, vol. 2 (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), pp. 442-443.
[105] Johnson, *Diplomacy in Black and White*, p. 5.

> qu'ils etaient èloignès d'effectuer alors eux même ces projets chimériques qu'ils presentaient sous le nom d'humanité et de devoir; ils étaient trop attachés à leur Commerce que tout tendrit ches eux à pendre exclusif, pour adopter de pareilles mesures: leur but a été semple: tout ce qui s'est passé sur cela est trop connu pour entrer dans des grands details, même pour en parler encore — il n'y a que les avènements qui en ont été le resultat qu'on na pas prévu ou qu'on na pas voulu prèvoir qu'il importe de mettre sous les yeux du public et du Gouvernement.[106]

Lamenting the 'unforseen calamities' of the revolution (avènements […] qu'on na pas prévu) which he observes had wrought the dissolution of the white colonial administration, Peries's account evinces a tone of dejection. Agonizing over the course of events, he surrenders himself to the scrutiny of the public and the [metropolitan] government, but juxtaposes his martyrdom with a sharp critique of America, depicted as a mercenary aggressor driven by commercial interests exploiting the weaknesses of the administration to stake its claim in the prosperous colony. The values of 'humanity and duty' that undergird the United States are represented as a superficial mask for strategy and guile ('ces projets chimeriques'). Peries's account thus underscores the dualistic and duplicitous nature of American government policy toward Saint-Domingue, which at one moment pretends to support the plight of besieged colonists, and at the next enters into a lucrative trade agreement with Toussaint Louverture, the adversary of the white colonial administration. Despite his uncontested bias, Peries's manuscript offers an insight into the equivocal attitude that America exhibited towards an independence-seeking Saint-Domingue during the Adams administration and the prevailing culture of cautious opportunism which extended throughout successive presidential administrations during the antebellum era.[107] As Ashli White affirms, '[w]hite Americans were at times unabashed in their discounting of the specter of revolution, but […] trade agreement[s] with […] Saint Domingue would make such

---

[106] 'REVOLUTION de St. Domingue, par M[onsieur ?] Peries, Tresorier on 1799, 1800, 1801', (18??), MS 38074, Manuscripts, British Library, London, p. 8. Translation: The plan of our enemies was to see us sacrifice our colonies by this inconsistency with which they inoculated us and that perfectly supported their policy, that they were far from carrying out their own chimerical projects that they are presenting in the name of humanity and duty; they were so attached to their trade that they were given exclusivity, to adopt such measures: their goal was simple: everything that has passed on the subject is too well known to enter into great depth about, even to speak about again - they are only calamities whose consequences we did not foresee or did not want to foresee and which will be important to submit to the scrutiny of the public and the Government.

[107] Indeed, despite the strengthening of ties during the Boyer era and enthusiasm for the emigration campaign, public recognition of Haiti did not follow suit. As Fanning posits, however, the subject of Haiti would remain a contested one throughout the first half of the nineteenth century and often reflected the divided interests of 'the slaveholding South and the market-seeking North'. See Fanning, *Caribbean Crossing*, p. 43.

disregard public policy.'[108] While various policy shifts reflected the discrepancies between parties (particularly during the era of Jefferson and Hamilton), political principle, whether Federalist or Democratic-Republican, often gave way to opportunity, and trading alliances with Saint-Domingue shifted the public focus from the spectre of black retribution onto the promise of economic reward.

This paradox was effectively mediated through a selective emphasis on the immediate benefits of such an agreement, and a minimization of the immediate and longer term risk. This inversive strategy is deployed to great effect in a public statement that was issued by the Consul of the United States at Port Republicain (Port-au-Prince) in 1800. This statement records the news that:

> A complete and unconditional submission of the Southern Department of this island, to the commander in chief Toussaint Louverture, has taken place. Jeremie, that was the last given up, official reports have this day been received of its surrender. Thus the whole department is under the jurisdiction of general Toussaint, whose conduct towards the deluded inhabitants has been marked by the most honourable humanity. Almost a general amnesty has been accorded, and the citizens of all colours in that quarter, now hail him as their deliverer. His opponent, Rigaud, with 40 or 50 of the officers attached to his person, have made their escape, by embarking in a small boat, where destined is not known. The general is now actively employed in organizing the departments; and a short time will secure to us this place, an intercourse with that rich country, which must greatly benefit our commerce. Several mercantile expeditions are already on foot for Jeremie, which promises an advantageous result. […] I am confidently informed, that not only a considerable quantity of coffee is in the mountains of the Grande Ance, but there is also a large collection of produce in store at Jeremie, which will find its way here and give an activity to our business.[109]

Channeling an outward-looking optimism, the statement focuses on the military efficiency of the liberal and business-like strategy of Toussaint Louverture, and plays down the sectional complexity of the conflict secreted in the spectre of Rigaud, who, as this statement acknowledges, was forced into exile during the latter stages of the revolution. Earlier fears of 'murder and devastation' give way to a general optimism that is bolstered by the 'promise' of an

[108] White, *Encountering Revolution*, p. 154.
[109] *City Gazette*, XVIII.4093 (13 October 1800), p. 2.

'advantageous result'. Economic opportunity is also foregrounded in the multiple and explicit references to the economic bounty of Saint-Domingue, especially to the 'considerable quantity of coffee' which no doubt titillated the senses of cosmopolitan American readers who nurtured a taste for luxurious goods. Furthermore, the threat of ongoing violence is subsumed by allusions to Toussaint's 'humanity' and to the 'amnesty' that he has brought to effect. However, although Toussaint's good character and diplomatic openness is celebrated, it is not acknowledged in any open endorsement of independence; while the consul alludes ambiguously to Toussaint's 'organi[zation of] the departments', he suppresses any consideration of the longer term future of Toussaint's administration, and America's position towards it.

This mediation between the suppression of an incendiary black nationalism and the active exploitation of commercial opportunity is played out literally at the end of the narrative account of 'Benito Cereno' when Delano physically suppresses the slave rebellion in order to claim the prize located within the *San Dominick* which, the reader learns, amounts to 'more than a thousand doubloons' in value.[110] The initial risk of recapturing the *San Dominick* is here offset against the prospect of reward, and the trepidation evinced by Delano's crew, who initially 'object[…] against their commander's going', launch themselves into combat with the mutinous slaves when they hear that 'no small part' of the prize will be theirs.[111] The *San Dominick*, like the real colony of Saint-Domingue, thus contains abundant riches open to the exploitation of covetous imperialists, represented by the merchant-crew of *The Bachelor's Delight*, and the acquisition of these riches trounces the risk of violent reprisals. After the ship is secured and the mutinous slaves are subdued, the narrative shifts its focus from the offending rebels toward the triumph of the American crew, and the reader does not learn of the fate of the rebels until the deposition narrative. When the combined crew of the *San Dominick* and *The Bachelor's Delight* reach their final destination in Lima, the reader is offered a cathartic reprieve; the curative effects of this 'hospitable refuge' work to restore narrative harmony.[112]

Here, however, Melville makes another important deviation from the original narrative. While the fictional Cereno is reduced to a cipher who retreats into the shadow of the monastery, the real Benito Cereno attempts to swindle Delano and 'effect [his] ruin' after their arrival at

[110] Melville, p. 241.
[111] Ibid.
[112] Ibid., p. 246.

Conception,[113] and, in so doing, preserve his own personal stake in the *Tryal*'s cargo. Whereas the real Delano is represented as the victim of shallow device, Melville's Delano thus emerges as heroic and triumphant, and no proceeding events impede upon his acquisition of the coveted 'prize'. This sustains Delano's belief that his triumph 'is owing to providence',[114] which encrypts a more entrenched belief in the providential virtue of American mercantilism.[115] The lingering 'shadow' that looms over Melville's Cereno is thus rebuffed by the certainty offered by mercantile opportunity—a certainty that is embodied by the '[w]arm [and] steadfast […] trades' that 'fan [Cereno's] cheek' on his voyage from Conception to Lima.[116] Melville's play on the word 'trades' (by which he means 'trade winds') inevitably reinforces this connection. Like the real American merchants who quickly 'overcame the fears they harboured about importing insurrection from Saint-Domingue',[117] Delano overcomes the 'malign machinations' of the *San Dominick*'s mutineers. Eschewing any 'moralization' of the preceding events, Delano looks to the 'bright sun […], and the blue sea, and the blue sky' which are shown to 'have turned over new leaves' and 'forgotten it all'.[118] In this way, the prevailing threat of black revolution is mediated through a rhetoric of optimism.

By anchoring the drama of 'Benito Cereno' in 1799, Melville demonstrated an acute understanding of the complex web of diplomatic relations during the early republican period and the pragmatic needs of emerging world powers seeking to break away from the thrall of European colonialism and the 'mercantilist powers that dominated the Atlantic world'.[119] As such, his narrative challenges the force of the dichotomy between black and white, between revolutionary excess and revolutionary progress, and between Haiti and the United States. This narrative invariably resonated with his own contemporary readership, and with antebellum America's conflicted relationship to slavery. By reproducing this narrative of commercial opportunism, Melville demonstrated the need to challenge the ideological motivations of economic relationships and possible contradictions they presented to republican democracy (especially in the 'free' North). The passage of the Fugitive Slave Law in 1850 and the repeal of

---

[113] Delano, p. 329.
[114] Melville, p. 266.
[115] This idea is explored by Max Weber, who connects Benjamin Franklin's 'Protestant ethic' with American capitalism. See Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. by Talcott Parsons (London and New York: Routledge, 1992).
[116] Melville, p. 268.
[117] White, *Encountering Revolution*, p. 155.
[118] Melville, p. 267.

the Missouri Compromise in 1852 reflected the continuing resonance of this narrative, demonstrating how antislavery sentiments operated in concert with a mercenary opportunism.

'The Dark Spaniard': Delano, Displacement, and the Veil of Exceptionalism

The excesses of the revolutionary Atlantic were increasingly brought to bear throughout the course of the 1790s, challenging the 'virtues' of revolutionary republicanism. This was compounded by Robespierre's Reign of Terror in 1793. These radical events signalled the ultimate limits of Jeffersonian politics, which increasingly disassociated itself from the ideals of the French Revolution after this period.[120] Of course, as Jefferson himself acknowledged, Saint-Domingue represented a more imminent and certainly closer geographical threat to American republicanism than French Jacobinism, presenting New World slave societies with an apocalyptic vision of what lay in wait. At no time was this more apparent than in 1804, when the new 'Haitian' emperor, Jean-Jacques Dessalines commissioned the massacre of thousands of former colonists across former French Saint-Domingue and extending into the Spanish territory. This shocking demonstration of violence was magnified by his subsequent assertion that by commissioning this massacre he had 'avenged America'.[121] Although Dessalines was recalling the spectre of New World colonialism represented by a larger Americ*as*, this discourse of 'vengeance' resonated across U.S. America throughout the antebellum period in the writings of African Americans such as David Walker and Frederick Douglass. Indeed, the trope of the 'slumbering volcano', overlooked by Melville's Delano, spoke to the persistent white fear that 'another Hayti' would emerge in the United States in the turbulent decades leading up to the Civil War.[122] However, the discourse of racial and colonial vengeance that signalled the birth of independent Haiti was absorbed by America's claim to an 'exceptional' republican and Anglo-Protestant heritage; according to this frame of reference, the Haitian Revolution was the violent

---

[119] Johnson, *Diplomacy in Black and White*, p. 30.
[120] Cleves notes that '[a]ccounts of the events in France preceded local affairs in the columns as editors provided eager readers with details of the increasing bloodshed of the incipient Reign of Terror'. See Rachel Hope Cleves, *The Reign of Terror in America: Visions of Violence from Anti-Jacobinism to Antislavery* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 1-2.
[121] Dessalines, qtd. in Jenson, *Beyond the Slave Narrative*, p. 140.
[122] J. Jacobus Flournoy, *An Essay on the Origin, Habits, &c. of the African Race: Incidental to the Propriety of Having Nothing to Do with Negroes* (New York: 1835), p. 41.

product of *French* excess and 'French negroes' and not the product of a larger 'American' network of black internationalism. As White argues in more elaborate terms,

> white Americans set aside transnational racial ties and looked for answers that were purportedly unique to the French colony. They highlighted the differences between themselves and their Caribbean counterparts in order to dismiss the possibility of a similar rebellion in the United States. In other words, as the Haitian Revolution challenged slavery and racism in increasingly universal terms, white U.S. residents particularized the causes of the revolution, concocting explanations that would absolve their country from the same fate.[123]

In spite of resounding evidence that the slave system was doomed to destruction, America continued to envision itself as an isolated outsider, and to see its own slave system as distinct from that of the 'other' Americ*as*. The 'revolutionary' leanings of black and enslaved people across the Atlantic were attributed to colonial misrule and degeneracy in the 'Creole' slave systems of the Caribbean.[124] This dichotomy between an exceptional 'America' immune from racial 'vengeance' and an 'other' and fundamentally corrosive Americ*as* is established in Melville's narrative through the dualism between Delano and Cereno, to whom the narrative alludes as 'the Spaniard' no less than eighty-three times in an effort to affirm his cultural otherness. In contrast, Delano is framed as 'the American' in a totalizing gesture that bolsters his exceptional (U.S.) American identity but entombs his inherent connections to a wider Americ*as*.[125] Although Cereno is introduced as a 'native and resident of Chili',[126] his 'American' identity is overshadowed by the corrupting vices of an Old World European lineage which Delano conspicuously eschews. By establishing a distinction between the virtuous American republic that he, his ship, and his elusive crew embody and Cereno, the 'dark Spaniard',[127] Delano channels the exceptional attitudes of early republican writers such as John Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, who conceived of the U.S. 'American' as a 'class of m[a]n' that Europe was

---

[123] Ashli White, 'The Saint-Dominguan Refugees and American Distinctiveness in the Early Years of the Haitian Revolution, in *The World of the Haitian Revolution*, ed. by David Patrick Geggus and Norman Fiering (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2009), pp. 248-260 (p. 248).
[124] James Alexander (Alec) Dun, 'Atlantic Antislavery, American Abolition', in *The World of the Revolutionary American Republic, Land, Labor, and the Conflict for a Continent*, ed. by Andrew Shankman (New York and London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 218-245 (p. 222).
[125] Melville, p. 120.
[126] Ibid., p. 137.
[127] Ibid., p. 165.

conspicuously lacking.[128] However, as Gillman and Gruesz point out, the 'other' world that Cereno represents is only a 'shadow of the one represented by the protagonist from whose perspective the story is told'.[129] In other words, Delano's parochial 'exceptionalism' protects him from the encroaching threat of racial rebellion that looms over him; by displacing his anxieties onto Cereno, the 'Guy-Fawkish conspirator',[130] Delano mediates the diffusive force of the numerous instances of black violence he witnesses against the *San Dominick*'s crewmen and situates the threat of black rebellion beyond the frame of U.S. 'America'.

This culture of 'displacement' was a prominent feature of American discourse at the time of the Haitian Revolution and during successive periods of slave unrest in the United States, which were often attributed to the influence of foreign 'outsiders' as opposed to the agency of internal agitators, least of all black ones.[131] Anxieties concerning the agency of 'Frenchmen' in particular often pervaded accounts of black conspiracies that followed on the heels of the Haitian Revolution. These anxieties are especially evident in the trial reports of the Gabriel Prosser Conspiracy. Indeed, despite the fact that testimonies offered by conspirators, such as Ben Woolfolk,[132] spoke to an ideological affiliation with a universal revolutionary discourse, and corroborate Sidbury's view that 'Gabriel and his followers spoke in idioms associated with the American, French, and Haitian Revolutions',[133] the universality of these idioms is overlooked by the trial's commentators. In the commentary on Gabriel's trial in particular, the universal drive for freedom from oppression is superseded by allusions to the external influence of two white Frenchmen.[134] These elusive Frenchmen absorb the focus of subsequent local news reports, which urge caution against 'contamination' by external 'French' sources. This anxiety, which in part reflected real anxieties about the excesses of French culture and their degenerative effects

---

[128] In *Letters from an American Farmer*, Crèvecoeur answers the question 'What is an American?' by asserting that 'Europe has no such class of men'. J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer* (New York: Fox, Duffield & Company, 1904), p. 57.
[129] Gillman and Gruesz, p. 236.
[130] Ibid., p. 2397.
[131] This is a theme that will be explored in greater depth in Chapter 3.
[132] In the testimony of Ben Woolfolk it is noted that the conspirators planned to 'purchase a piece of Silk for a flag on which they would have written death or liberty,' and that they planned to kill all resident whites, excepting those friendly to their cause, 'unless they agreed to the freedom of the Blacks'. See 'Testimony in the Trial of Gabriel, 6 October 1800', *Library of Virginia*, <http://www.lva.virginia.gov/exhibits/DeathLiberty/gabriel/gabtrial17.htm> [accessed 30 September 2013].
[133] Sidbury, p. 87.
[134] In the transcription of the testimony of Prosser's Ben, it is noted that '2 frenchmen had actually joined whom he said Jack Ditcher knew, but whose names he would not mention to the Witness'. See 'Testimony in the Trial of Gabriel'.

upon republican democracy, was nevertheless heavily inflated, and detracted from the domestic problem of a growing black unrest.

The extent to which Franco-hysteria might have been exaggerated was acknowledged in an article from the Alexandria *Times* in the wake of the Prosser trial. Interrogating the hyperbolic nature of such accounts, and their emphasis on the involvement of 'French' incendiaries in black revolts, the article scrutinizes the validity of an incoming news report from Richmond, which had claimed that 'the conspiracy of the Negroes ha[d] been set on foot by two Frenchmen', contesting that '[t]his species of trick has been so often played off, that it no longer carries any weight with it.'[135] Certainly, however, this concession is somewhat aberrant, as most contemporary observers framed their anxieties about the diffusive influence of black militancy within a critique of the corruptive vices of 'Frenchness' or the 'Caribbean' colonial environment, which obscured the fundamental iniquity of the New World slave system at large. In New York in the mid-1790s, a series of fires broke out, and a rumour was circulated attributing the blame to a group of black Saint-Domingans. It was reported that these 'French negroes' took pride in their incendiary actions and repudiated their African American counterparts for 'not know[ing] how to set a fire', apparently boasting 'we at the Cape know better.'[136] As White suggests, the circulation of this rumour implied that white Americans saw 'French' blacks as a threat owing to the fact that they would 'corrupt the "good character" of African Americans', suggesting that 'black New Yorkers did not know how to plan a large-scale attack and would not have thought of doing so, were it not for pressure from "French negroes."'[137] Unruly black behaviour was thus seen not as retaliation against a violent and pervasive Atlantic slave system that spanned the Americ*as*, but was rather seen as the result of a 'foreign' (but assuredly European and Catholic) culture that had degenerated into excess. The spectre of a 'foreign' colonialism steeped in decadent, Old World values haunts Delano throughout the course of his time on board the *San Dominick* and ultimately offsets the fear of a deeper and more complex problem embedded in his vision of a supposedly 'regenerate' U.S. 'America', encrypting a pervasive fear of the uncanny similarities between *all* New World slave economies, republican or otherwise.

---

[135] *Alexandria Advertiser Times and the District of Columbia Daily Advertiser*, V.1075 (1 October 1800), p. 2.
[136] Qtd. in White, *Encountering Revolution*, p. 143.
[137] Ibid.

Such similarities were acknowledged by Charles Pinckney, the South Carolina governor, when he wrote to the Saint-Domingan colonial assembly shortly after the outbreak of the revolution, stating that:

> When we recollect how nearly similar the situation of the southern States and St. Domingo are in the profusion of slaves—that a day may arrive when they may be exposed to the same insurrections—we cannot but sensibly feel for your situation.[138]

This uncanny realization highlighted the inherent contradictions within the state infrastructures of the nascent American republic, which, despite efforts to eliminate slavery and a reliance on a transatlantic trade in trafficked Africans, became increasingly reliant on the perpetuation of a domestic trade as it accumulated more territory to the South and West of its borders. The 'exceptional' narrative of America's democratic, republican genesis was thus increasingly made to retrofit complex and contradictory desires.

The contradictions inherent in these exceptionalist narratives are underwritten in Melville's Delano, who not only dismisses the spectral threat of retributive slave violence manifested in Haiti but, like America more generally, displaces it onto the 'other' Americas. That Delano is a native New Englander who we meet in the Pacific (in other words, on the Western coast of America) only serves to reinforce this contradiction, affirming his dissenting Anglo-Protestant heritage and his symbolic connection to a Westward migration that in Melville's time became the cornerstone of a new exceptionalist narrative.[139] This migration, however, also fuelled the expansion of slavery. Symbolically, then, Delano reflects this tension and is shown to be implicated in the perpetuation of a system that he regards as a corrupting vice on board the *San Dominick*, which operates within this hermeneutic frame as a metonym for colonial slavery in the 'other' Americas. His complicity within a larger colonial economy is also underwritten in the secreted identities of his crewmen and the elusive character of the 'valuable cargo' harboured on *The Bachelor's Delight*.[140] Indeed, despite the emphatic contrast that the narrative establishes between Delano's modest 'sealer' and the grand and decadent slaving vessel

---

[138] Qtd. in Matthew J. Clavin, *Toussaint Louverture and the American Civil War: The Promise and Peril of a Second Haitian Revolution* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), p. 17.
[139] Deborah Madsen argues that the drive West and the ideology of 'Manifest Destiny that supported it was stimulated by an exceptionalist discourse. See chapter 5, 'Westerns and Westward Expansion' in Deborah Madsen, *American Exceptionalism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998).
[140] Melville, p. 109.

that Cereno commands, it also contains subtle clues which point to the encrypted complexity of Delano's mercantile past, his ambiguous present, and the 'exceptional' America that he embodies, immune from slave revolt.

The reader learns, for example, that the 'noisy confusion' that Delano witnesses on board the *San Dominick* is at variance with 'the quiet orderliness of the sealer's comfortable family of a crew'.[141] When he later upbraids Cereno for his failure to discipline one of the young black boys on board the *San Dominick*, who is witnessed striking one of his white companions over the head with a knife, he asserts that '[h]ad such a thing happened on board the Bachelor's Delight, instant punishment would have followed.'[142] This statement is subtly revelatory, suggesting that his unified 'family' might contain subversive elements that are nevertheless constrained through his scrupulous control. This reinforces the patriarchal and patrician nature of the Anglo-Protestant family. The lurking significance of this statement is magnified at a later stage in the narrative when a number of Delano's crewmen arrive in a boat with supplies for the ailing crew of the *San Dominick* and Delano prevents them from boarding, 'being unwilling to add to the confusion of the decks.'[143] The suggestion that his crew might 'add' to the 'confusion' encrypts diverse imaginative possibilities which imply that Delano's crew might more faithfully resemble Cereno's crew and 'cargo' than Delano leads the reader to believe. The nature of the crew on *The Perseverance*, the ship commanded by the real Delano, was certainly a far cry from this constructed fiction of a harmonious 'family', and comprised 'refractory' elements and 'unfaithful' Botany Bay convicts.[144] The complex identity of Delano's fictional crew and the full scope of his 'cargo' nevertheless remain elusive to the reader, even throughout the deposition, when the retributive violence perpetrated by the *San Dominick*'s crew is brought to light.[145] By thus obfuscating the 'exceptional' identity of his own ship, Delano displaces his anxieties concerning Babo and the other black militants onto Cereno and the general 'disarray' of the *San Dominick* and the 'other' Americas to which they are connected.

By taking charge of the mutinous ship, and the 'reward' which includes 'no small part' of its 'cargo' (and, presumably, a share in the labouring bodies of the rebel slaves), Delano and his crew nevertheless affirm that they have a shared interest with Cereno, the *San Dominick*, and this

[141] Ibid., p. 128.
[142] Ibid., p. 141.
[143] Ibid., p. 192.
[144] Delano, p. 320.

'other' Americas, as all interests merge into one. Cereno, his crew, and his cargo represent a phantom of the 'refractory' elements that Delano secretes. In this sense, the dynamic between Delano and Cereno conforms neatly to the prototype of the Rankian double, in which the object of fear is manifested in the shadow.[146] Like Freud's notion of the uncanny, which drew heavily on Rank's ideas, the double is understood in psychoanalytic terms as a reflection of certain fears and taboos. Through literary analysis, Rank demonstrated how the repressed anxieties of fictional protagonists often manifest themselves in the form of a physical or metaphorical 'double': in short, in a 'vessel' external to that protagonist. In gothic terms, therefore, Cereno is essentially a surrogate, who experiences the fears that Delano refuses to admit to consciousness. He is the shadow of the fears that he represses, and haunts as his spectral 'double'. Delano's distrust of Cereno is thus a reflection on the inherent contradictions of his (and indeed Melville's) America, which replicate the colonial infrastructures of the wider Americ*as*, and extends its scope to encompass the timeframe of the insurrectionary Caribbean. As Gillman and Greusz demonstrate, it is largely through Melville's manipulation of time in the narrative that the erasure of definite (political, cultural, and geographical) boundaries is effected, as he navigates his 1855 readers through Delano's 1817 *Narrative* and the fictional events of 1799.[147] In this way, the relevance of 'Haiti' is made constantly transferrable and perpetually inescapable as the narrative of Cereno and Delano is adapted across time and space. This reinforces the polymorphous and circular energy that the Haitian Revolution has in the American imaginary. Despite Delano's attempts to displace and thereby secrete his fear of Haiti and the diffusive black discourses to which its revolutionary saga gave voice, it keeps returning to haunt him, and to haunt America more generally in the perpetual existence of domestic slavery.

Melville thus establishes 'displacement' as a recurring historical pattern that defines the 'exceptional' American psyche. The views of American southerners who attributed the Haitian Revolution to the excesses of 'Old World' colonialism were echoed (although manifested in slightly variegated forms) in Melville's contemporary reality. Unable to confront the threat embodied by Babo, and the black (inter)nationalism at the heart of the Haitian Revolution, Delano magnifies Cereno's foreign 'otherness' and diminishes Babo's agency. That Cereno's

---

[145] Melville, p. 263.
[146] Otto Rank, *The Double: A Psychoanalytic Study*, ed. and trans. by Harry Tucker Jr (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1971), p. 51.
[147] Gillman and Greusz, p. 231.

status as a Creole is abstracted through a more ambiguous 'European' frame serves only to heighten his elusive 'foreignness' as someone who is categorically *un*-'American'. While at times evincing the characteristics of a glorious Spanish colonialism,[148] and at others a more general and loosely-affiliated Catholic piety, his configuration within the narrative as a dangerous threat to 'American' identity also evokes the spectre of French revolutionary Jacobinism.[149] This spectre is most visible in the shaving scene, when Delano momentarily conflates Babo and Cereno with 'a headsman' and 'a man at the block',[150] symbolically recalling the memory of the guillotine and what Sundquist calls 'Jacobin terror'.[151] The scene is undoubtedly sinister, and evokes terror in the reader's imagination.

However, besides the Jacobin threat that is therein manifested, Melville also encrypts a link to popular depictions of the types of black vengeance that were exacted against white colonists in the wake of the Haitian Revolution. Indeed, the imagery of blood-spilling and throat-cutting that is present in this scene recalls the memory of Dessalines (Figure 2), who, as Dayan notes, famously 'called his people to arms with the command, "Koupe tèt, boule kay" (Cut off their heads, burn their houses).'[152] Certainly, these types of images represented too great a horror for most Americans to reconcile,[153] and those more favourably inclined towards the cause of Haiti preferred to remember Toussaint as a martyr-figure than recall the bloody violence of Dessalines and his counterparts. Mirroring this deflective tendency, Delano subverts the palpable resonance of this image and dismisses the potential violence of the spectacle as 'one of those antic conceits, appearing and vanishing in a breath, from which, perhaps, the best regulated mind is not always free.'[154] Any suspicion of violence is attributed rather to Cereno than to Babo, who Delano suspects will feel the wrath of Cereno's 'Spanish spite' for the presumed 'mistake' of

---

[148] Both Sundquist and Adler have noted the allusions to Charles V in 'Benito Cereno'. See Joyce Sparer Adler, '*Benito Cereno*: Slavery and Violence in the Americas', and Eric J. Sundquist, '*Benito Cereno* and New World Slavery', in *Critical Essays on Herman Melville's 'Benito Cereno'*, ed. by Robert E. Burkholder (New York and Toronto: G. K. Hall & Co., 1992).

[149] Sundquist notes that 'The conflation of Spanish and French rule, coupled with the allusion to the Inquisition, yokes anti-Catholic and anti-Jacobin sentiment'. See Sundquist, '*Benito Cereno* and New World Slavery', p. 155.

[150] Melville, p. 203.

[151] Sundquist, '*Benito Cereno* and New World Slavery', p. 158.

[152] Dayan, p. 50.

[153] Even Leonara Sansay's '*Horrors*', which offers graphic descriptions of black-on-white violence during the revolutionary period, balances such horrifying imagery with accounts of the 'honourable' acts of 'human nature' witnessed during 'the first days of the massacre'. See Mary Hassal, *Secret History; or, The Horrors of St. Domingo, in a series of letters, written by a lady at Cape Francois, to Colonel Burr, late vice-president of the United States, principally during the command of General Rochambeau* (Philadelphia: Bradford & Inskeep, 1808), p. 169.

[154] Melville, p. 203.

cutting his cheek.[155] Despite the fact that Babo wields the razor, and despite the gothic Dessalines-like shadow that he casts in this scene, it is Cereno who elicits Delano's suspicions, compounded by Cereno's 'nervous' reaction to 'the sight of barber's blood'.[156] The looming threat of Babo (who represents the external threat of Haiti but also points to the rebellious black spectre that haunts Delano's, and, by extension, Melville's, internal reality) is thus stripped of rebellious agency and deflected onto Cereno. This in turn reinforces the parochial boundaries of Delano's exceptionalism and highlights America's inability to confront the realities of black (inter)nationalism.

Figure 2: Manuel Lopez Lopez, *Vida de J. J. Dessalines, gefe de los Negros de Santo Domingo* (1806), ink engraving. Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Archive of Early American Images, Brown University, Providence, RI 02912.

[155] Ibid., p. 210.
[156] Ibid., p. 206.

Undoubtedly, Melville's use of free-indirect speech does a great deal of work here, and in numerous other spaces in the text, in demonstrating the cultural arrogance of Delano, whose voice is frequently subsumed by the omniscient narratorial one. Indeed, through the use of the free-indirect style, Melville problematizes and obscures the boundaries between author and narrator, demonstrating that it is not necessarily he who, as Fiedler suggests, 'finds the problem of slavery and the Negro a little exotic,'[157] but rather Delano—and, by extension, white America at large—who constantly fail to probe the signifiers of black mutiny that are repeatedly thrust in their faces. In the shaving scene in particular, Melville uses this free-indirect frame to expose Delano's solipsism. Meditating on the peculiar grooming 'skills' of Babo, Delano overlooks the pervasive threat that he represents and reassures himself that:

> There is something in the negro which, in a peculiar way, fits him for avocations about one's person. Most negroes are natural valets and hairdressers: taking to the comb and brush congenially as to the castinets, and flourishing them apparently with almost equal satisfaction.[158]

Delano's uncritical reflection on Babo's 'performance' is incongruous with the uncanny horror of the scene and its bloody revolutionary resonance. This compounds the reader's sense of dramatic irony, and urges them to challenge the validity of Delano's supposedly 'regulated' mind. As the narrative vacillates between a (relatively) objective indirect style supported by the authoritative perspective of the 'deposition' narrative, and a free-indirect style in which the solipsism of Delano is laid bare, the reader is given the tools to make the deductions that Delano cannot (or will not). His 'generosity and piety' are seen, in this context, as dangerous ignorance to the encroaching and unavoidable reality of black militancy.

Of course, the deposition works partly to absolve Delano's credulity, and his inability to interpret the 'hints [conveyed] to him of the true state of affairs' is attributed not only to his 'generosity and piety', but also to 'devices which offered contradictions'.[159] These 'contradictions' are manifested in the figure of Babo, who presents himself as the epitome of faithfulness and servile devotion, a fact that is compounded by his unrelenting attachment to

---

[157] Fiedler, p. 401.
[158] Melville, p. 199.

Cereno throughout Delano's stay on the *San Dominick*. So pronounced is this vision in Delano's mind that he sees the relationship between Babo and Cereno as symbiotic; this is symbolically reinforced during the scene in which Babo 'present[s] himself as a crutch' to Cereno, which envisions him as a physical embodied prosthesis.[160] Unable to tell them apart, Delano cannot discriminate between the presumed faithfulness of the one and the revolutionary threat of the other. As a result, the 'day-long enigmas and contradictions' converge around them both,[161] leading Delano to question whether 'Don Benito [might] be any way in complicity with the blacks'.[162] At no point, however, does he locate the origin of rebellious agency with the black slaves on board the *San Dominick*, and least of all with Babo. The signs of black unruliness abound and are visible for the reader to see as they follow Delano's movements, from the early introduction of the curious black hatchet-polishers, and the mutinous Atufal bound in chains, to the scene in which a slave stabs one of Cereno's crewmen in the head without apparent provocation. Yet in spite of the omniscient narrator's efforts at rendering these scenes conspicuous, Delano constantly displaces the ship's failings and 'disorder' onto Benito Cereno, and his compatriots. Emblematically, the downfall of the *San Dominick*/Saint-Domingue is linked to the poisonous and degenerative effects of white Europeans and 'Creole' slavery.

However, the deposition also explores the extent of the retributive racial violence that Delano is unwilling to confront. Here, the skeleton of Aranda—which remains literally veiled throughout the course of the main narrative—is clinically 'unveiled', and the horror of this image is rendered all the more palpable by the verisimilitude of the 'deposition' frame. The horrific revelation of the psychological torture to which the crew of the *San Dominick* and (Benito Cereno in particular) are subjected demonstrates the scope of black retributive violence, and the military precision with which it is deployed. Delano's resounding optimism at the end of the narrative which follows the deposition in this way jars uncannily, and compounds the force of the 'shadow' which continues to loom large over Benito Cereno. Unable to decipher 'the cryptic text of past-eventness',[163] he reduces the vengeance of Babo, Atufal, and the numerous and nameless slaves harboured on the *San Dominick* to a fact of singular event-ness; 'the past is passed', he affirms, reflecting his inability to transfer the experience to his own contemporary

---

[159] Ibid., p. 261.
[160] Ibid., p. 233.
[161] Ibid., p. 230.
[162] Ibid., p. 180.

reality, or perceive its resonance beyond the particular moment and place. Black vengeance is, in this way, contained to the past and divested of its continually resurgent power.

Delano thus entombs the larger complexity of an America struggling to deal with the inherent contradictions between republican nationhood, race, revolution, and slavery. The dichotomy that he creates between U.S. 'America' and the 'other' Americ*as*, and the spectralization of the 'Spaniard' Benito Cereno, absorbs the threat of the 'slumbering volcano' that threatens his own world. His prevailing contempt for Cereno, which extends even after the revelation of the mutiny, vindicates his exceptionalist belief in the 'ugly passions' bred by slavery in general,[164] and in the 'corruptibility' of a 'foreign' slavery in particular. In this way, he creates a shield against the revolutionary repercussions of the domestic slavery from which he indirectly profits. As a metaphor for Melville's America, Delano delimits the reach of a black (inter)nationalism that gained increasing ground in the wake of the Haitian Revolution. Of course, the enduring threat of this internationalism was compounded in Melville's own time by the imperial coronation of Haiti's president Faustin Soulouque in 1852. An illustrated album of Soulouque's coronation, published in New York in the same year, reflected the ideological and 'imperial' force and diffusive reach of black nationalism (Figure 3). The Haitian Revolution and its legacy of independent nationhood resonated across black communities throughout America, and the migrations between and diffusions across the black Atlantic would only reinforce its symbolic weight in the first half of the nineteenth century. While Melville's contemporaries continued to disavow, and isolate themselves from, the encroaching threat of this phenomenon, Melville was able to tease out the connections and 'untie' the 'knot' that they could not and would not—connections which are configured temporally and symbolically in 'Benito Cereno', binding Haiti's revolutionary past, and its independent legacy (and imperial present) with his own reality. Far from 'excepted', America's future was repeatedly unsettled by Haiti's revolutionary past.

---

[163] Gillman and Greusz, p. 233.
[164] Melville, p. 211.

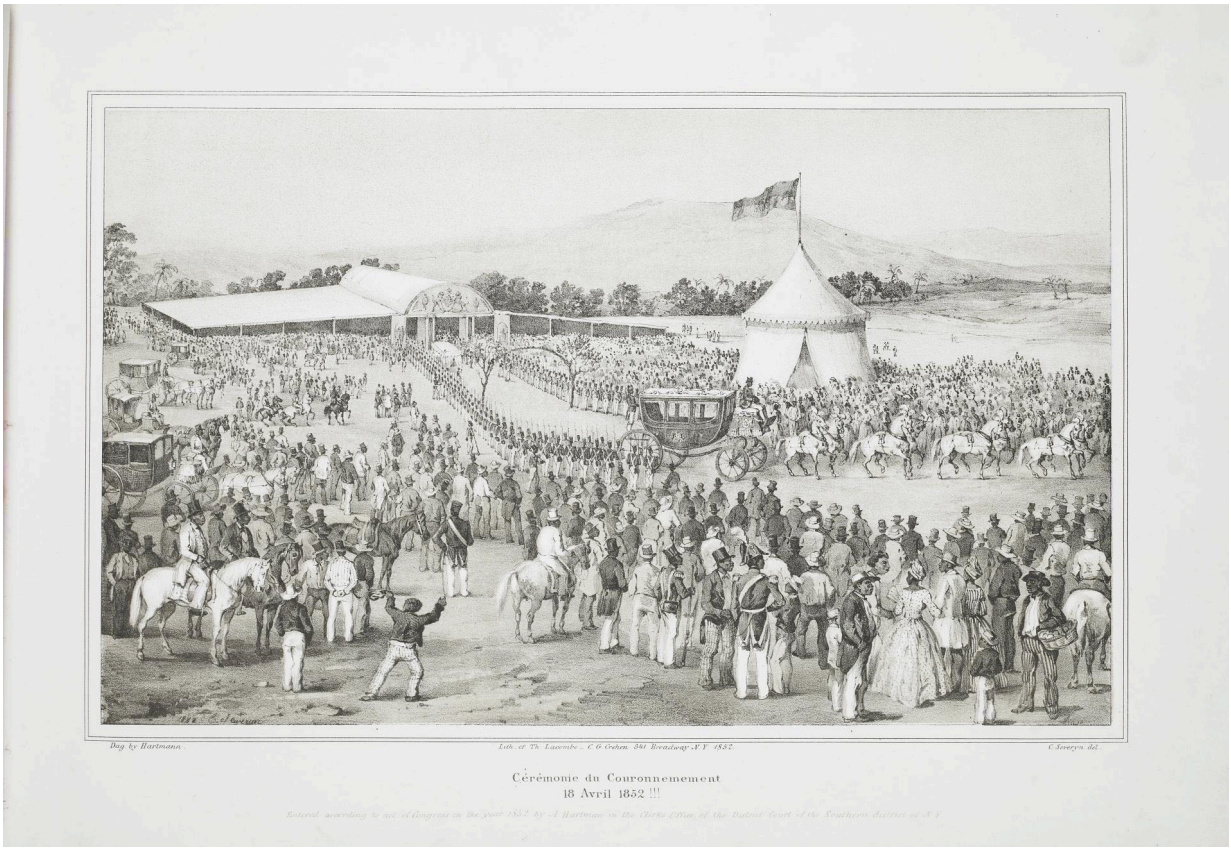


Figure 3: Th. Lacombe, 'Cérémonie du Coronnement', in *Album Impérial d'Haïti* (1852), lithograph. Reproduced with permission from the British Library, London.

Chapter 2 | Tragic Magnolias? Phantoms of Sexual Revolution from Saint-Domingue to Louisiana

> the country boy with his simple and erstwhile untroubled code […] looked at the apotheosis of two doomed races presided over by its own victim—a woman with a face like a tragic magnolia […] the boy, sleeping in silk and lace […]
>
> — William Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936)

Race, Intimacies, Inheritance, and Saint-Domingue's *Gens de Couleur Libres*

The peculiar frontier conditions out of which colonial society emerged in Saint-Domingue gave rise to a large and—in some cases—wealthy and powerful free population of colour.[1] The economic success of the colony was based on a ruthless system of plantation slavery and the larger expansion of the transatlantic trade, which accelerated significantly in the latter half of the eighteenth century. This was compounded by the institutionalized rape of women of African descent, which fed a transgenerational culture of exploitation and intimidation. In this context, enslaved bodies were viewed as dispensable.[2] Yet against this backdrop of brutality, relationships were forged across colour lines, creating, in many instances, opportunities for individual aggrandizement and a wider-reaching social mobility. While, as Marlene Daut has shown, naturalist travel literature from the early colonial period inculcated—via taxonomies of 'race'—a mythology of colonial Saint-Domingue characterized by sexual depravity, race-mixing, and 'the "tropical temptress,"' described by Daut as 'a naturally dangerous and seductive woman of colour',[3] the reality was much more complex.

As John Garrigus highlights, the mixed 'racial' demographic of colonial Saint-Domingue was by no means unique; what made Saint-Domingue exceptional, however, was its gothic vision of a radically expansive racial hierarchy that became steadily more pronounced in the decades leading up to the revolution. The certainty of the colonial order, which had been founded

---

[1] Garrigus notes that the wealthiest families were concentrated predominantly in rural southern plantation regions of Aquin and Torbec. The majority of free men were not wealthy planters, but derived their wealth largely from trades. See John D. Garrigus, 'Colour, Class and Identity on the Eve of the Haitian Revolution: Saint-Domingue's Free-Coloured Elite as *Colons américains*' *Slavery and Abolition: A Journal of Slave and Post-Slave Studies*, 17.1 (1996), 20-43.

[2] James, p. 11.

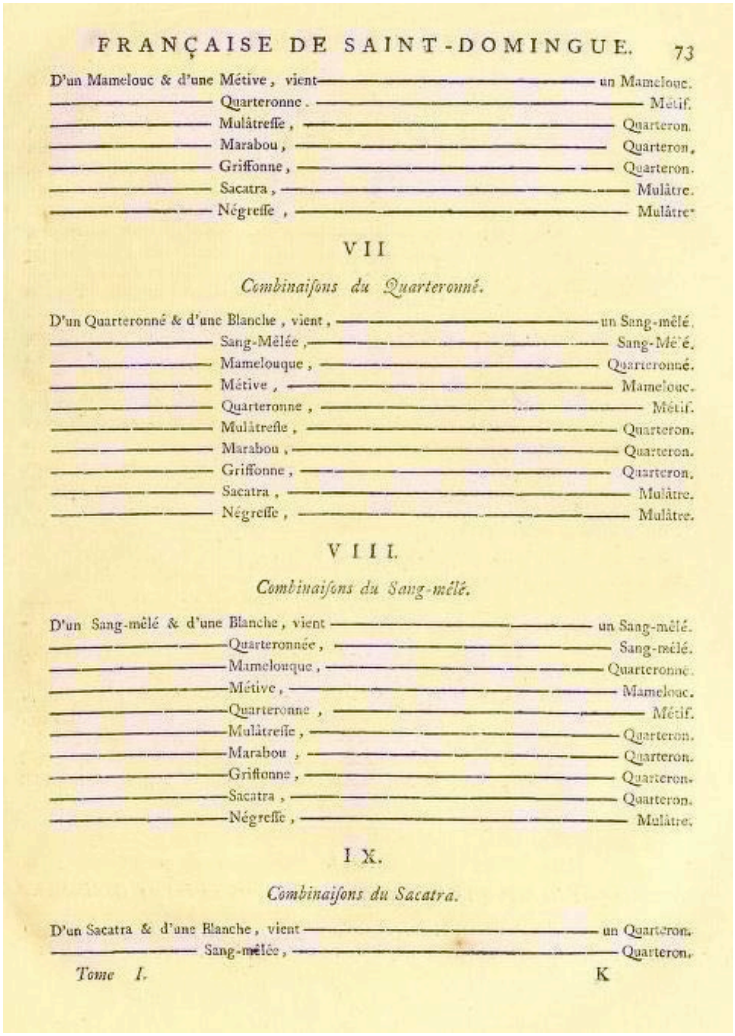
[3] Daut, pp. 4-6.

on a system of patriarchal heredity, was increasingly unsettled by the complex lived realities of colonial life in Saint-Domingue. People of colour—of varying 'gradations' of blackness (and whiteness)—occupied diverse positions within the colonial economy, and thus literally 'embodied' this growing sense of colonial uncertainty. This uncertainty was magnified by what Julien Raimond termed the '*jalousies*' of poor white settlers who had migrated to the colony, altering the racial demographic.[4] These migrants, like the young, opportunistic Thomas Sutpen of William Faulkner's 1936 novel *Absalom, Absalom!*, travelled to Saint-Domingue in pursuit of material opportunity, but were ill-equipped to confront the competition that they would face from the free-coloured community, who, in many instances, had well established economic foundations, cultural ties, and a keen understanding of the metropolitan and colonial public sphere (despite being largely denied the privileges that citizenship conferred).[5] Mounting social pressures created an intense gulf between the white population and the *gens de couleur libres* (free people of colour). The free black community thus became increasingly marginalized within colonial society; whereas their *white* ancestry had previously conferred social opportunities, their configuration within the colonial order became, toward the close of the century, increasingly predicated on degrees of blackness. A complex ideology of race was thus formulated, admonishing the behaviour of white men who chose to engage in sexual relationships with women of colour, and persecuting the women of colour whose legal status as free enabled the transferral of social privileges to their progeny.

This gothic 'romance' of racial 'pollution' found its expression in contemporary writings such as the Baron de Wimpffen's *A Voyage to Saint Domingo*. In this text, De Wimpffen equates sexual relationships between white men and women of colour with moral degeneracy. He nevertheless apportions the blame for this degeneration to the 'black, yellow, [and] livid complexioned mistresses', who 'brutify and deceive' white men, and urges male colonists to 'marry women of their own colour'. In so doing, he argues, 'we shall soon see the country assume, in the eyes of the observer, a very different aspect'.[6] The distinction that De Wimpffen makes between 'black', 'yellow', and 'livid' women presents the reader with a scale of tonal gradation that inheres a fantasy of sexual 'pollution' wrought by women of colour. Although

[4] See Julien Raimond, 'Observations on the Origin and Progression of the White Colonists' Prejudice against Men of Color' in *Slave Revolution in the Caribbean*, Cf., pp. 78-82 (p. 80).
[5] Dubois, *Avengers*, p. 64.

these remarks reflect a moralistic disdain for sexual licence, they also betray an uncanny realization that the matrilineal slave system has been inverted by those at its root. Women of colour were, in such a way, constructed as monstrous and destructive—as conduits for a reproductive degeneration of Saint-Domingan colonial society.



FRANÇAISE DE SAINT-DOMINGUE. 73

D'un Mamelouc & d'une Métive, vient — un Mamelouc.
— Quarteronne. — Métif.
— Mulâtreſſe, — Quarteron.
— Marabou, — Quarteron.
— Griffonne, — Quarteron.
— Sacatra, — Mulâtre.
— Négreſſe, — Mulâtre.

VII

Combinaiſons du Quarteronné.

D'un Quarteronné & d'une Blanche, vient, — un Sang-mêlé.
— Sang-Mêlée, — Sang-Mêlé.
— Mamelouque, — Quarteronné.
— Métive, — Mamelouc.
— Quarteronne, — Métif.
— Mulâtreſſe, — Quarteron.
— Marabou, — Quarteron.
— Griffonne, — Quarteron.
— Sacatra, — Mulâtre.
— Négreſſe, — Mulâtre.

VIII.

Combinaiſons du Sang-mêlé.

D'un Sang-mêlé & d'une Blanche, vient — un Sang-mêlé.
— Quarteronnée, — Sang-mêlé.
— Mamelouque, — Quarteronne.
— Métive, — Mamelouc.
— Quarteronne, — Métif.
— Mulâtreſſe, — Quarteron.
— Marabou, — Quarteron.
— Griffonne, — Quarteron.
— Sacatra, — Quarteron.
— Négreſſe, — Mulâtre.

IX.

Combinaiſons du Sacatra.

D'un Sacatra & d'une Blanche, vient — un Quarteron.
— Sang-mêlée, — Quarteron.

Tome I. K

Figure 4: From Moreau de Saint-Méry's Déscription Topographique, Physique, Civile, Politique et Historique de la Partie Francaise de l'isle de Saint-Domingue (Philadelphia: [n. pub.],1798), 2 vols, vol. 1, p. 73.

This monstrous vision would reach its apotheosis in Médéric Louis Élie Moreau de Saint-Méry's natural history, *Déscription Topographique*, *Physique, Civile, Politique et Historique de la Partie Francaise de l'isle de Saint-Domingue*. Published in Philadelphia in 1797, Moreau's

[6] Francis Alexander Stanislaus, Baron de Wimpffen, *A Voyage to Saint Domingo, in the Years 1788, 1789, and*

Déscription offered Americans a prurient and gothic insight into the excesses of racial mixing in Saint-Domingue and into the social backdrop of the revolution. Unlike De Wimpffen's account, which attempted to envision colonial life from an outsider's perspective, Moreau's *Déscription* provided a unique account of lived experience in the colony. This authenticated and compounded the gothicism of his 'monstrous' racial vision, which included a graphic illustration of the 128 different racial '*combinaisons*' that one might find in the colony. This taxonomy inculcated a scale of blackness that was virtually inescapable, regardless of the degree of removal from a black ancestor. However, it also demonstrated the necessity for a linguistic formula for a problem that was becoming visually difficult to signify: a problem exacerbated by interracial sex (see Figure 4). Indeed, as Colin Dayan suggests, Moreau's 'system' eventually falls apart,[7] because the concept of 'race' shows itself to be redundant where colour difference cannot be determined; Moreau himself concedes the existence of *affranchis* (or free people of colour) 'dont la couleur ne montre aucune différence sensible lorsqu'on la compare avec celle du Blanc.'[8] Encrypted within this formula was the certain reality that slave society would collapse in on itself in the absence of a rigorous, racially-stratified system.

In an attempt to counteract such a collapse, Saint-Domingan authorities took steps to reinforce the systems that had been implemented to preserve colonial hierarchies. The *Code Noir*, or 'Black Code', a decree passed by Louis XIV in 1685 which articulated France's colonial provisions for slaves and free blacks, had proven itself ineffectual. As a result, a raft of legislation was passed in late eighteenth-century Saint-Domingue that sought to enforce distinctions between the free-coloured population and the white colonists. Strengthening the ideological connection between race and slavery, and undermining privileges of white ancestry for people of colour, a law was passed in 1773 which forbade people of African descent from taking the names of their white fathers. As Laurent Dubois notes, '[t]he family of Julien Raimond complied grudgingly by switching from the "Raymond" of their French father to "Raimond."'[9] Although evidence suggests that certain mixed-race families were able to 'pass' as

---

1790, trans. by J. Wright (London: [n. pub.], 1817), p. 49.
[7] Dayan, p. 231.
[8] Translation: for whom colour shows no discernible difference when compared to that of a white. Médéric Louis Élie Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description Topographique, Physique et Politique de la Partie Francaise de l'Isle Saint-Domingue*, 2 vols, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: [n. pub.], 1798), p. 70.
[9] Dubois, *Avengers*, p. 62.

white because their connection to slavery had been sufficiently eroded,[10] black 'heirs' were, by this edict, symbolically disinherited. In an echo of this legislative assault, Faulkner's *Absalom* charts the symbolic disinheritance of Charles Bon, the (purportedly) mixed-race Haitian son of Thomas Sutpen, who is also denied Sutpen's name. The legalistic and authoritative nature of this disinheritance is compounded by the Genealogy that is appended to the narrative, listing names and relation. In this Genealogy, Bon is bastardized, and excluded from the white male patriarchy and the 'design' that Sutpen nurtures. However, the paradox of this racial system and the rights of inheritance in the larger slave society are brought to bear by the fact that Clytemnestra (who is assumed to be Sutpen's daughter by an unnamed Haitian slave) *is* accorded the name of Sutpen. As the daughter of a slave, however, 'Clytie' cannot be disinherited, as she has no legal claim, and her name distinguishes her rather as Sutpen's slave 'property' than as his legal *progeny*.[11]

This paradox, woven deeply into the fabric of Saint-Domingan society, was actively disputed by its diverse free-coloured populace. Refusing to bear their segregation mutely, the *gens de couleur* vociferously fought back. Fuelled by the publication of the *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen* by the French National Assembly in 1789, an elite group of property-owning free men of colour, many of whom could claim the 'privilege' of European ancestry and education mounted a campaign for free-coloured citizenship in the colony. These men, who included the likes of Raimond, commanded a voice within the metropolitan public sphere, and sought to petition the National Assembly for rights and representation equal to their white landowning counterparts. The revolutionary campaign was thus set in motion two years before the slave insurrection of 1791, and began in earnest when the free man of colour, Vincent Ogé, led a rebellion against the white colonial elite and occupied the southern Saint-Domingan town of Dondon in 1790.[12] Although this campaign ultimately failed, it began a chain of events that led to a larger scale revolution. This revolution was complex and many-layered, and reflected the conflicting interests of numerous different factions among free and slave communities. The need to stamp out any trace of white colonialism nevertheless led to an

---

[10] John D. Garrigus, *Before Haiti: Race and Citizenship in French Saint-Domingue* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 158.
[11] William Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!* (London: Vintage Books, 2005), p. 382.
[12] It is crucial to note that these free men of colour fought rather for the advancement of their own civil liberties than for racial 'justice' or 'universal' liberty. See Dubois, *Avengers*, p. 87. Dubois notes that when Ogé met for the second time with the Club Massiac (the society representing the interests of landowning colonists in the Americas), he presented a proposal for the gradual abolition of slavery. However, Ogé was not representative of the vast

uncertain alliance between the free-coloured and former slave militias. By the end of 1803, the Tricolor had been divested of its white centre (a wholly symbolic gesture) and independence won; Haiti was declared as an independent 'black' republic, with liberty extended to all. The language of race was officially written out of the new constitution.[13] *All* Haitian citizens, whatever their parentage, and regardless of the colour of their skin, were to be classified as 'black': members of 'one family'.

However, long before the revolutionary campaign led by Ogé the 'revolution' had already taken seed within colonial society. The proscriptive legislation enacted by the colonial government on the legal rights and performative social agency of its free-coloured citizens encrypted fears of its spread. This was compounded by the 'monstrous' projections of sexual degeneration which circulated across the Atlantic in print form via the likes of Moreau and De Wimpffen. This revolution—a revolution enacted through sexual reproduction—radically transformed the structural formation and social expectations of plantation society. In a sense, then, it was not just a 'Haitian' revolution, but a revolution against the very foundations of the slaveholding Americas, wrought from within the system itself. The racial tensions that characterized the Haitian Revolution, and later, life in independent Haiti—which, after the assassination of Dessalines became two independent states: a northern kingdom ruled by the black general Henri Christophe and a southern republic governed by the mixed-race general Alexandre Pétion—served as a reminder to the wider slave-owning Atlantic of the interstitial complexities and enduring effects of race-based slavery. America, in particular, saw in Haiti an uncanny reflection of its own complex interracial history—one that was refracted through cultural tropes such as the 'tragic mulatto/a', but was in fact much more entangled and entrenched, bound up with the antebellum history and post-Civil War legacy of the U.S. South, and with ideas of class, sex, property, inheritance, and a global market economy whose transactional nature nullified patriarchal ideologies of agrarian republicanism and inheritance. Although mediated, for a time, by a culture of capitalist self-interest and Enlightenment rationality, *this* revolution could be contained by neither system nor myth.

---

majority of free-coloured elites, who, as Geggus notes, 'generally acted according to their class interests'. See David Patrick Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), p. 164.

Interwoven Histories: Saint-Domingue—New Orleans—Yoknapatawpha

The phantom of Haiti's complex racial politics haunts the South of William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*. Here, the revolution manifests itself as an interconnected, transgenerational force that threatens to destabilize the elaborate 'design' of Thomas Sutpen, a poor white 'West' Virginian turned Haitian then Mississippian planter.[14] While this phantom looms largest in the memory of the violent 'slave' insurgency that Sutpen purportedly puts down on a mythical Haitian sugar plantation in 1827 (the significance of which has been bitterly contested by Faulkner scholars),[15] it is the contention of this chapter that the real 'volcano' upon which Sutpen 'rides' is the 'miscegenous' volcano that promises to destroy his white legacy.[16] Charles Bon, who the narrative reveals to be a free man of colour and Sutpen's natural son and heir, stakes his claim to the name and legacy of this 'demonic' patriarch in a (largely imaginary) courtship of his 'legitimate' white daughter, Judith, and the patriarch is forced to sever this claim. Behind Bon, however, is the shadow of the ever elusive and critically overlooked figure of Thomas Sutpen's first wife Eulalia, the presumed *mulâtresse* whose obscure origins remain obfuscated from Sutpen until Bon's birth in 1831. Confined to a voiceless crypt, and pushed to the periphery, her narrative is frequently co-opted by a succession of white patriarchs from Sutpen through Mr Compson, Quentin, and Shreve. This narrative co-optation is nevertheless testament to the threat that she represents; the rebellious threat of sexual *mésalliance*, or 'miscegenation' as it is represented in the narrative account of Quentin and Shreve, and the legacies that derive thereof.

This phantomogenic threat is magnified by Charles Bon's unnamed 'octoroon mistress', who presents a radical vision of sexual licence and race-mixing in Creole society. This phantom

---

[13] Article 14 of the Haitian Constitution dictated that '[b]ecause all distinctions of color among children of the same family must necessarily stop, Haitians will henceforth only be known generically as Blacks.' See 'The Haitian Constitution', in Dubois and Garrigus, *Slave Revolution in the Caribbean*, Cf., pp. 191-196 (p. 193).

[14] Shreve contests that the state of 'West' Virginia did not in fact exist in 1808 when Sutpen was born. Faulkner, p. 220.

[15] Richard Godden points out that 'Faulkner's chronology creates an anachronism which rewrites one of the key facts of nineteenth-century black American history': namely, the Haitian Revolution. The revolution lasted from 1791-1804 and so Sutpen's suggestion that he put down a slave uprising in Haiti in 1827 is at odds with real events. See Richard Godden, '*Absalom, Absalom!* and Faulkner's Erroneous Dating of the Haitian Revolution', *Mississippi Quarterly: The Journal of Southern Culture*, 47 (1994), 489-496 (p. 489). Arguing against Godden's position, Matthews posits that this is not an anachronism and that there is no suggestion that the uprising that Sutpen puts down in Haiti is in fact a 'slave' uprising. He posits instead that the 'slaves' are really rural cultivators forced to labour under the harsh strictures of the Haitian Rural Code introduced by Boyer in 1826. See John T. Matthews, 'Recalling the West Indies: From Yoknapatawpha to Haiti and Back', *American Literary History*, 16 (2004), 238-262 (pp. 252-253).

[16] Faulkner, p. 251.

of *mésalliance*, or 'miscegenation' as the text would have it, pervades the Anglo-Protestant South that is embodied by Yoknapatawpha—a fact made damningly manifest by the pervasive presence of Clytemnestra Sutpen. This encroaching threat is nevertheless geographically mediated by Mr Compson's vision of a 'Creole' New Orleans which facilitates a symbolic and ideological displacement of the miscegenous legacies of the plantation South and absorbs the fear of Haiti's encroaching sexual revolution. This Creole enclave becomes a sanctuary for Bon and Eulalia following their repudiation by Sutpen. Echoing the migratory routes undertaken by a significant number of free Saint-Domingans of colour who migrated to New Orleans in the wake of the *real* revolution, this conceptual geography and timeline of migrations fit with the logic of the revolutionary chronology, if not with actual time. It also yokes together Haitian and American histories in such a way as to reinforce their symbolic interconnection; in an echo of Melville in 'Benito Cereno', Faulkner thus demonstrates the continuing relevance of Haiti within the American psyche and within the landscape and legacies of the plantation South. New Orleans is only one symbolic access-point within a fantastical network of chronologies and geographies that are bound together by a series of narratorial frames. As Glissant would suggest, this informs a discourse of the larger South; while Sutpen attempts to establish his own 'legitimate' enclave within the perfectly circumscribed borders of Yoknapatawpha—something that he effects through chronological and genealogical disavowal—the narrative works to counteract this delimiting effort, creating a chronology which encompasses the Haitian Revolution, the Civil War, Reconstruction, and the Progressive Era of Quentin Compson's present, dissolving borders and affirming relation across time and locale.[17] As George Handley notes, **'**Faulkner restores Haiti and its black revolutionary resistance to a more central place in the imagination of the extended Caribbean.'[18] This is a Caribbean that, as Kutzinski suggests, encompasses the American South:[19] a Caribbean defined by inter-racial intimacies and the multiple metamorphic routes established therein.

---

[17] Glissant writes: 'Into this fictional county of [Yoknapatawpha] Faulkner put his whole native land of Mississippi, and the entire South as well (one emphatically says "the South," with a capital "S," as though it represents an absolute, as though we other people of the south, to the south of this capitalized South, never existed)'. Edouard Glissant, *Faulkner, Mississippi*, trans. by Barbara Lewis and Thomas C. Spear (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1996), p. 30.

[18] George B. Handley, *Postslavery Literatures in the Americas: Family Portraits in Black and White* (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 2000), p. 131.

[19] Vera M. Kutzinski, 'Borders and Bodies: The United States, America, and the Caribbean', in *The New Centennial Review*, 1.2 (2001), 55-88 (p. 61).

What this phantom obscures, then, is an encrypted realization that 'the South' is not a stable and bordered environment safeguarded by patriarchal heredity or racial hierarchy, but is rather part of a globalizing network of bodily and commercial transactions that undermine the absolute certainty of these systems. Faulkner scholars such as Richard Godden, Maritza Stanchich, George Handley, and John Matthews have been a major driving force in teasing out these connections, placing Haiti at the centre of a narrative about patriarchal inheritance, race-mixing, and the 'southern' plantation economy. However, despite conscientious efforts to develop a critical landscape that considers the resonance of the Haitian Revolution within the work of Faulkner, and within the southern imaginary more generally, little has been done to rehabilitate the often neglected agency of the women of colour at the core of this narrative. Indeed, while both Stanchich and Matthews consider how Faulkner 'forcibly includes' the Haitian Revolution only to invalidate the fact of independence, these arguments occlude other revolutionary narratives that celebrate the metamorphic ascendancy of women of colour within the colonial landscapes of the larger South.[20] This chapter therefore attempts to redress prevailing scholarly silences and omissions, demonstrating how women of colour circulated within this globalizing network, transforming their social identities through a series of corporeal metamorphoses. These metamorphoses, which were partly enacted via the medium of clothing and fabric, fed intense fears about the reproductive agency of women of colour and the autonomy that they had over their bodies, in turn stimulating a set of gothic fictions about the 'monstrous' nature of black femininity, seduction, and sensuality. Viewed through this monstrous frame, women of colour were seen to undermine the strictures of the white, landowning patriarchy, and unsettle the systematic infrastructure that bound 'the South' together. This infrastructure relied on the corporeal and reproductive subordination of women of colour in order to survive. In *Absalom, Absalom!*, Faulkner shows each narrator attempting to harness these infrastructures to contain the revolutionary threat that the woman of colour represents. While little to no critical scholarship on Faulkner has sought to penetrate the mystique of Eulalia Bon, who sparks the destruction of Thomas Sutpen's lauded 'design', this chapter seeks to follow her 'trace' and explore her metamorphic and revolutionary capabilities. It therefore looks closely at the ways in which 'phantoms' of sexuality and sensuality encrypt a deeper performative social agency,

[20] Matthews, Cf.; Maritza Stanchich, 'The Hidden Caribbean "Other" in William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*: An Ideological Ancestry of U.S. Imperialism', *Mississippi Quarterly: The Journal of Southern Culture*, 49 (1996), 603-618 (p. 608).

examining, in particular, the significance and function of the headscarf—a symbol that channels multiple encrypted meanings. Although each of *Absalom*'s narrators promotes a cycle of exegesis that breaks the silence and brings these phantoms to light, revealing the degenerative Haitian 'canker' at the heart of Sutpen's 'design', these phantoms are seen to haunt the South more generally, and continue to haunt long after the end of the Civil War. In this way, this chapter contends that Godden's argument that Faulkner uses Haiti to 'foreground the continuous potential for revolution within the institution of slavery' does not go far enough.[21] Indeed, by reading the revolution as literally and metaphorically embodied by the woman of colour, it seeks to demonstrate the traumatic effects of race, slavery, and heredity on the southern imaginary at large. It thus looks *beyond* the historical and geographical parameters of slavery to reveal the eternal social legacies left by women of colour, which are seen to exist even after the system's collapse.

Countering Mythologies: Voices, Legacies, and the 'Hidden Transcripts' of Resistance

The Saint-Domingan woman of colour was seen to be the 'arbiter of sexual colonial corruption'.[22] She presided over the 'monstrous' threat of an interracial 'degeneration' that effected a social revolution and undergirded anxieties about identity and legacy in Faulkner's South. Fed by an elaborate, white, patriarchal mythology, this fiction of 'tropical temptresses' simplified the complex dynamics of interracial relations in colonial society. History has nevertheless drawn heavily on this mythology, in turn fuelling generalizations about the nature of interracial relationships in Saint-Domingue and beyond. A whole body of literature on a presumed culture of '*plaçage*' in Saint-Domingue and its propagation in Louisiana has sustained a fiction about the formalized concubinage of women of colour in these societies and its diffusive spread from one locale to the other.[23] According to the historical record, *plaçage* was

[21] Godden, p. 494.
[22] Daut, p. 200.
[23] Accounts that sustain the historical mythology of a '*plaçage*' culture include: Joan Martin, '*Plaçage* and the Louisiana *Gens de Couleur Libre*', in *Creole: The History and Legacy of Louisiana's Free People of Color*, ed. by Sybil Kein (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000), pp. 57-70, Laura Foner, 'The Free People of Color in Louisiana and St. Domingue: A Comparative Portrait of Two Three-Caste Slave Societies', *The Journal of Social History*, 3 (1970), 406-430, Caryn Cossé Bell, *Revolution, Romanticism and the Afro-Creole Protest Tradition in Louisiana 1718-1868* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1997), Dessens, *From Saint-Domingue to New Orleans*, and Thadious M. Davis, *Southscapes: Geographies of Race, Region, and*

the name accorded to the extra-marital alliances between white men and women of colour in these societies. These alliances, often brokered at 'octoroon balls' by the mother of the so-called '*plaçée*', were semi-contractual, and were thus intended to ensure the financial security of women of colour who entered into sexual relationships with white men in this precarious colonial environment. Her white partner would buy her a house and promise to provide for any children that might derive from the union. However, this narrative is founded on a hyperbolic fantasy of sexual relations in Saint-Domingue, and of women of colour in particular (propagated by the likes of Moreau and De Wimpffen), rather than solid evidence from the historical archive. In fact, both Dubois and Clark subject the concept of *plaçage* to serious scrutiny, and expose the historical contradictions that are embedded therein.[24] Clark's research also challenges the prevalence of these types of relationships, arguing that, in antebellum Louisiana in particular, women of colour strove to achieve legitimate marital relationships with members of the free-coloured community over uncertain extra-marital alliances with white men. [25] The '*plaçage*' narrative thus propagates a mythology which negates the multivalency and skews the reality of relationships formed between white men and women of colour in colonial Saint-Domingue and antebellum Louisiana (if, indeed, they bore any correlation).

Of course, evidence from the archive—and most especially from wills—offers evidence which testifies to the fact that white men and women of colour entered into longstanding relationships that afforded financially remunerative benefits for the latter. The will of Maurice Prévost, who was born in 1778 in Môle Saint Nicolas in Saint-Domingue and died in 1843 in New Orleans, named as his principal legatees his partner, a 'négresse' named Clarisse, and their free-coloured daughter, Florestine Cecile. This will was contested by his 'white' sister, Emilie

---

Literature (Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 2011), pp. 213-215. More recent scholarship, however, has contested the institutionalization of such relationships. See Thomas N. Ingersoll, *Mamon and Manon in Early New Orleans: The First Slave Society in the Deep South, 1718-1819* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1999), p. 337, Kenneth Aslakson, 'The Quadroon-Plaçage Myth of Antebellum New Orleans: Anglo-American (Mis)interpretations of a French-Caribbean Phenomenon, *Journal of Social History*, 45 (2012), 709-734, and Emily Clark, *The Strange History of the American Quadroon: Free Women of Color in the Revolutionary Atlantic World* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013), p. 66.

[24] The term is said to derive from the French verb *placer* (to place). However, as Clark points out, the word was not used by contemporaries. Dubois highlights that, in Haiti, the term refers to permanent unions formed between men and women sanctioned by parental authority rather than by church and state. Commentators may have observed similarities between this Haitian custom and the types of interracial relationships that were forged in Saint-Domingue and colonial/antebellum Louisiana, and this may have occasioned the seepage of such language into the historical discourse. See Clark, p. 159 and Laurent Dubois, *Haiti: The Aftershocks of History* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2012), p. 157.

[25] Clark, p. 59.

Prévost, but its provisions were ultimately upheld by the Supreme Court.[26] Such legalistic concessions safeguarded the benefits that these types of alliances afforded. Although this does not provide an evidential basis for the normalization of a '*plaçage*' culture, it does point to the prevalence of certain interracial intimacies which were afforded some degree of social sanction. Garrigus argues that, in Saint-Domingue, such intimacies spawned from the domestic setup of early colonial culture and thereafter became commonplace. He notes that enslaved and free women who assumed the role of the *ménagère* (a role that was generally occupied by the plantation mistress or metropolitan housekeeper, literally translated as 'housewife'), would often form sexual alliances with their masters and employers.[27] Intimacies forged within this environment resulted in manumissions, *mésalliance*,[28] and less formal arrangements that nevertheless proffered opportunities of advancement through inheritance. While the notion that these *ménagères* became the de facto wives of white planters has often been overstated,[29] and while *mésalliance* became less common towards the end of the eighteenth century (and was invariably legislated against in Louisiana),[30] such alliances arguably led to the advancement of a free population of colour that owned a stake in the local and indeed *global* economy. Within this economy, women of colour were not only the victims of exploitation, but were also powerful social agents who commanded a degree of bodily and industrial autonomy. This complex web of relations that underlay Saint-Domingan culture and fed into Louisiana in the wake of the revolution is best articulated by Yvonne Fabella. She notes:

---

[26] Prevost Family Papers, Mss. 1560, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, LA., Box 1, Folder 2.

[27] Garrigus, *Before Haiti*, p. 56 and Dubois, *Avengers*, p. 70.

[28] This word, literally translated as 'misalliance', has historically defined all 'unsuitable' marriages, but in the colonial lexicon related specifically to marriages between white colonists and people of colour. See 'mésalliance, n.', in *OED Online* <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/116911?redirectedFrom=mesalliance#eid> [accessed 14 August 2015], Doris L. Garraway, *The Libertine Colony: Creolization in the Early French Caribbean* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), p. 30 and Dayan, p. 229. The Original version of the *Code Noir* (formulated for French possessions in the Antilles in 1685) actually permitted and to some degree encouraged *mésalliance* while censuring the practice of concubinage, which carried harsh penalties. See Article IX of 'The Code Noir', in Dubois and Garrigus, *Slave Revolution in the Caribbean*, Cf., pp. 49-54 (p. 51).

[29] Rogers and King are apt to stress that women employed as *ménagères* were accorded written contracts, and these contracts offered them legal recourse if their employers threatened to abuse them sexually. See Dominique Rogers and Stewart King, 'Housekeepers, Merchants, Rentières: Free Women of Color in the Port Cities of Colonial Saint-Domingue, 1750-1790', in *Women in Port: Gendering Communities, Economies, and Social Networks in Atlantic Port Cities, 1500-1800*, ed. by Douglas Catterall and Jodi Campbell (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012), pp. 357-398 (p. 363).

[30] Article IV of the Louisiana *Code Noir* of 1724 forbade intermarriage or concubinage with free or enslaved blacks. See 'A Translation of the Black Code of Louisiana', in *Historical Collections of Louisiana, Embracing Translations of Many Rare and Valuable Documents Relating to the Natural, Civil and Political History of that State*, ed. by B. F. French, 5 vols, vol. 3 (D. Appleton & Co., 1851), pp. 89-100 (pp. 89-90).

> white men and women of color entered into a variety of relationships with one another, relationships forged around exchanges of labor, sex, affection, and no doubt violence. Such relationships […] took a variety of forms and served a range of needs not always mentioned in their depictions by whites.[31]

Whatever the quality of such relationships, we are reminded of the necessity to peel back the mythological veneer, and interrogate the anxieties and uncertainties which lay at their core.

Colonial mythologies about the reproductive 'legacies' left by Saint-Domingan women of colour—authored by commentators such as Moreau and De Wimpffen and sustained by more recent historical narratives—inevitably obscure real, qualitative insights into the lives of the women that were so central to this revolutionary discourse. Indeed, as Dubois notes, '[t]he little insight we have into them […] comes from the sparse and distorted writings of whites.'[32] The 'voices' of the women of colour who were able to navigate this precarious colonial system have largely been lost, or, if not lost then purposely occluded within a text-based archive (created to serve the interests of a white, male bourgeois public sphere) that is insufficient to the task of recording what Skeehan has called the 'extra-discursive or material text[s]' that may have been favoured by women of colour outside of this realm.[33] What is lost or occluded points to the *real* metamorphic revolutionary power encrypted within the 'phantom' of sexual revolution that pervades this textual, adrocentric archive. Locating hidden female voices is thus central to understanding the fears that are embedded in the sexual phantom that haunts the South of Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*.

Looking beyond or beneath the textual archive is crucial to rehabilitating these voices. More often than not, only 'traces' of their existence remain. Such traces nevertheless show that the legacies that were left by Saint-Domingan women of colour contested the repressive mechanisms of matrilineal slavery and the patriarchal plantation economy. Moreover, they also reveal the diverse pathways to forms of creative self-making made available to free people of colour (and women in particular) in plantation economies based on a transactional culture which was determined increasingly less by feudal ties to land and inheritance and more by globalizing

---

[31] Yvonne Eileen Fabella, 'Inventing the Creole Citizen: Race, Sexuality and the Colonial Order in Pre-Revolutionary Saint-Domingue', (unpublished doctoral thesis, Stony Brook University, 2008), p. 167.
[32] Dubois, *Avengers*, p. 48.

networks and commercial demands. Via inherent weaknesses within the colonial 'system', women of colour found routes through, and were able to reclaim ownership of their bodies and identities, unsettling the foundations of the plantation system. The phantomogenic 'traces' of these transactions, which form the core of the hermeneutic axis in *Absalom*, highlight fears of a marketized, commercial culture that invited the participation of women of colour and thereby undercut the subordinating power of the plantation economy (or at least operated alongside it). Their power extended beyond the imaginative realms of a sexual-reproductive mythos of racial 'amalgamation' that haunted the popular imaginary, penetrating to the root of plantation society.

Born in New York in 1796 to a Saint-Domingan planter named Pierre-Antoine Lambert and an enslaved woman named Marie-Nicolle, Charles-Pierre Lambert (later known as Charles Richard Lambert) offers a curious insight into the legacies of such a transactional culture. After a period of residency in New York, where he lived with his slave mistress and his son, Pierre-Antoine returned to Saint-Domingue where he married Louise Hélène Emilie Chapdu. Like many other white émigrés who fled Saint-Domingue during and after the revolution, he spent a brief period in Cuba before eventually settling in New Orleans where he established a pharmacy, and where his family archive remains. In 1798, while still in New York, Pierre-Antoine acknowledged his paternity to Charles-Pierre, and pledged to set him free (see Figure 5).

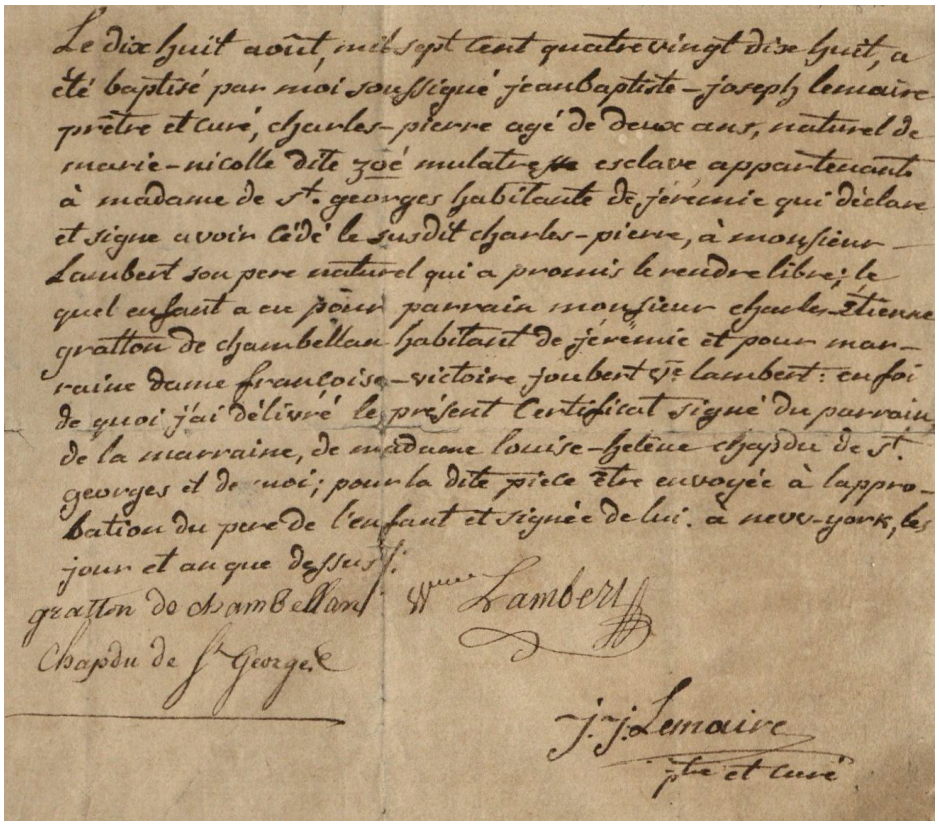
The fate of Marie-Nicolle, or Zoé, remains unknown, any remaining trace of her having seemingly disappeared between New York and Saint-Domingue (where Pierre-Antoine proceeded to marry a white woman). Given that these migrations occur during the revolutionary period, when a number of families were riven apart by conflict, it is perhaps unsurprising that Zoé should disappear without a trace.[34] The legacy of her slave-born son Charles-Pierre is nevertheless sustained. Charles-Pierre followed his father to New Orleans, and, as his legacy attests, enjoyed the benefits of an elite white upbringing. He is remembered as a successful musician and composer who tutored, amongst others, the Creole musician Edmond Dédé, and in this way leaves a cultural legacy that is perhaps even more indelible than that of his white father.

---

[33] Danielle C. Skeehan, 'Caribbean Women, Creole Fashioning, and the Fabric of Black Atlantic Writing', *The Eighteenth Century*, 56.1 (2015), 105-123 (p. 106).

[34] Some insight into the precariousness of life for white colonists in Saint-Domingue at this time is offered by Sansay in her eyewitness account of the revolution. In the last letter that she writes before she is compelled to flee the colony, her sense of impending danger is particularly acute. She remarks that 'it is much feared that those who remain will be sacrificed.' See Hassal, *Secret History*, p. 104. It is also important to note that after the 1794 French decree, all former slaves in Saint-Domingue were emancipated and so, if Zoé returned to the colony with Pierre-

This legacy was conferred upon his children, who not only inherited the legal freedom granted to Charles-Pierre as an infant, but also the professional training, financial stability, and social leverage that he acquired over the course of his life. Indeed, the legacies left, in turn, by his children, many of whom would go on to have successful (and, in the case of Charles-Lucien and Sidney Lambert, international) musical careers,[35] are testament to the rich inheritance left more generally by Zoé. Although Zoé disappears from the historical record, therefore, the trail left by her descendants reflects the legacy of possibilities that she endowed.



Le dix huit août, mil sept cent quatre vingt dix huit, a été baptisé par moi soussigné jean baptiste – joseph lemaire prêtre et curé, charles-pierre agé de deux ans, naturel de marie-nicolle dite zoé mulatresse esclave appartenante à madame de St. georges habitante de jérémie qui déclare et signe avoir cédé le susdit charles-pierre, à monsieur Lambert son pere naturel qui a promis le rendre libre; lequel enfant a eu pour parrain monsieur charles-étienne gratton de chambellan habitant de jérémie et pour marraine dame françoise-victoire joubert vve lambert: en foi de quoi j'ai délivré le présent Certificat signé du parrain de la marraine, de madame louise-helene chapdu de St. georges et de moi; pour la dite piece être envoyée à l'approbation du pere de l'enfant et signée de lui. a new-york, les jour et an que dessus.

gratton de chambellan — Wm Lambert

Chapdu de St George

j. j. Lemaire ptre et curé

Figure 5: Baptismal certificate and record of emancipation for Charles-Pierre, the 'natural child of Marie-Nicolle (nicknamed Zoé), mulatto slave belonging to Madame [Chapdu] de Saint Georges, inhabitant of Jérémie.' The certificate attests that Chapdu de Saint Georges will turn Charles-Pierre over to Monsieur Lambert, 'his natural father who has promised to set him free.' It has been signed by Chapdu de Saint Georges, the Curé, Charles-Étienne Gratton de Chambellon, and Françoise-Victoire Joubert Lambert (named respectively as the child's godfather and godmother). Lambert family papers, Manuscripts Collection 244, Courtesy of Louisiana Research Collection, Howard-Tilton Memorial Library, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA 70118.

Antoine, she would have been legally recognized as free upon her arrival, perhaps altering the dynamic of their relationship.

[35] Davis, pp. 209-210.

Figure 6: Frontispiece from Sidney Lambert, *Rescue Polka Mazurka: Respectfully Dedicated to the Heroine of New Port Lime Rock* (Providence: Cory Brothers, 1869), Courtesy of the Lester S. Levy Collection of Sheet Music of the Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD 21218.

While other women of colour undoubtedly left more personal and indelible legacies than Zoé, the root of eighteenth-century mythologies about the reproductive agency of women of colour can be traced to the innumerable metamorphic *possibilities* that her curious and unwritten history invites. Her own discursive silence is set against a paradoxical culture of intense narrative production that attempts to fill the silence and contain possible transformations. The need to 'enumerate' and thus circumscribe the limits of possibility of such women as Zoé was underwritten in taxonomies of race and racial mixture, for which the likes of Moreau had a

specific vocabulary drawn largely from myth, thus compounding symbolic distinctions of otherness and suppressing claims to whiteness.[36] In most written histories of the contemporary period, Zoé would have been represented as a seductive 'temptress' who authored the racial 'degeneration' of the Lambert line. This demonstrates that language was often used as a critical device of containment, encrypting the possibilities that lay at the root of phantomogenic fears of interracial sex and reproduction.

Reading the revolutionary possibilities of such women thus demands, as James Scott would suggest, a reading of the '"hidden transcript" that represents a critique of power spoken behind the back of the dominant.'[37] The 'transcript', existing outside of the parameters of the textual archive, may not be as easy to read as a textual source, and may be embedded with a multitude of meanings. Muted voices and transcripts of possibility form a central pillar in the revolutionary drama at the heart of Faulkner's *Absalom*, which invites the speculation of a succession of narratorial voices. Although the text is anchored by the mathematical language of race and racial mixing constructed by the likes of Moreau—which is borne out in such linguistic phantasms as the 'monkey nigger', the 'black gargoyle', and the 'octoroon'—it is also characterized by a series of silences that embody the revolutionary transcripts of Saint-Domingan women of colour, and women of colour across the Americas more broadly, represented in the novel by the 'Haitian' Creole Eulalia. Indeed, as Edward Clough notes, 'Eulalia Bon is an absence at the heart of *Absalom, Absalom!*';[38] what little we know of her is masked by occlusion and amplified by fantasy. However, while '[t]he novel offers no explicit solutions to these thinly-veiled gaps […] we are also free to read its silences.'[39] Eulalia occupies a spectral presence, and yet, like Zoé, she leaves a dynastic trace that binds the localities of Mississippi, New Orleans, and Haiti/Saint-Domingue, and it is this 'trace' that the narrative, through a series of signifying clues, encourages the reader to probe in order to purge the phantom of sexual revolution that haunts each successive generation of narrators.[40]

---

[36] Dayan, p. 232.
[37] James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), p. xii.
[38] Edward Clough, 'Building Yoknapatawpha: Reading Space and the Plantation in William Faulkner' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of East Anglia, 2014), p. 82.
[39] Ibid., p. 83.
[40] Ladd also suggests that Faulkner 'inscribes traces' for his readers to follow. See Barbara Ladd, 'Race as Fact and Fiction in William Faulkner', in *A Companion to William Faulkner*, ed. by Richard C. Moreland (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), pp. 133-147 (p. 141).

The signifying power of such traces are not admitted to consciousness until near the end of the novel, when Quentin Compson, the tormented southerner, and Shrevlin McCannon, the comparatively unencumbered Canadian 'outsider', bring the Sutpen saga to its gothic apotheosis. According to their version of events, when Thomas Sutpen crosses paths with his son Henry on a Confederate picket line four years into the Civil War, he entreats Henry to intercede in the marriage between his daughter, Judith, and Charles Bon, identified already as his natural son from his previous marriage to Eulalia. Henry knows the arrangement to be an incestuous one, but he is willing to let it play out, or so our narrators lead us to believe. It is not until this moment, however, that Sutpen reveals to Henry the secret about Bon's ancestry that provides the ultimate turn of the screw: '*He must not marry her, Henry. His mother's father told me that her mother had been a Spanish woman. I believed him; it was not until after he was born that I found out that his mother was part negro.*'[41] Whatever gothic 'reveal' took place in the lapse of time between Bon's birth and Sutpen's removal to Mississippi, during which he becomes apprised of the 'true' racial lineage of his Haitian family, is unknown. However, as Ladd is apt to remind us, 'it is only in Quentin's narrative that Bon is constructed as black.'[42]

In their narration, it is Eulalia that frames the destruction of the Sutpen dynasty—the as yet unnamed heiress of Sutpen's Haitian plantation who subverts the 'absolute caste system' by which Sutpen and his 'southern' ancestors have defined their existence.[43]. Although hints of her racial identity abound, the final discursive exegesis is protracted through a series of narrators and narrative frames, which include narrative 'paratexts' such as the Chronology and Genealogy.[44] These paratexts function, like the 'deposition' narrative in Melville's 'Benito Cereno', to authenticate the fiction that they frame. Of course, Quentin and Shreve push the limits of possibility beyond the conception of their narratorial forbears, undertaking a Freudian 'working through' by reconciling the symbolic cues of other narratives, yet their therapeutic remedy for the traumatic history of the South falls short of a full catharsis. Eulalia's identity remains entombed by her 'blackness' and Quentin 'fails' to envision a world beyond the terms of a

---

[41] Faulkner, pp. 354-355.
[42] Barbara Ladd, '"The Direction of the Howling": Nationalism and the Color Line in *Absalom, Absalom!*', *American Literature*, 66 (1994), 525-551 (p. 540).
[43] Faulkner, p. 345.
[44] Pamela Dalziel, '*Absalom, Absalom!*: The Extension of Dialogic Form,' *Mississippi Quarterly*, 45 (1992), 277-294 (p. 279).

plantocratic racial hierarchy.[45] It is thus ultimately down to the reader to contest the possibilities of such a reading, by excavating the signifiers that point to the 'hidden transcripts' of her existence *beyond* narrative and linguistic sign. It is at this cryptic root that Faulkner embeds the fears of a South haunted by the phantom of Haiti's 'sexual' revolution.

By undertaking such a reading, Eulalia is transformed from a tragedy of circumstance into a powerful agent; she is not just a 'vessel' for the retributive violence that is planned (though never perpetrated) by her son, but is also the author of a violence that has already happened, presiding over a legacy of southern unmaking and a creative existence that extends beyond the realm of the body. In this way, she embodies the revolutionary possibilities of *all* women of colour across the Americas—possibilities that were borne out in the disintegration of colonial society in Saint-Domingue and in the eventual demise of the slave system in United States. As a 'Haitian' woman of colour, Eulalia offers an uncanny reflection of America's own complex relationship with race, space, interracial sex, and, above all, with femininity. As Clark notes, 'Americans imagined the beautiful, seductive quadroon as a foreigner in the Caribbean who did not occupy American territory.' This was ultimately part of a 'complex symbolic strategy that kept her at imaginative distance from the nation's heart and heartland.'

However, the Haitian Revolution, and the resultant diasporic reverberations in the lower plantation South that frame the drama of Faulkner's *Absalom*, reminded Americans—and southerners in particular—about the physical proximity of the threat that women such as Eulalia represented and the possibilities that they realized. Indeed, it brought to bear the uncanny similarities between slave societies, and forced America to look to the racial paradox of its own heartlands whose **'**homegrown American quadroon[s]' supported the idea that the 'sexual' revolution was 'already well established'.[46] Within this heartland were women such as Clytemnestra Sutpen who, under the strictures of slavery had no legal rights but nevertheless presented a challenge to the system by dint of their very mixed-race existence. The unspeakable and unspoken desires of white patriarchs such as Thomas Sutpen are channelled through Clytemnestra, who, unlike Charles Bon, upholds the dichotomy between slavery and freedom and thus sustains his agrarian plantocratic vision. Her connection (through her 'slave' mother) to

[45] Ladd, '"The Direction of the Howling"', p. 547.
[46] Clark, p. 6.

'Haiti' nevertheless haunts the certainty of this racial vision, and anticipates its revolutionary implosion.

This spectre of complicated heredity is at the gothic root of southern literary culture, and is played out by the free 'blacks' and 'white' or light-skinned slaves that dominate the fictions of Victor Séjour, Lydia Maria Child, Mark Twain, Charles Chesnutt, Kate Chopin, and George Washington Cable, who located such racially paradoxical spectres at the heart of their writings. Their combined gothic vision reflected the inevitable destruction of a society founded on constructions of 'race'. Instead of acknowledging such inevitabilities, and following the example of France, who granted some legislative concessions to free people of colour in the early 1790s, southern slaveholding states imposed increasingly strict legal sanctions on the lives of free people of colour in the wake of the Haitian Revolution, restricting their movements, curtailing their privileges, and, towards the end of the antebellum era, denying their legal existence by imposing programmes of forced migration. It is perhaps no coincidence that the Lambert family left Louisiana in the 1850s when such repressive legislation reached its height.[47] Race had become an absolute, and yet this intensely repressive culture pointed to a present and pervasive fear of the disintegration of absolutes. The decadent world of New Orleans, with its own 'octoroons' or *mulâtresses*, and a Creole culture of *mésalliance* that was reinforced by Saint-Domingan migrations,[48] became an abstraction of the colonial fantasy of Saint-Domingue and the Saint-Domingan woman of colour, creating a buffer between the revolutionary sexual 'excesses' of the Caribbean and the real racial uncertainty of antebellum America. However, as *Absalom* demonstrates, and as Kutzinski suggests, this buffer is 'porous',[49] and rather than guarding against revolutionary threats, it provides an open gateway through which they seep. It is in this migrant hotbed of New Orleans—characterized by Mr Compson as a netherworld of sexual and racial 'degeneracy' that 'virtuous' (Anglo-)American southerners do not cross—that alternative existences are forged and possibilities realized that extend beyond the racially-circumscribed boundaries of the plantation South. And beneath the sexualized bodies that effect intergenerational 'contamination' lie the social agents who represented a powerful and dominant counterculture to the plantation economy of the South—an economy represented by artisans,

[47] The Ste-Gême papers from the Historic New Orleans Collection also give some insight into the 'inquiètudes' of 'familles de couleur' in regions to the North who were threatened with expulsion out of the state. See Ste-Gême Family Papers, MSS 100, Folder 157, The Historic New Orleans Collection, New Orleans, LA.
[48] Dessens, p. 165.

small traders and multiple alternative 'publics'.[50] This economy was dominated by prosperous, educated, and professionally adept communities of colour that undergirded colonial life in Saint-Domingue and New Orleans, and made their presence felt in the 'larger' South. It is within this economy that the 'secret' lives of Eulalia, Zoé, and women like them are to be sought. Ultimately, these secrets reveal the larger fear that the 'sexual' phantom encrypts.

Eulalia Bon (as she is imagined by Quentin and Shreve) represents a class of free black women who, in colonial Saint-Domingue and antebellum New Orleans, transcended the lines that demarcated their social existence through a defiant demonstration of bodily autonomy and material wealth. Such women had a considerable impact on the cultural landscape of these regions, subverting racial stereotypes and at times re-appropriating the structural apparatus of colour prejudice. Eulalia in this sense presents a radical challenge to the patriarchal plantation South; she is a paradox that can only exist if the Sutpens do not. The antebellum South that the Sutpens, Coldfields, and Compsons inhabit is haunted by the spectre of this transcendence. By reading Eulalia Bon's silences, we are thus able to trace the phantomogenic root of anxieties surrounding interracial sex and 'tropical temptresses', and envision the varieties of social and cultural metamorphoses made possible by women like her, particularly through the motifs of clothing and the language of materiality. This enables us to unlock the crypt of the American family romance that contains other 'silenced' and revolutionary women of colour such as Clytemnestra and the 'octoroon mistress'. In so doing, the phantom of sexual revolution that emerges out of Faulkner's 'Haiti' is reconstructed as a revolution that threatens the white patriarchy of the slaveholding Americas—a revolution with multiple—indeed limitless—possibilities.

Shrouded in Silk and Lace: Women of Colour, the Marketplace, and Phantoms of Sensuality

To explode these possibilities, it is important to explode the fictions of black female sexuality and sensuality that proliferated in the age of slavery. As this chapter has thus far demonstrated,

---

[49] Kutzinski, p. 56.

[50] As Skeehan suggests, alternative publics shaped by 'a vibrant Caribbean creole culture' opened up 'sophisticated embodied signifying practices' which 'emerged despite the conditions of New World slavery'. See Skeehan, pp. 106-107.

Saint-Domingan women of colour were brought to imaginative life via a mythology of hyper-sexualization that was propagated by contemporary white commentators. This mythology was often undergirded by a narrative of materiality and sensual excess. The material fabrics and adornments that these women wore on their bodies, and especially the 'expensive material goods such as lace, linen, silk, [and] gold […] that they acquired from white lovers',[51] became particular focus-points of this mythology, representing the 'tools' of seduction that these women deployed to ensnare credulous and love-struck white men. By thus adorning their bodies, commentators posited, they were able to divert the attentions of white men away from white females, and thereby subvert the 'natural' order of colonial sexual relations. This is the discourse at the heart of the seduction narrative of Leonora Sansay's *Secret History*, which highlights the 'extreme […] beaut[y]' of Saint-Domingan women of colour, who 'are taught to heighten the power of their charms by all the aids of art, and to express in every look and gesture all the refinements of voluptuousness.'[52] However, as Daut highlights, this seduction narrative 'cover[s] up an anxiety about the possibilities, real or imagined, for these women to transgress colonial authority'.[53] In effect, it secretes the dangerous and rebellious potential for women of colour to step outside of the social boundaries that were demarcated by the plantation system, and become powerful social agents. These clothes and adornments thus contain a secreted narrative or 'hidden transcript' of female resistance and self-fashioning that demonstrate the social anxieties of patriarchal slave-based societies.

In an echo of these contemporary commentaries on women of colour, *Absalom, Absalom!* uses textiles and the language of materiality to bolster a narrative of black female seduction which is seen to overturn Sutpen's 'design'. At their cryptic root lies a transcript of resistance that narrator and reader work together to unveil, bringing to life the revolutionary women that history (represented by the white, male archive) endeavours to silence. These fictional symbols thus facilitate the reconstruction of the personal histories which haunt the American unconscious. This is borne out most effectively in Faulkner's seductive and sensual vision of Creole New Orleans and the women of colour who define the contours of its markets. Through the transcript of clothing, Faulkner juxtaposes the 'sumptuous' decadence of the Bons (and indeed Bon's 'octoroon' mistress), who represent a vision of sartorial luxury, with images of the plain, worn-

[51] Adams-Campbell, p. 88.
[52] Hassal, p. 77.
[53] Daut, p. 205.

out livery of the Old South; this is encapsulated by Sutpen, who returns home during the war wearing 'his worn and shabby uniform, with his worn gauntlets and faded sash',[54] but reaches its apotheosis in Rosa Coldfield's neurotic attempt to create a trousseau for her niece as she stitches together scraps of old fabric in a tragicomical homage to the ideal of white southern womanhood. While the motif of an 'Old South' that is eventually 'reduced to rags' may seem a little too obvious, it is clear that cloth and clothing have a special symbolic resonance within the text, operating as a vital tool in the exchanges that take place, particularly at the intersection of these two (or rather three) worlds. These transcripts are crucial in anchoring the connection between Eulalia, Bon, and the 'octoroon mistress' to the decadent world of New Orleans, the 'Caribbean' South, and to a wider global network, and highlight Eulalia's centripetal role within this 'network'. Despite her voicelessness, she presents a prominent threat—a threat that is acknowledged in the power of 'fashioning' and 'grooming'.

While these transcripts have a sensual component, and in part serve to reinforce the fetishistic mythologies of sexuality and seduction associated with the 'tropical temptress', they also highlight routes to creative and performative identities *beyond* sexuality, and to social currencies that women of colour were typically denied access in the conventional bourgeois public sphere. Whereas men of colour such as Ogé and Raimond were able to participate in revolutionary publics via the salon, women were often precluded from revolutionary participation within the mainstream bourgeois public,[55] and thus harnessed opportunities to participate in alternative publics: principally, the marketplace. As a public space in which women operated as vendors, consumers, and manufacturers, the marketplace presented multiple performative possibilities for women of colour. Within this environment, textiles were bought, sold, produced, mended, and worn. The transformative possibilities of this public space, and the prominence of fabric as a tool for its navigation, is the core message of Agostino Brunias's 1780 conversation piece, *Linen Market* (Figure 7). Although the scene depicted refers specifically to the colony of Dominica, Brunias's portrait speaks to the revolutionary possibilities open to women of colour in the broader slaveholding Atlantic, and presents a vision of alternative colonial publics in which racial and gendered identities were frequently contested through the

[54] Faulkner, p. 271.
[55] Despite the efforts of women such as Olympe de Gouges to carve out a space for women in the bourgeois public sphere, this was actively repudiated. The incongruity of female participation in the public sphere was illustrated in

exchange and appropriation of material goods. The colonial linen market functions here as a site of social transformation, conferring status and power on the women of colour who operate within it; this idea is played out symbolically in the stratification of the women depicted in the portrait, with the vendors situated below the visual level of the 'consumers' reflecting what Kay Dian Kriz calls a 'hierarchically ordered community of people of color'.[56] The force of female agency within this nexus, is reinforced by their juxtaposition with white men, who occupy the portrait only as observant bystanders or as chaperones who carry the purchases of their presumed paramours.

Figure 7: Agostino Brunias, *Linen Market, Dominica* (circa 1780), oil on canvas, 19.6 x 27 inches. Courtesy of Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection.

Sansay's account of a French officer who provoked a duel with a Saint-Domingan Creole when he addressed his wife as 'citoyenne'. See Hassal, pp. 36-37.

[56] Kay Dian Kriz, 'Marketing Mulatresses in the Paintings and Prints of Agostino Brunias, in *The Global Eighteenth Century*, ed. by Felicity Nussbaum (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), pp. 195-210 (p. 205).

This topsy-turvy dynamic is replicated in Moreau de Saint-Méry's description of the colonial marketplace in Saint-Domingue. In this environment, he posits, fabric is used by women of colour as a tool of manipulation and power over colonial whites. He notes that

> La plus grande marque d'amour qu'on puisse donner à une négresse, c'est de lui faire *couper des cotes*; c'est-à-dire, de la conduire ou de l'envoyer chez un marchand, pour choisir les superbes mousselines, les indiennes & les perses, dont elle se fait des jupes. Combien d'entr'elles savent, par un manège etudié, inspirer l'espoir à de crédule amans, déjà dupes depuis long-tems, lorsqu'ils s'apperçoivent que leurs présens ne leur acquièrent aucun droit![57]

In this portrait of coquettish mastery, Moreau presents women of colour as extortionists who utilize white men to accumulate their own stock of fine fabrics without offering anything in 'exchange'. Within this public, then, women are able to *retain* their bodily autonomy and simultaneously become leading agents of trade and exchange. Fabric and costume are thus presented as material routes to power.

Of course, the kind of social metamorphosis realized in Brunias's portrait is highly idealized; after all, the colonial marketplace was also a space in which enslaved bodies could be bought and sold. It also presents a vision of Caribbean society that, as Kriz has highlighted, serves 'to banish all thoughts of forced labor, rape, and brutal punishment' from the Western imagination.[58] The phantom of slavery haunts this happy idyll and jars uncannily with the scene of transformation and transgression that he presents. Yet in spite of these problems, it serves as an important document which highlights the intimate relationship between women of colour and the marketplace and demonstrates how these women used these settings to reclaim bodily identity and to stake a claim to 'elevated' social status. Such demonstrations of defiance became a distinguishing feature of colonial society in Saint-Domingue and, as Brunias's painting highlights, of other New World plantation economies. The sartorial motifs deployed by Faulkner in the service of a racial-seduction narrative therefore point to the secreted subversive identities

---

[57] Translation: The greatest display of affection one can give to a negress is to provide them the means to make clothes from raw fabric; that is to say, to take them or to send them to a market vendor to choose superb muslins, and Indian and Persian fabrics, from which they make themselves skirts. How many of them know, by a perfected art, how to inspire the hope of credulous lovers, already under their spell, when they realise that their presents don't gain them any right [to their bodies]. Moreau, *Déscription*, p. 60.

[58] Kriz, p. 207.

of Saint-Domingan and, by extension, southern women of colour, and highlight the encrypted fear of creative revolutionary performances that were played out in Saint-Domingue, New Orleans, and the larger South during the age of slavery and beyond.

As an outward marker of wealth and power, clothing has a socially performative function that has the capacity to signify both power and prestige. This is brought to bear in Quentin and Shreve's narrative deconstruction of the first encounter between Henry and Bon. Here, 'fine clothes' are seen as central to the 'role' that Bon is expected to 'perform' in front of Henry—a role characterized by refinement and respectability.[59] Although Bon cannot assume the status of aristocratic planter (owing to his repudiation by the white patriarch Sutpen), he is able to acquire access to this social nexus through the power of social purchase, and through the gentrified loungewear that he wears in his college dorm in particular.[60] In this imaginative masquerade, Bon assumes an identity that is equated with plantation nobility and, most importantly, with whiteness. Clothing thus becomes the foundation upon which the relationship between Henry and Bon is built. It is fetishized as something that holds cultural meaning. This fetishization encrypts the instability of southern plantation society at large, which, fractured by the threat of its erasure, requires a symbolic intermediary to effect its cohesion. The disjuncture between the free-flowing urban market economy of Bon's 'New Orleans' (which is at one remove from the highly market-oriented economy of the Saint-Domingue or Haiti that he and his mother left behind) and the rural plantation economy of Henry's Mississippi is elided through recourse to this masquerade, wherein clothing and other 'trophies' (including Henry's sister, Judith) function as exchangeable commodities that mediate different social worlds. In other words, clothing performs a socially 'levelling' function, or rather an 'overpassing', as Shreve posits;[61] just as it functions to ennoble Bon and obscure his uncertain lineage, it transforms Henry from an unpretentious 'country youth'[62] into a sophisticated cosmopolite. By emulating Bon's 'clothes carriage and speech and all',[63] Henry likewise acquires access to the alternative, fluid, and less proscriptive social reality that Bon occupies. The fallibility of the patriarchal aristocracy of the plantation South is thus further compounded by this sartorial masquerade.

---

[59] Faulkner, p. 312.
[60] Ibid., p. 317.
[61] Ibid., p. 316.
[62] Ibid., p. 315
[63] Ibid.

This symbolic challenge to southern social identity is taken to gothic extremes, however, in the figure of the nameless 'octoroon mistress' who inhabits Bon's den of 'voluptuousness'.[64] Arrayed in silk and lace, the decadent vision she presents pushes the limits of Henry's 'simple and erstwhile untroubled code'.[65] Drawing on the mythological trope of the mulatta concubine, or '*plaçée*', Faulkner uses the octoroon mistress as a tool to demonstrate southern anxieties surrounding materiality, decadence, seduction, and race. In Mr Compson's narrative, she is represented as a 'tragic magnolia',[66] and an abject 'victim' of a white patriarchal system that 'created her' and 'brought her to flower'.[67] In this way, she is deprived of performative agency—a fact that is compounded by her namelessness—and her personal narrative is obfuscated by the catalogue of material signifiers that surround her. Indeed, as Ladd suggests, the 'relish with which [Mr Compson] describes her home in New Orleans […] confines her threat within [its] displaced colonialist culture'.[68] This co-opted narrative of abjection obscures a secreted narrative of performed agency, and Henry's avowed horror reinforces the octoroon's radical incongruity with his ideas of race, hierarchy, domesticity, and public life. Sartorial symbols mount an assault on Henry's senses, according the octoroon with a sensual power. In this way, her chamber substantiates his view that 'all of morality [is] upside down and all of honor perished'.[69] This carnivalesque fantasy echoes the topsy-turvy world of Brunias's and Moreau's linen market, and reinforces the metamorphic capabilities of the octoroon and her bodily identity. Like the colonial travel narrators that propagated mythologies of free-coloured sexual excess, Henry shows himself to be perturbed by 'the attachment of white men to free *négresses* and mulattas, the devotion to pleasure, [and] the money spent on linen, lace, and jewels for the *filles de joie*.'[70] Of course, unlike these foreign travel writers, Henry is not an outsider to this world. Slavery is at the core of his existence, and confounds the relationship that he shares with his black, enslaved half-sister (under the care of whom he eventually dies). The picture of sartorial luxury that the octoroon presents brings the contradictions of Henry's own social reality to bear, and undermines his understanding of a slave system that operates to deprive people of colour of social agency.

---

[64] Ibid., p. 114.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid., p. 116.
[68] Ladd, 'Direction', p. 541.
[69] Faulkner, p. 114.
[70] Dayan, p. 64.

This is invariably compounded by Henry's perception (voiced through Mr Compson) of the child that the octoroon nurses, who is likewise clad in silk, and bears both the forename and surname of his father, which symbolically legitimates the cyclicality of this uncanny socially-transgressive reality. It is not the fact of their existence that mystifies him, therefore, but the abundance that they symbolize and the privilege that their material existence confers. Within the 'padded silken vacuum cell' that the octoroon and the young Charles Etienne St. Valery Bon occupy, 'pigmentation ha[s] no more moral value than the silk walls and the scent and the rose-colored candle shades'.[71] Screened, literally, from the plantocratic world from which Henry has emerged, defined by a rigid racial hierarchy in which blackness signifies slavery, the octoroon nullifies these distinctions, and undermines Mr Compson's sense of inherited patriarchal supremacy. Even after Bon has died, and the annuity that she receives has died with him, she parades through Sutpen's Hundred clad in a 'soft flowing gown',[72] projecting a sense of poise and social power. This image contrasts starkly to the image of the poverty-tinged garments espoused by Judith, who attends her in 'the calico dress and the sunbonnet to match it,' which are nevertheless 'both faded and shapeless'.[73] Although Judith preserves her virginity and her claim to an aristocratic ancestry (through the land on Sutpen's Hundred), she lacks the creative ingenuity or material wealth to preserve her public appearance and her *perceived* social value in the same way as the octoroon. The sensualization and sexualization of the clothing worn by this class of free-coloured females thus encrypts a fear of their transformative impact upon slaveholding economies and foreshadows the ultimate demise of the Anglo-American South (and Sutpen's 'design'), signalling the dawn of a new kind of power based upon the *re*-appropriation of co-opted bodily identities.

The threat posed by this alternative, transactional social economy to the slaveholding South was undoubtedly reinforced in the wake of the Haitian Revolution and the subsequent diaspora. The fledgling market economy of New Orleans was rejuvenated by the influx of skilled professionals and traders, many of whom came from the free-coloured community. The infusion of wealthy women of colour who 'arrived with more property than local free women of color had been able to accumulate' nevertheless stoked the fears of a plantocratic demise and its diffusive

[71] Faulkner, p. 199.
[72] Ibid., p. 193.
[73] Ibid., p. 194.

spread across the larger South.[74] This inversion of colonial society was realized in the proliferation of images reflecting the sartorial splendour of women of colour in Saint-Domingue and elsewhere in the slaveholding Americas (made popular by the likes of Brunias).[75] Although, as Johnson acknowledges, these images were highly 'romanticized' and 'present[ed] as quotidian what was in fact an extreme level of luxury consumption unavailable to the large majority of the black population',[76] they exacerbated contemporary fears of women of colour, and thereby added fuel to the restrictive and prohibitive legislation that sought to circumvent their bodily autonomy. In the decades preceding the revolution in Saint-Domingue, sumptuary laws were enacted in an attempt to restrain the metamorphic possibilities that clothing afforded such women, and reaffirm the racial boundaries that demarcated its colonial society.

The personal memoirs of Laurette Ravinet, a white Creole born in Saint-Domingue in the late eighteenth century, offer an insight into the motivations behind such laws, noting that 'creole ladies, humiliated as wives by the luxury and indecency of the mulâtresses, […] wanted a distinguishing mark that could place them on another level than these courtesans'. As a result of the mounting tensions, she reveals that '[a]n ordinance was passed in [Le] Cap that prevented this greedy class from wearing shoes.'[77] By invoking the term 'courtesans', Ravinet reaffirms the link between women of colour, sartorial luxury, and sexual indecency, and diminishes their claim to personal agency. The provisions of this law are also discussed in Sansay's *Secret History*, which details that '[n]o woman of colour was to wear silk, which was then universally worn, nor to appear in public without a handkerchief on her head.'[78] Such laws became a commonplace

---

[74] Paul Lachance, 'Were Saint-Domingue Refugees A Distinctive Cultural Group in Antebellum New Orleans? Evidence from Patterns and Strategies of Property Holding', in *Revista/Review Interamericana*, 29 (1999), 171-192 (p. 191).

[75] *Casta* paintings generated in South America had often been a source of such illusions. Rebecca Earle suggests that these images stress the 'exuberant materiality of the colonial world'. See Rebecca Earle, 'Casta Paintings and the Colonial Body: Embodying Race in Colonial Spanish America' (paper presented at Institute of Historical Research, London: 16 October 2012).

[76] Johnson, *The Fear of French Negroes*, p. 127.

[77] Laurette Ravinet, qtd in Yvonne Fabella, 'An Empire Founded on Libertinage: the Mulâtresse and Colonial Anxiety in Saint Domingue', in *Gender, Race and Religion in the Colonization of the Americas*, ed. by Nora E. Jaffary (Burlington: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 109-124 (pp. 112-113).

[78] Hassal, p. 78. The law to which Sansay alludes is probably the 1779 law which declared: 'Leur défendons trés expressément d'affecter dans leurs vêtements, coiffures, habillemens ou parure, une assimilation réprehensible avec le maniere de se mettre des hommes blancs ou femmes blanches, leur ordonnons de conserver les marques qui ont servi jusqu'à présent de caractere distinctif dans la forme desdits habillemens et coiffures sous les peines portées en l'article ci-après.' Translation: We forbid them very specifically from affecting in their clothing, hairstyles, apparel or adornment, in an objectionable assimilation with the ways that white men and white women dress themselves, we instruct them to retain the marks that have so far served as a distinctive character in the shape of aforesaid apparels and hairstyles, under the penalties listed in the article below. See Médéric Louis Élie Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Loix et*

feature in Creole societies where women of colour were able to express certain freedoms through dress, and it seems that the 'handkerchief' or headscarf clause was a particularly common feature of these laws. In 1786, Governor Esteban Miró instituted a similar law in Spanish Louisiana as part of his *bando de buen gobierno*, or proclamation of good government, enforcing the wearing of headscarves for all women of colour in the colony. As Virginia Meacham Gould notes, this 'was a completely symbolic ploy.'[79] As symbol, it would function to circumscribe racial identity in a way that counteracted the Moreauvian assumption that racial difference or 'mixture' could not be visibly signified. Indeed, headscarves, which were referred to in the contemporary lexicon variously as *mouchoirs*, turbans, bandannas, and handkerchiefs, had a specific link to slavery and to the 'uniform' associated with plantation labour. Beyond this, the headscarf could trace its roots back to Africa.[80] Thus, as Gould notes, 'the intent of Miro's sumptuary law was to return the free women of color, visibly and symbolically, to the subordinate and inferior status associated with slavery.[81],

When Quentin and Shreve invoke this same motif in the service of Eulalia, it has a similar symbolic effect. In *Absalom*, the headscarf forms part of a series of uncanny traces that are left in the hope that the reader will begin to tease out the connections that lead to the gothic apotheosis and the final 'reveal' of Eulalia's black ancestry. As they piece together the jigsaw of interconnections in the lives of Bon and Henry, Quentin and Shreve begin to question the more obscure identity of Eulalia, who, like the Saint-Domingan slave Zoé, vanishes from history and memory without a trace at some point between the Civil War and Bon's death. Although she leaves no trace, the clue to her racial heritage is underwritten in their assumption that she wears a 'shawl on her head',[82] which recalls the highly racialized symbolism of the headscarf (and, by extension, the seductive threat of the women of colour who were forced to wear them). By suggesting, furthermore, that the only accoutrements missing from this fantasy are 'the mop and the pail',[83] they affirm the correlation between this sign and Eulalia's enslaved heritage.

Constitutions des Colonies Françoises de l'Amérique sous le vent de 1550 à 1785, 6 vols, vol. 5 (Paris: Moutard, Labotiere, et Barois l'aîné, 1786), pp. 855-856.

[79] Virginia Meacham Gould, '"A Chaos of Iniquity and Discord": Slave and Free Women of Color in the Ports of New Orleans, Mobile and Pensacola', *The Devil's Lane: Sex and Race in the Early South*, ed. by Catherine Clinton and Michele Gillespie (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 232-246 (p. 237).

[80] Georgia Scott, *Headwraps: A Global Journey* (Cambridge: Public Affairs, 2003), p. 21.

[81] Gould, 'A Chaos of Iniquity and Discord', p. 237.

[82] Faulkner., p. 304.

[83] Ibid.

The headscarf functions as a synecdochic tool that delimits Eulalia's possibilities, reducing her to signified (racial) object who is, like the woman of colour in the Moreauvian mythology, only a sexual 'vessel' for racial degeneration. The sexual 'threat' that these women represented was underwritten in the sumptuary laws that sought to contain their performative bodily power. Embedded within this synecdochic sign is thus a cryptic trace of revolutionary identity that was defined by acts of transformation, re-appropriation, and creativity that were preserved and resurrected across the revolutionary diaspora. In Saint-Domingue, such signs also facilitated creative strategies of resistance by the very women they sought to restrain. The subtle and varied ways in which women responded to these restrictions, and to those laws targeting their public appearance, opens us up to the private and individual worlds that have so often been overshadowed by the mythology, demonstrating the scale of female agency that is encrypted in spectral figures such as Eulalia Bon. Ravinet's postscript to her diatribe against the women of colour who were forbidden by Saint-Domingan law from wearing shoes demonstrates, for example, how women flouted such restrictions by wearing 'sandals, with diamonds on the toes of their feet'.[84] The headscarf that in Saint-Domingan colonial law served to signify and circumscribe 'racial' identity likewise had a multitude of symbolic meanings, and its appropriation and re-appropriation by women of colour who attempted to transform its meaning speaks to its manifold metamorphic capabilities and explodes its synecdochic function in the narrative of Quentin and Shreve.

Despite its parochial white, colonialist bias, Moreau's *Déscription* offers revealing insights into the ways in which headscarves were fashioned by their wearers, and the symbolic potency of such modes of self-fashioning in Saint-Domingue. He notes, for example, that women of means ('de poche') would often wear their 'handkerchiefs of the neck' ('mouchoirs de cou') very high on the head, and that some women would wear ten to twelve headscarves at a time, one on top of the other, to create a large and heavy bonnet ('un énorme bonnet dont le poids demande une forte d'équilibre').[85] He also catalogues the types of accessories worn by women of colour, which he suggests 'add to the ornament' ('ajoutent à l'ornement') of the headscarf, which include '[d]e beaux pendans d'oreilles d'or, dont la forme varie, des coliers à grains d'or mêlés

[84] Ibid.
[85] Moreau, *Déscription*, p. 59.

de grenats ou bien de grenats seulement […] ainsi que des bagues d'or.'[86] In this way, he reinforces the transformative and metamorphic power of the headscarf and the creative ingenuity of the women who wore them; fine jewellery serves only to enhance and enliven the bold spectacle that such headscarves represent. His account also testifies to the popularity of the headscarf among all classes of women in Saint-Domingue and its centrality to evolving fashion trends. Certainly, the diversity in the types of headscarves that were produced and in the ways that women chose to wear them suggests that the headscarf was not just perceived as a marker or affirmation of racial heritage, but was also seen as a reflection on an evolving Creole culture bolstered by circulations across global publics. Brunias's *Linen Market* provides further evidential basis for this claim. In this portrait, a light-skinned female of colour who occupies the centre foreground peruses the stalls, inspecting fabrics that catch her eye.[87] Arrayed in a fine, delicate dress, possibly made of silk or muslin, she wears an elaborate headscarf that pulls back her hair, offsetting her jewelled earrings and necklace, drawing the observer to her face and décolletage. This figure invariably corresponds with Moreau's vision of free-coloured excess, decadence, and 'ornamentation'. However, she is contrasted sharply with the black female market traders and the black maidservant (or slave) who shades her from the sun with a parasol who are also depicted wearing headscarves. These headscarves take different appearances and serve a variety of performative functions, none matching either the height or elaborate detail of the headscarf worn by the light-skinned *mulâtresse* at the centre of the image.

In a series of engravings produced for Jacques Grasset de Saint-Sauveur's 1796 *Encyclopédie des Voyages*, depicting cultural life in Saint-Domingue, such distinctions are shown to be more marked. In an engraving entitled 'Négresse et Femme Mulatre de St. Domingue' (Figure 8), the 'femme mulatre' is depicted wearing a headdress that is tall and uniformly white, which sets off the subject's elaborate jewellery and fashionable décolletage in an echo of the *mulâtresse* from Brunias's portrait. The darker-skinned 'négresse', however, is depicted in a state of désabillé with a plaid scarf tied roughly round her head as she carries a basket of fruit. The contrast between these women and the function of the clothes that they wear, reinforced by their strategic posturing, serves to affirm the agency of the former and diminish the

[86] Translation: Beautiful gold earrings, varied in form, necklaces made with gold beads mixed in with garnets, or made of garnets alone […] as well as gold rings. Ibid., p. 60.
[87] Kriz suggests that we are supposed to infer that the woman in question is a light-skinned '*mulâtresse*'. Kriz, p. 205.

agency of the latter. Whereas the headscarf worn by the 'négresse' functions as a symbol of labour, and indeed, her enslavement, the headscarf worn by the 'femme mulatre' offers an indication of her wealth and purchasing power and the freedom that she has over her own body.

Figure 8: Engraving by Labrousse, 'Négresse et Femme Mulatre de St. Domingue', from J. Grasset de Saint-Sauveur, *Encyclopédie des Voyages* (Paris: [n. pub.], 1796).

Nevertheless, despite the evocative contextual insights that these images and descriptions provide into the shifting signification of the headscarf, it is important to remain mindful of their authorship and the context of their production. Indeed, such artistic depictions invariably reflect the stereotypical and parochial vision of a white, patriarchal public sphere that was sustained by the circulation and reproduction of such images. Although, as Kriz highlights, 'they do not solicit

viewer disapproval' and 'their mode of address is not one of social or moral critique', they 'reinforce […] written representations of the mulatress's pride, love of finery, and seductive power.'[88] Given that Saint-Sauveur's engravings were produced in France, he probably relied heavily on the descriptions or artwork of others (including, most likely, Brunias's Dominican conversation pieces). In this way, these works offer little in the way of tangible evidence about the nuances of headscarves or their wearers or indeed the hidden transcripts of resistance embedded therein.

While they offer clues to the varying degrees of wealth and power among communities of colour in the slaveholding Americas, they tell us little about the performed identities of individuals or countercultures of resistance led specifically by women of colour. Physical artefacts, on the other hand, provide more complex insights. The bandannas held in the Costumes and Textiles Collection at the Louisiana State Museum, which date from the early nineteenth century, expand some of the mythologies propagated by contemporary white commentators, and open access to 'hidden transcripts' of resistance and self-fashioning. Significantly, the museum catalogue indicates that at least two of the five headscarves in the collection originate from Saint-Domingue. This record of exchange attests to the transactional nature of people and fashions during the Saint-Domingan diaspora and beyond, and the central role of women in effecting transactions and shaping cultural perceptions. Although the information in the catalogue does not amount to a comprehensive narrative,[89] it offers a multitude of imaginative possibilities about the performed lives of women of colour whose voices were so often co-opted or reduced to synecdoche.

The patterns on the headscarves, for example, offer insights into their function and into the possible life of the wearer. The collection suggests that headscarves with a simple check or plaid pattern were much more commonplace than headscarves with elaborate patterns or embellishments. This is certainly substantiated by Brunias's *Linen Market*, wherein the majority of women of colour, and the vendors in particular, are depicted in chequered headscarves. Such a pattern offered a perfect guide for tailoring, and scarves featuring this pattern were usually cut

[88] Ibid., p. 198.
[89] Diana DiPaolo Loren, *The Archaeology of Clothing and Bodily Adornment in Colonial America* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2010), p. 18. Loren reminds us that 'while the museum archives are rich repositories of information, they are also replete with stilted, problematic, or incorrect information.'

from larger lengths of cloth produced on an industrial scale.[90] The majority of the headscarves from the collection exhibit a plaid pattern (see Figure 9), and the absence of a 'bleed' line at the edge of the scarves indicates that they were probably cut from a longer piece of fabric. Judging from contemporary illustrations, these headscarves were more commonly worn by enslaved women, or women of colour with limited means. However, as Skeehan highlights, this kind of 'cotton and linen "check"' became known as 'Guinea Cloth' because it 'became the primary textile exchanged for enslaved peoples on the West African coast.'[91] Its function as a purely utilitarian fabric is thus complicated by the wider currencies of Atlantic exchange and its symbolic value within it.

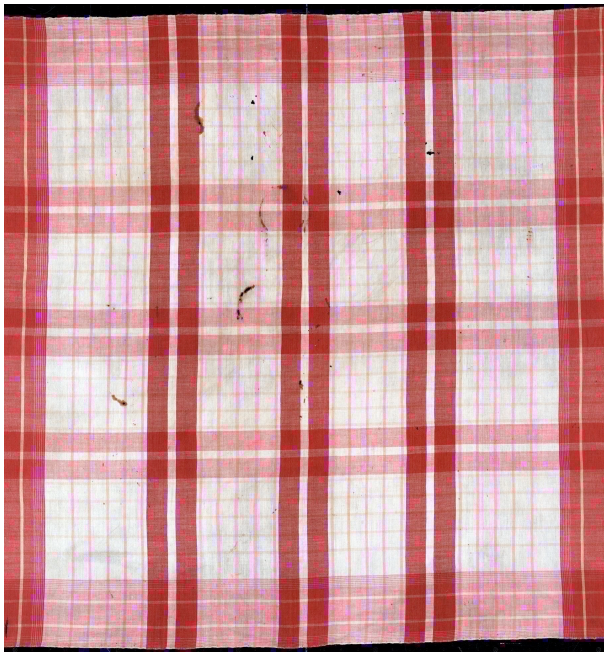


Figure 9: Santo Domingo Bandana (Tignon), Costumes and Textiles Collection, Item 07068.1. Reproduced with permission from the Louisiana State Museum, New Orleans, LA 70176-2448.

Other characteristics that may offer clues into the revolutionary lives of the women who wore such garments are traced in marks of wear, which suggest that such scarves were used as either working or protective garments, and worn regularly. Certainly, women with limited means or limited access to new fabrics would have worn the same garments more frequently. The

[90] Wayne Phillips (personal communication, November 8 2015).
[91] Skeehan, p. 107.

scorch marks evident on the headscarf in Figure 9, one of the two headscarves in the collection thought to have originated in Saint-Domingue, are also potentially indicative of industry; given that both Saint-Domingue and Louisiana were prominent sugar-producing slave societies, it is not unreasonable to assume that such items may have been connected with the industrial processes associated with sugar production, for example.

In contrast, other headscarves, such as the scarf on display at the Louisiana State Museum's Capitol Park museum in Baton Rouge (Figure 10) tell quite a different story. As one of the two headscarves of purported Saint-Domingan origin, it exhibits a pattern that is highly stylized and rich in colour. It is clear, furthermore, from the formation of the geometric pattern on the scarf, that this item was produced as an individual piece, and was not cut from a larger piece of 'stock' fabric. Clearly, this headscarf served as a fashion item for women of means.

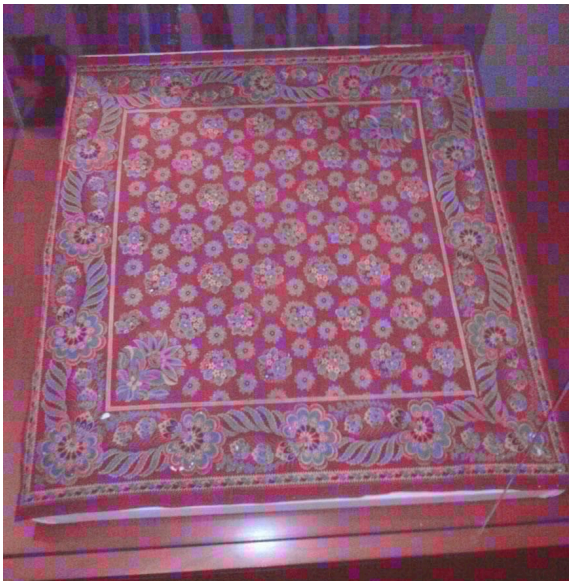


Figure 10: Santo Domingo Bandana (Tignon), Costumes and Textiles Collection, Item 07068.2. Reproduced with permission from the Louisiana State Museum, New Orleans, LA 70176-2448.

Although these assessments are largely conjectural, the divergent possibilities of such artefacts point to a wider archive of revolutionary performativity encrypted within the symbolic 'tropologies' created by the white, male, bourgeois public sphere, which reduces the subversive interactions between Saint-Domingan women of colour and the marketplace to tropes of seduction and sensuality. By probing the phantomogenic depths of such objects, the diverse lives

of women of colour are brought imaginatively to life, and resurrected from revolutionary spectrality. Such imaginative 'afterlives' reveal how women of colour—and women such as Eulalia and Charles Bon's 'octoroon mistress' within the context of Faulkner's *Absalom*—were able to carve out personal revolutionary identities in spite of barriers they encountered to forms of self-expression. By re-appropriating these sartorial symbols through personal acts of creativity and defiance, women of colour inverted their signified racial identities and thereby established Creole cultural trends that other *white* women aspired to emulate.

Indeed, what was at various times prescribed as a 'racial' symbol in colonial law became a *chosen* form of cultural expression for those at all levels of racially-stratified societies, and subsequently became incorporated into global sartorial culture. Depictions of white women wearing headscarves throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries suggest that it became a popular fashion-object among white women across the Atlantic world. These representations exemplify a vogue for Creole and 'exotic' fashions which were nevertheless shaped definitively by women of colour. In *A Voyage to Saint Domingo*, De Wimpffen expresses his disdain for what he perceives to be the 'imitation' affected by 'white ladies' who he observed wearing the 'India handkerchief'.[92] Colin Dayan also examines the example of Pauline Leclerc, who is observed in Leonora Sansay's *Horrors of St. Domingo* 'dress[ing] and act[ing] like a Creole'.[93] Sansay's depiction of Pauline Leclerc offers context for General Leclerc's expedition in Saint-Domingue, and speaks to the general fear of sexual and sensual excess that was seen as characteristic of the colonial and revolutionary climate. Their first encounter in Cap Français channels this excess. The manner in which Leclerc receives Sansay (or rather 'Mary Hassal', Sansay's literary alter-ego) is described thus:

> She was in a room darkened by Venetian blinds, lying on her sofa, from which she half rose to receive me. When I was seated she reclined again on the sofa and amused general Boyer, who sat at her feet, by letting her slipper fall continually, which he respectfully put on as often as it fell. She is small, fair, with blue eyes and flaxen hair. Her face is expressive of sweetness but without spirit. She has a voluptuous mouth, and is rendered interesting by an air of languor which spreads itself over her whole frame. She was dressed in a muslin morning gown, with a Madras handkerchief on her head. I gave her

[92] Wimpffen, p. 114.
[93] Dayan, p. 173.

> one of the beautiful silver medals of Washington, engraved by Reich, with which she seemed much pleased. The conversation languished, and I soon withdrew.[94]

This evocative description of Leclerc's dress echoes Moreau's vision of the covetous and seductive *négresses* whose sartorial finery denotes their coquettish mastery. The 'darkened room' in which she receives 'Hassal' also resonates with Faulkner's description of the 'silken prison lighted by perpetual shaded candles' in which Henry encounters Bon's octoroon mistress,[95] and exhibits similar tropes of luxury and excess. Each element, from the room and its ornamentation through to Leclerc's attire and behaviour, converges to form an assault on the senses which is only broken by Hassal when she offers Leclerc the gift of a Washington medallion. By conflating materiality with seduction and the colonial environment—an analogy which is heightened by the central seduction narrative featuring Hassal's 'sister' Clara—Sansay invokes the colonial 'tropologies' of women of colour created by the likes of Moreau and De Wimpffen, and thus negates the moral integrity of Leclerc and the French expedition against the Saint-Domingan revolutionaries more generally. Leclerc's sensuality is deeply bound up with her choice of attire, which is in turn informed by the fashion choices of Saint-Domingan women of colour and the 'Creole' women who emulate them. In this way, Leclerc invariably functions as a symbolic counterpoint to the morally righteous 'Hassal', and highlights the degenerative and corruptive power of the colonial environment. However, accounts of other white women who adopted similar headscarf styles testify to the fact that Leclerc did not represent an anomalous exception to the cultural mainstream.

The popularity of 'tignon' style headdresses among the female intelligentsia of late eighteenth-century Europe, particularly among women such as Mary Wollstonecraft, Madame Roland, and the portraitist Louise Elizabeth Vigée Le Brun (Figure 11), point to the possibility that the tastes and trends set by women of colour informed a larger, global market economy. If, as Skeehan suggests, fashions were often dictated by the demands of African markets,[96] it stands to reason that the women that undergirded the survival of those markets also had a significant influence upon them, thus enabling them to 'capitalize on the commodity potential for their

---

[94] Hassal, pp. 7-8.
[95] Faulkner, p. 193.
[96] Skeehan notes that 'a West African market for cheaply produced textiles caused a change in the aesthetics of dress in the wider Anglophone Atlantic world as fabrics mimicking the tastes of West African buyers were also sold in English domestic markets, as well as markets in colonial North America and the West Indies.' Skeehan, p. 108.

bodies'.[97] The vision of decadence, appropriation, and consumption that Leclerc embodies thus encrypts a revolutionary narrative about the dominant influence of women of colour who transformed 'a symbol of mulatto women's humiliation' into 'a sign of regional pride',[98] thereby shaping sartorial habits and currents of exchange within the alternate public spheres that Atlantic women were circulating. Given the neoclassical turn that fashions across the Atlantic were then taking, which rejected the exoticism and excess that characterized the costume styles of the *ancien régime*, and upon which Pauline Leclerc had a major influence,[99] this is especially pertinent, and reflects the transactional nature of fashion and the cultural power of women of colour who orchestrated, or at least fed, these transactions. These women, by their acts of re-appropriation, subverted the racial and sexual connotations that the headscarf was seen to have in slaveholding society, and thereby created metamorphic opportunities for other women typically denied the power conferred by the white, male, bourgeois public sphere.

Figure 11: Louise Élizabeth Vigée Le Brun, *Self Portrait* (1800), oil on canvas, 30.9 x 26.8 inches. Courtesy of The State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg.

[97] Adams-Campbell, p. 85.
[98] Ibid., p. 88.
[99] Claire E. Cage, 'The Sartorial Self: Neoclassical Fashion and Gender Identity in France, 1797-1804', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 42 (2009), 193-215 (pp. 193-194).

Such metamorphic possibilities are thus encrypted in the headscarf 'worn' by Eulalia Bon, which records the diffusive cultural influence of free-coloured Saint-Domingan women across the American South. This influence is elsewhere seen in her attempt to 'orchestrate' the meeting between Henry and Bon, wherein clothing functions as the primary tool of cultural mediation. Eulalia effectively presides over this romance, and by 'grooming' Bon,[100] she subtly effects the infiltration and destruction of the Sutpen-Coldfield line, forging a space for herself within a white patriarchal economy that has repudiated her and her son's existence. Indeed, it is Eulalia, the reader is informed, who endeavours to ensure that Bon is equipped with the requisite 'uniform' that will bridge the racial divide between himself and Henry by 'pack[ing] the fine clothes and the fine linen into the bags and trunks' before Bon departs New Orleans for the University of Mississippi.[101] That Eulalia undertakes this task is significant; she invests a great deal of importance in this procedure. Clothing is thus signified as a powerful form of social currency, and, by assembling Bon's 'costume', she bridges the social divide between Henry's Yoknapatawpha *inheritance* and Bon's racial *heritage*. In this way, she is shown to confer cultural knowledge that Henry Sutpen, by virtue of his efforts to *emulate* Bon, seeks to acquire. This cultural knowledge diffuses outwards, infiltrating the provincial plantation infrastructure of the Sutpens' Yoknapatawpha.

A portrait painted in 1841 by Luigi Marie Sotta who came to New Orleans as an itinerant painter in the early 1840s provides an insight into the legacies of such diasporic transactions and their resonance in the plantation South. The portrait depicts an elderly white female, Mrs Leonard Wiltz, wearing a style of headscarf that corresponds with the 'tignon' styles worn by women of colour in the Caribbean and lower South in the eighteenth centruy (Figure 12). In fact, this painting mirrors a similar portrait painted in 1829 by Louis Antoine Collas, another itinerant portrait painter from New Orleans, of a free woman of colour (Figure 13). Phenotypically, there is very little difference between the two women in each portrait, and what difference there is is emphasized by Sotta's use of reflective light. Their mode of dress and the postures that they strike are virtually identical. The addition of the chequered headscarf further confounds any easy distinction, and complicates its supposed 'racial' signification. The angelic image of Mrs Wiltz,

[100] Faulkner, p. 306.
[101] Ibid., p. 310.

emphasized by accents of light, nevertheless presents a stark contrast to the Moreauvian portrait of the seductive Saint-Domingan *négresses* whose headscarves 'lend themselves […] to all their caprices'.[102]

Figure 12: Luigi Marie Sotta, *Mrs Leonard Wiltz* (1841), oil on canvas, 31.9 x 25.5 inches. Reprinted with permission from The Louisiana State Museum, New Orleans, LA 70176-2448.

[102] 'se prétàt […] à tout ces caprices'. Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Déscription*, vol. 1, p. 59.

Figure 13: Louis Antoine Collas, *Portrait of a Free Woman of Color Wearing a Tignon* (1829), oil on canvas, 44 x 36 inches. Reprinted with permission from The New Orleans Museum of Art, New Orleans, LA 70124.

Again, it is only really possible to speculate what motivated white women such as Mrs Wiltz to adopt such sartorial habits. It is plausible that such garments reflected the practical needs of the hemispheric climate—the head wrap functioning as a substitute for the traditional sunbonnet or cap. However, the domestic scenes in which both Sotta's and Collas's sitters are depicted indicate that such garments were also worn indoors much like the mob cap.[103] Certainly,

[103] The mob cap was popular in domestic settings in antebellum America. See Valerie Cumming, C.W. Cunnington, and P. E. Cunnington, *The Dictionary of Fashion History* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2010), p. 133, 'A Colonial Lady's Clothing: A Glossary of Terms', *Colonial Williamsburg* (The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 2014) <http://www.history.org/history/clothing/women/wglossary.cfm> [accessed 1 April 2014], and *What Clothes Reveal: The Language of Clothing in Colonial and Federal America* (Williamsburg: The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 2002), pp. 140-141.

in this context, the headscarf worn by Mrs Wiltz functions less as the kind of elaborate 'ornement' worn by Moreau's *négresses* or Brunias's *mulâtresses* and more as a simple shroud. The colours are neither bright, nor exuberant, and the check pattern is analogous to the more generic 'Guinea Cloth' styles that circulated widely in Atlantic markets. The illumination of the sitter's face, which highlights and accentuates marks of age, and the posture that she adopts, clasping her hands together, converge to form an image of respectability. Viewed in this context, the headscarf is only an extension of the modest character that this painting attempts to build, and any 'racial' signification is distinctly muted. Such images thus offer an insight into the ways in which white women such as Mrs Wiltz subverted the sexualized mystique that undergirded white 'tropologies' of women of colour, and expanded the metamorphic possibilities of fashion and female performativity within the alternative publics of Atlantic slaveholding communities.

The distinctive manner in which the headscarf is fashioned, which echoes the elaborate styles made popular by women of colour in colonial societies such as Saint-Domingue, reflects the subtle revolutionary power embedded in this portrait. The uncanny shadow of Collas's free woman of colour reinforces the fact that Mrs Wiltz's headscarf has a particular cultural inheritance bound up with the racial and sexual politics of colonial society. By reading such instances of cultural appropriation, the secretive rebellious agency of Saint-Domingan women of colour and of Faulkner's headscarf-wearing Eulalia Bon are thus brought to the fore. Recording the cultural transformations to which the headscarf is subjected—as racial sign, tool of seduction, utilitarian garment, and fashion item—these portraits point to a host of performative identities that women of colour created for themselves and others. The gothic 'shock' value of Eulalia's headscarf and its racial signification in *Absalom* is thus a foil to its normalization within southern culture, encrypting a fear of the powerful transgressive reach of women of colour in plantation society. Headscarves represented the bodily defiance of women of colour who sought to counteract proscriptions upon their expressive freedoms, but they also contained the fears of this defiance—fears which were embedded in the slaveholding imaginary. The ways in which these scarves were fashioned reflected the cultural ties and personal tastes of the wearer; as a result, racialized symbols were re-appropriated and inverted by women of colour, and their meaning was thereby transformed in mainstream white culture. In this way (and in many others), women of colour demonstrated their pervasive influence upon the tastes and trends of the global cultures that exploited their bodies and labour. The headscarf thus encrypts a memory of the ways in

which women of colour used their bodies with ingenuity, creativity, and defiance to create alternative publics that were not dictated exclusively by white, male, bourgeois society and operated beyond the jurisdiction of the patriarchal plantation economy.

The burlesque of Eulalia Bon with a 'shawl over her head' betrays a Moreauvian necessity to contain and circumscribe blackness, reminding the reader that, no matter how fair-skinned she is, and no matter how much wealth she commands, she will always be black. Her avowed blackness is an anchor of destruction and degeneration that obscures the possibility of transformation. The reader is not permitted for a second to lose sight of this; her identity must always be traced back to the interracial sexual union that (supposedly) brought her into being. The revolutionary phantom is thus characterized by a woman of colour arrayed in silk and lace, with a head covered in a 'shawl': a seductress who has orchestrated the dilution of Sutpen's 'design'. Beyond 128 degrees of blackness, uncertainty looms. Sartorial symbols thus operate synecdochically in *Absalom, Absalom!* to constrain the revolutionary potential of women of colour within the confines of racialized and sexualized 'tropologies'. Faulkner's preoccupation with the symbolism of clothing betrays an underlying societal fear in the erasure of such symbols—an erasure that is ultimately realized by Shreve at the end of the novel. This anxiety was replicated in Faulkner's own time in the racial discourses that pervaded the Jim Crow South, especially in the cultural paranoia surrounding 'miscegenation'.[104] The persistent co-optation of women's performed identities via sartorial symbols echoes the ways in which women's bodies were physically exploited in the slaveholding Americas. The complexity embedded in clothing, as a commodity produced through exploitative labour practices and exchanged as currency for labouring bodies, and its centrality to global markets and inter-cultural exchange in the Age of Revolution nevertheless circumvents the synecdochic dissolution of female agency. Both Eulalia and the 'octoroon mistress' are co-opted, reduced to sign, and consigned to the margins of the narrative. However, their progeny outlive the (white) Sutpen line, and their ability to recreate and sustain themselves is thus affirmed and underwritten in these signs.

As discussions about clothing between women of colour in the antebellum South demonstrate, women of colour were able to carve out an autonomous existence within the

[104] In 1924 the Racial Integrity Act was passed in Virginia which prohibited marriages between white and 'colored' Virginians. See 'The New Virginia Law to Preserve Racial Integrity', *Library of Virginia* <https://lva.omeka.net/items/show/62> [accessed 20 November 2015].

economies of exchange that existed in plantation society.[105] These women employed knowledge and expertise to barter for a stake within the social economy; they were not the 'kept mistresses' of white men, but agents of their own economic destinies. As such, they had a degree of purchasing power that was enacted through barter, exchange, manufacture, and self-fashioning. In this way, they were able to mediate the 'relations of production and social reproduction that', as Dillon attests, stood 'at the core of colonial politics'.[106] By appropriating the skills that would allow them to 'fashion' an independent existence, and by learning the language of trade and exchange that would allow them to participate within a global market economy, women of colour creatively subverted the strictures of southern plantation societies.

Such creative ingenuity is reflected in the visualization of the octoroon's 'new lace and silk and satin negligees subdued to the mauve and lilac of mourning' that she is described as wearing when she arrives at Sutpen's Hundred after Bon's death.[107] Her identity as Charles Bon's concubine/*plaçée* and, thus, as abject victim of 'white' patriarchal authority encrypts her creative skill and capacity for reinvention. This is compounded here by the use of the word 'new'. Whereas Judith, Rosa, and even Clytie—who is confined by this white, Anglo-Protestant, patriarchal society and by Sutpen's 'design'—are consigned to faded rags, and have no skills to manufacture luxury clothes of their own,[108] the octoroon mistress is able to make herself 'anew' and fashion a new existence (albeit one that codifies her sexual intimacy with Charles Bon). Although she eventually dies and fades into textual obscurity, what remains of her after her death in 1871 is secreted amongst those things 'tied up in a bandana handkerchief' that her son, Charles Etienne, takes with him when he departs New Orleans for a new life at Sutpen's Hundred.[109] Indeed, it is reasonable to assume that this very 'bandana handkerchief' is her only

---

[105] This is evident in an 1850 letter sent by a New Orleanian woman of colour, Lavinia Miller, to her aunt in Natchez in which she discusses the price of textiles being used to make clothes. Miller observes 'I have sent you the calico and father got two pair of shose for Kate at sixty five cents a pair. They are good ones. […] I got three yards for you and the twelve yards and nine in the other. And I have sent you some peaces of my dresses that I bought. The two dark peaces is a dime a yard and the other, the red, is twenty cents a yard and the other is french calico. It is twenty five cents a yard.' The value of each item of clothing is shown to be clearly understood, and transactions take place in the marketplace where quantities of items can be bought for less. Lengths of cloth are cut, from which these women are presumably able to fashion their own dresses. See Lavinia Miller, 'Letter to Ann Johnson, New Orleans, 23 November 1850', in *Chained to the Rock of Adversity: To be Free, Black, & Female in the Old South*, ed. by Virginia Meacham Gould (Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 1998), p. 10.

[106] Elizabeth Maddock Dillon, 'The Secret History of the Early American Novel: Leonora Sansay and Revolution in Saint-Domingue', *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*, 40 (2006-2007), 77-103 (p. 78).

[107] Faulkner, p. 194.

[108] Ibid., p. 180.

[109] Ibid., p. 195.

remaining remnant (the reader is told, before this, that she too wears 'cloth upon her temples').[110] This is significant; although she is denied a voice, the *possibilities* of revolutionary and performative identities of women from Saint-Domingue to Louisiana and beyond are embedded within this symbol. This very concept is a threat to the illusion of a 'reconstructed' postbellum South that Rosa Coldfield clings onto as she luxuriates over a period of forty-three years in her wounded pride, and that Judith attempts to maintain in the hierarchy that she preserves between herself and Clytie who, long after the end of slavery in the South, 'sle[eps] on a pallet on the floor'.[111] The reality of death and renewal is too hard to assimilate. The catalogue of deaths recounted by Quentin replicates in microcosm the successive cultural deaths of the South—the death of gentility, the death of plantocracy, and the death of white southern femininity. The boundaries drawn around the octoroon's social identity do not necessarily indicate her limits, therefore, but suggest a fear of her limits; it is a conscious *choice* on the part of Faulkner/Rosa/the Compsons/Shreve to circumscribe her limits. In this way, they curtail her access to a cultural rebirth that they have been categorically denied. As Matthews notes, 'Faulkner's style makes the visible seen and leaves an afterimage that may continue to work in the moral imagination.'[112] The horror of socially-subversive possibility simmers continually beneath the surface of symbolic containment. And certainly, although Judith may know how to 'weave cloth',[113] the octoroon knows how to *fashion* it, and, in an echo of the defiant women of colour in colonial Saint-Domingue, demonstrates the pervasive historical reach of black female cultural resistance.

As Fabella points out, white commentators in Saint-Domingue (and indeed elsewhere) used sartorial symbols to demonstrate the seductive shadow that women of colour cast over the slaveholding Americas, and the corruptive and degenerative effects of 'race' more generally.[114] However, the symbolic association of free-coloured sartorial habits with the myth of a destructive black female sexuality obscured the more socially unsettling ideas of female self-purchase, financial autonomy, and social visibility, all of which suggested that matrilineal slavery was doomed to destruction. Beyond the more subtle metamorphoses that some women were able to realize through costume, and the influences that they had upon white fashions, the

[110] Ibid., p. 194.
[111] Ibid., p. 197.
[112] Matthews, p. 257.
[113] Faulkner, p. 197.

textile industry afforded women of colour opportunities to assert their agency within a growing and globalizing consumer economy. Transatlantic slavery had created a culture of conspicuous consumption, in which men and women across the racial divide participated. As Sophie White has highlighted, cloth was a valuable and highly prized commodity in the Atlantic world, which had the 'potential […] to assert or contest status, to construct community and economic agency, to facilitate or disrupt inter- and intra-ethnic power relations, and even to engineer social control within black spaces.'[115] African traders exchanged cloth for bodies, and free women of colour were caught up precariously in this matrix of conspicuous consumption, working and embellishing the cloth produced from the raw materials farmed by black slaves—not least cotton and indigo. The idea that women of colour in Saint-Domingue and Louisiana entered into intimate relationships with white men in order 'to survive',[116] as Joan Martin posits, diminishes the fact that such women asserted agency over their bodies and labour in a socially visible forum. Indeed, these women not only operated within the spaces demarcated by white society, they were also able to shape and determine that society through active participation in the market economy. Undergirding phantoms of the sexualized bodies of free women of colour in the American imaginary was thus a fear of their material legacies and social influence as public *women* within the larger slaveholding system.

Fashion is just one example of how women of colour in Saint-Domingue were able to re-imagine their social identities and effect cultural change using their bodies. Their influence, spurred by revolutionary and commercial migrations, resonated across the lower South and indeed the larger Atlantic. Saint-Domingan women of colour were thus central to a revolutionary movement that influenced 'a geopolitics of European colonialism and developing world capitalism that preceded and accompanied the national revolutions in the Atlantic world of the eighteenth century.'[117] Although they were not quite revolutionary *citoyennes*, such women demonstrated that they had a stake in slaveholding society, and thereby highlighted the power that existed beyond the patriarchal plantation economy. This is the ultimate horror embedded at the heart of *Absalom, Absalom!*—that the southern, slaveholding South will collapse in on itself

---

[114] Fabella, 'Inventing the Creole Citizen', p. 166.
[115] Sophie White, 'Slaves and Poor Whites' Informal Economies in an Atlantic Context', in *Louisiana: Crossroads of the Atlantic World*, ed. by Cécile Vidal (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), pp. 89-102 (p. 92).
[116] Martin, p. 65.
[117] Dillon, p. 79.

and be remade anew by the very people that undergird that system. This revolutionary vision shook the foundations of the agrarian republicanism upon which Jefferson's South had been built. It was perhaps this uncanny realization that prompted Jefferson to propose that all emancipated slaves in a hypothetically slave-free America 'be colonized to such place as the circumstances of the time should render most proper'.[118] However, in Faulkner's *Absalom*, change and transformation is an unstoppable force; Sutpen's design founders upon the death of Henry, and Jim Bond emerges like a phoenix from the ashes. That Clytemnestra effects this destruction is of course significant, and her actions, as the descendant of another nameless 'Haitian' slave, echo the incendiary acts perpetrated by the revolutionary slaves across Saint-Domingue's northern plain in 1791. However, the fact that she destroys Sutpen's only remaining (white) heir along with the Sutpen house is perhaps more significant. By burning the house, and Henry with it, she kills Sutpen's name. Of course, as the Genealogy testifies, this is a name that she also carries, and one that, by immolating *herself*, she actively repudiates. Crucially, despite this act of destruction and self-immolation, she spares Jim Bond, son of Charles Etienne, and thus leaves intact the name left by Eulalia. Like the madras headscarf, the name 'Bond' serves as a perpetual reminder of his Saint-Domingan/Haitian (and indeed slave) inheritance, but it also attests to the revolutionary transformations and re-appropriations enacted by women of colour in Saint-Domingue and throughout the slaveholding Atlantic.

Indeed, as *Absalom* demonstrates, the ability to transcend race and the structural hierarchy bound up with the patriarchal plantation economy is at the basis of this metamorphosis. Fantasies of race and racial reproduction that centre around ideas of 'contamination' or 'dilution' via a sexual 'inheritance' create a buffer against these fears, anchoring a 'one-drop' rule that equates race with slavery through the maternal line. The narrative reproduces a Moreauvian taxonomy of race and colour which situates the 'high white face' of Ellen Coldfield at the top of the scale,[119] and the 'coal black ape-like woman' that marries Charles Etienne at the bottom.[120] This scale reflects the mathematical logic of racial 'degeneration' orchestrated by women of colour, which is rhetorically borne out in the figure of the 'octoroon' mistress. However, it also inheres the notion that anything less than 'pure' whiteness is in fact black. When Henry Sutpen meets Charles Bon's octoroon 'mistress' and child, he recoils at the bigamous threat that this

[118] Jefferson, *Notes*, p. 149.
[119] Faulkner, p. 23.
[120] Ibid., p. 229

alliance poses to Bon's prospective marriage with his (or rather their) sister Judith. Bon nevertheless subverts the legitimacy of this alliance, arguing, 'Have you forgotten that this woman, this child, are niggers? You, Henry Sutpen of Sutpen's Hundred in Mississippi?'[121] By appealing to Henry's plantation heritage, which sees race as deeply bound up with inheritance and *matrilineal* inheritance in particular, Bon reinforces the inflexibility of the slave system and those under its yoke. This is a system that deems that even Clytie, the daughter of a white planter, should be viewed as a 'negress'.[122] This rationale supports the perpetuation of the system and the coherence of 'the South' and weakens the metamorphic potential of the woman of colour. However, the Saint-Domingan women of colour who defied this rationale, whose influence was felt in other southern societies, demonstrated the increasing irrelevance of this system. The encroaching realization of this metamorphic reality led to the reinforcement of white colonialist infrastructure and racial signification. The futile efforts to restrain this 'revolution' are reflected metaphorically in Sutpen's attempt to curtail the Haitian uprising by shooting blindly 'at the Haitiean night'.[123] Quentin and Shreve attempt to contain the metamorphic agency of Eulalia and the unnamed octoroon through the synecdochic tool of the tignon, but their secrets are ultimately borne out by the stream-of-consciousness narration which pushes the reader to probe the secreted depths of this synecdoche.

History itself is thus shown to be a continually revolutionary process. Haiti represents the historical force of social change that Sutpen, Yoknapatawpha, and the white Anglo-Protestant South actively guard against. Bound by the conservative constraints of tradition and patriarchal lineage, they cannot assimilate the idea of social metamorphosis. This metamorphosis is the inevitable product of the fundamental weaknesses in the slave system. In this sense, Glissant's assertion that 'the whole ensemble of [Faulkner's] work stands before you as though erected by an architect who constructed a monument around a secret to be known, pointing it out and hiding it all at the same time',[124] resonates most forcefully with *Absalom, Absalom!*. The secret, encrypted in his decadent vision of New Orleans, which represents both a symbolic and literal bridge between the revolutionary past and conservative future, is in fact more of a warning: a warning that history always comes back to haunt, and the descendants of slavery will return to

[121] Ibid., p. 118.
[122] Ibid., p. 205.
[123] Ibid., p. 253.
[124] Glissant, *Faulkner*, p. 5.

contest their legacies. The anxious conservatism that reigns in Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha persisted in the South of Faulkner's own time, rooted in a revolutionary containment that was enacted through legal segregation and institutionally-sanctioned racial violence. The revolutionary history that Faulkner reproduces in *Absalom* is a 'miscegenous' history that has its roots in Saint-Domingue. However, as a cultural and linguistic phenomenon, it became a source of much consternation at the time that Faulkner was writing. Revolutionary history and haunted present were bound together, especially by the story of Homer Plessy, a one-eighth black ('octoroon') from New Orleans descended from Saint-Domingan migrants whose act of racial defiance in the late nineteenth century strengthened a racial hierarchy predicated on a legal doctrine of 'separate but equal'. The links between history and the present were also brought to the fore by the U.S. Marine occupation of Haiti which came to an end in 1934, the memory of which was undoubtedly acute when Faulkner published *Absalom* in 1936.

This unbreakable link between revolutionary geographies and histories, between a Haitian (or Saint-Domingan) past and an American present demonstrates the real fear at the heart of 'miscegenation'—the fear that it will not go away. After all, as Christopher Peterson notes, miscegenation is 'the sign of an impossible possibility, the sign of something that can both never *really* take place, and yet has always already taken place'.[125] This is finally illuminated when Shreve declares to Quentin that 'in a few thousand years, I who regard you will also have sprung from the loins of African kings.'[126] In short, Faulkner understood the value and revolutionary power of composite cultures that repudiated 'the absolute legitimacy of dynastic bloodline.'[127] Far from 'harmless', as Stanchich attests,[128] the Haiti of Faulkner's *Absalom* permeates to the core of the southern American experience. The final destruction of Sutpen's house, and, thus, of the 'architecture' of secrecy that contains the cryptic truth, exposes the barren and estate-less land of Sutpen's Hundred to the unbounded limits of the globalizing world—a world to which it had always belonged, but never wanted to admit.

---

[125] Christopher Peterson, 'The Haunted House of Kinship: Miscegenation: Homosexuality, and Faulkner's "Absalom, Absalom!"', *The New Centennial Review*, 4 (2004), 227-265. (p. 234).
[126] Faulkner, p. 378.
[127] Ibid., p. 197.
[128] Stanchich, p. 608.

Chapter 3 | Degenerate Creoles: America, Saint-Domingue, and Revolutionary Creolization

> What took place in the Caribbean, which could only be summed up in the word *creolization*, approximates the idea of Relation for us as nearly as possible. It is not merely an encounter, a shock […], a *métissage*, but a new and original dimension allowing each person to be there and elsewhere, rooted and open, lost in the mountains and free beneath the sea, in harmony and in errantry.
>
> — Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* (1997)

'Creole': Etymological Phantoms and Revolutionary Afterlives

In a communication published in the New Orleans *Picayune* in 1884, an unnamed correspondent attempts to chart the etymology of the term 'Creole'. Speaking to the cultural confusion surrounding the term in the United States, and its association with ideas of race-mixing, the author remarks:

> Many years ago, while traveling in the North, I met a noted physician, who inquired of what race were the Creoles, saying that, he had been informed they were people of color, or more plainly speaking, mulattoes and quadroons. I informed him that such was not the case. While on a visit in Memphis, I heard a lawyer in conversation remark that a man born in Tennessee was a Creole of that State; one born in Louisiana was a Creole of said State, and one born in any other State was a Creole of that other State, etc., and, finally, that the word as now used, was synonymous with "native," and that Spaniards, French and their descendants intended such whenever they used the word Creole.[1]

The author concludes by asserting that 'Creole is not used by Americans unless referring to people of Spanish or French descent', further affirming that '[t]he Americans in Louisiana outnumber those of French descent, and the native Americans of this State never call themselves Creoles.'[2] The need to anchor the etymology of the term and understand its various cultural mutations was no doubt motivated in part by the publication of George Washington Cable's first

---

[1] 'Origin of the term "Creole"', in *The Times Picayune* (22 December 1884), p. 2 <http://www.newspapers.com/newspage/28272852/> [accessed 23 June, 2014].
[2] Ibid.

novel *The Grandissimes* in 1880. Subtitled 'A Story of Creole Life', *The Grandissimes* had thrown into disarray cultural assumptions about 'Creole' identity and culture—particularly within Anglo-American communities beyond the reach of the 'Creole' South, thereby blurring the social distinctions that certain cross-sections of Louisiana's Creole community had fought hard to preserve.

Set in New Orleans at the time of the Louisiana Purchase, *The Grandissimes* narrates the fictional history of the extended Grandissime family, a noble Creole family who can trace their lineage back to the earliest settlers of Louisiana. It follows the pursuits of a New Orleanian immigrant Joseph Frowenfeld, a northern '*Américain*', who is looked upon by his Creole neighbours with much disdain. Joseph travels to New Orleans with the rest of the Frowenfeld family, who invest in it hopes of a 'New Jerusalem'. What greets them on their arrival, however, is far removed from their utopian vision. Instead of a 'city upon a hill' they find '[a] land hung in mourning, darkened by gigantic cypresses, submerged; a land of reptiles, silence, shadow, and decay.'[3] The climate and ecology of this foreign landscape are hostile and degenerate, which is intensified by the fact that, shortly after their arrival, each member of the Frowenfeld family succumbs to yellow fever—which proves fatal to all but Joseph. Proving himself to be acutely susceptible to the hostilities of this new and forbidding environment, his incongruousness is compounded by his Protestant sensibilities, his firm commitment to the supposedly 'American' virtues of reason, justice, and self-improvement, and his scorn for the peculiarly 'Creole' vices of superstition, prejudice, obstinacy, and conservatism. Nevertheless, he adapts quickly to the New Orleanian way of life, which, he learns, has been defined by the histories of several prominent Creole families, including the Grandissimes, the Fusiliers and the De Grapions: descendants of three intrepid members of Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville's exploring party. The lives of these families intersect at various moments, forming a complex inter-familial web which even they cannot quite make sense of.[4] This web is haunted by spectres of race-mixing, spurious and semi-legitimate marriages, libertinage, and bastard progeny. It is the complete antithesis, in short, to the world from which Joseph has sprung, and, on its 'degenerate' surface, negates hope of 'American' redemption. Real personages such as William Claiborne, the Jeffersonian emissary who was tasked with the responsibility of unifying the disparate Creole and American factions of

[3] George Washington Cable, *The Grandissimes: A Story of Creole Life* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1957), p. 9.
[4] Ibid., p. 29.

the newly-acquired southern territory, loom on the periphery, adding verisimilitude to this tale of local colour, but dense layers of Creole heritage make Louisiana a difficult core to penetrate. In this redemptive odyssey of Americanization, history of the distant—and indeed more recent—Creole past is not so easily effaced.

The tensions and uncertainties evoked by Cable's depiction of the Creole South are accentuated by the doubled relationship between the novel's two Honoré Grandissimes: one, an elite white Creole merchant and legatee to the Grandissime estate, and the other, his mixed-race half brother who presides over an independent fortune generated from a number of urban rental properties (including, amongst them, Frowenfeld's pharmacy). While Honoré Grandissime 'f.m.c.' meets his tragic demise at the end of Cable's novel, he maintains an uncanny presence throughout, shadowing his 'legitimate' white brother. Indeed, as Shirley Thompson notes, '[f]or much of the novel, the reader is not certain to whom Cable refers' when he invokes the name of "Honoré Grandissime", and must infer the racial identity of the Honoré under question from situational and physical cues'.[5] This uncertainty is compounded by their shared occupation of the same geographical space, and the topography of the New Orleans that Cable maps, inviting cultural crossings that negate any conception of clear boundaries. The reader's sense of the Honorés' uncanny mutability (and the mutability of the Creole identities that they both embody) is also exacerbated by the story of Bras Coupé, a story that is told by both brothers on the same day.[6] Even in his decease, the Creole f.m.c. casts a lingering shadow over the elite Creole lineage of the Grandissime family, spectrally memorialized in the name of the business that his white brother inherits: 'Grandissime Frères' (Grandissime Brothers). Despite, then, the apparent 'contradiction' that the white Honoré poses to 'the notion that a Creole is a person of mixed blood',[7] his doubled relationship with his darker-skinned half brother problematizes any sense of paradigmatic stability, and demonstrates that Creole families are not so easily purged of their unruly elements.

Given the novel's emphasis on doubling and paradox, it is hardly surprising that Cable's readers were confused about what constituted a 'Creole', particularly to those American 'natives' who did not personally identify in such terms. However, the compulsion for Cable's

---

[5] Shirley Elizabeth Thompson, *Exiles at Home: The Struggle to Become American in Creole New Orleans* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2009), p. 124.
[6] Cable, *Grandissimes*, p. 169.
[7] Ibid., p. 38.

contemporaries to find an etymological 'root' for the term exposes phantomogenic anxieties about its cultural genesis and its revolutionary potential. As Sean Goudie points out, '"creole" is a term with multiple and overlapping genealogies'. On that point, most modern scholarship appears to agree; language, after all, is a product of exchange, and this is most true in the history of the colonial Americas. The point of contention, however, is over its origin. Goudie supports the view of various scholars who contend that the term is '[e]tymologically derived from the Latin verb "creare," [meaning] to create' and that it 'was first deployed in its Spanish colonial version—perhaps deriving from the Spanish "criollo"—before migrating into French and British colonial lexicons as a term of New World identity.'[8] Certainly, colonial documents from Saint-Domingue and Louisiana seem to support this idea.[9] In Moreau de Saint-Méry's *Déscription*, for example, he notes that 'Creole' is a name given 'à tous ceux qui naissent aux Colonies' (to all those who are born in the colonies).[10] However, George Handley highlights that the term had a specific resonance in the New World slave market, where it was used 'to refer to black slaves born in the Americas'. In this context, 'native' colonial slaves were labelled as 'Creoles', and distinguished from '*bozales*', who were imported from Africa.[11] Inevitably bound up with a taxonomical Enlightenment culture that sought to create order within—and affirm the conquests of—European empires, this language allowed for 'chains' or 'families' of categorized phenomena to be regulated as they multiplied (in the Moreauvian sense). Taking on a utilitarian specificity, it thus played a central role in the calculated inventorial apparatus of Atlantic slavery.

Of course, when considering the various linguistic transmutations to which the term was subject and the context of crossing and collision within which it came into being, the etymology also opens itself up to possible African and diasporic influences. Carolyn Allen, for example, notes that research conducted by Maureen Warner-Lewis 'posits a Kikoongo root for "creole", meaning "outsider"'.[12] While this etymological possibility has received relatively less critical attention (which is perhaps in itself indicative of a systematic scholarly culture that precludes

---

[8] Goudie, p. 8.
[9] Virginia R. Domínguez, *White By Definition: Social Classification in Creole Louisiana* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1986), p. 97 and Joseph G. Tregle, Jr., 'Creoles and Americans', in *Creole New Orleans: Race and Americanization*, ed. by Arnold R. Hirsch and Joseph Logson (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), pp. 131-185 (p. 137).
[10] Moreau, *Déscription*, vol. 1, p. 12.
[11] Handley, pp. 46-47. See also Juan M. de la Serna, 'Bozal', in *The Historical Encyclopedia of World Slavery*, ed. by Junius P. Rodriguez, 2 vols, vol. 1 (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 1997), p. 97.
[12] Carolyn Allen, 'Creole Then and Now: The Problem of Definition', *Caribbean Quarterly*, 1-2 (1998), 33-49 (p. 35).

certain Creole 'voices'), its significance should be accorded equal value, especially given that Anglo-American anxieties generated by the term were, as the *Picayune* communication attests, occasionally predicated on notions of racial 'hybridity'.

It is, however, important to recognize that as words migrate between languages, so too do meanings; the increasing preference for the French 'creole' over the Spanish 'criollo' in English-language texts from the eighteenth century onwards, for example, highlights certain cultural assumptions about Creole identity that are anchored in ideas of Frenchness and French colonialism. Even if 'Creoles' were not regarded in this particular way, they were often seen as part of an 'other' New World culture in the U.S. American imaginary. Indeed, Goudie posits that 'newly independent U.S. "American" creoles imagined themselves to a significant extent through and against West Indians and creole discourse about the West Indies.'[13] 'Creole' identities were thus imagined in contradistinction to 'exceptional' (Anglo-) American identities. Such an imaginative process created a mechanism for ideological distancing, obfuscating American complicity in a wider Atlantic 'creolization' that was both aggressive and totalizing while silencing unruly African diasporic connections and their (re)generative and preservative power.

'Creole' was in essence, then, a thing that most Americans feared becoming but in fact had always been. As adjective and noun it describes both process and product. At its most expansive and inclusive, 'Creole' identity encompasses multiple, 'rhizomatic' possibilities in relation to syncretism and exchange. Indeed, as creolization scholars such as Glissant suggest, embedded in the term 'Creole' is the idea of 'a limitless *métissage*, its elements diffracted and its consequences unforeseeable.'[14] At the same time, it encompasses the idea of a coercive order—of a coherence wrought through force as well as negotiation. In this way, it should not be seen as a harmonious and 'kaleidoscopic totality', but rather as the process and product of colonial violence.[15] Perpetually elusive, fragmentary, and repetitive, 'Creole' undermines the stability of a singular, uniform, and coherent definition. As Ulrich Fleischmann notes, '[e]verything that is

[13] Goudie, p. 8.
[14] Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. by Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1997), p. 34.
[15] Garraway, *The Libertine Colony*, pp. 18-22.

termed "Creole"—people, cultures, languages—relates to an everlasting memory of old sins'.[16] America's founding vision of republican 'virtue', anchored in a millenarian colonial heritage that propelled it into the future, rejected its association with a 'sinful', creolized past. Although situated at the epicentre of such creolistic 'rhizomes', the imagined identity of the early republic relied on its exceptional status as a bearer of a stabilizing liberty and equality that would remain unchallenged by memories of a radical past or possibilities of a radical future.

The 'revolutionary' threat of 'Creole' identity was magnified in America by the spectre of Haiti. Eighteenth-century Saint-Domingue was the site of a radical or, as Munro posits, an 'apocalyptic' creolization,[17] understood by contemporary observers such as De Wimpffen and Sansay as socially degenerative. This idea of a 'Creole apocalypse' was undoubtedly informed by the Saint-Domingan culture of racial 'mixing' and *mésalliance*, but was also shaped by the border crossings, exchanges, and adaptations that defined its Creole culture more generally, expressed in food, language, dress, commerce, architecture, music, dance, religion, and forms of sociability. Cultural perceptions of its hybrid, metamorphic, and uncontrollable Creole culture left an indelible mark on the American imaginary and fused with emergent ideas about the cause of the revolution. Drawing on these contemporary perceptions, James describes the social context of the revolution in terms of a 'savagery' that was 'inseparable from everything connected with San Domingo.'[18] The radical creolization of colonial society had effectively wrought the downfall of colonial order in Saint-Domingue.

This perception was compounded by the diasporic 'revolutions' which occurred in its wake, which were perhaps most forcefully felt in early nineteenth-century Louisiana, and contributed to what Nathalie Dessens has termed a 're-creoliz[ation]' of culture.[19] These revolutions were shaped by a diverse mix of migrants—a mix that encompassed African and Afro-Creole slaves, plantation-owning whites, and free people of colour (who represented a

---

[16] Ulrich Fleischmann, 'The Sociocultural and Linguistic Profile of a Concept', in *A Pepper-Pot of Cultures: Aspects of Creolization in the Caribbean*, ed. by Gordon Collier and Ulrich Fleischmann (New York: Rodopi, 2003), p. xv-xxxvi (p. xix).

[17] Martin Munro, 'The Revolution's Ghosts: Dessalines, the Chimères, and Apocalyptic Creolization' (paper presented for *1804 and its Afterlives* conference at Nottingham Contemporary, Nottingham, UK: December 8, 2012). Munro argues that 'far from a harmonious fusion of their constituent parts, Creole subjects and communities may be fatally riven by their contradiction', further noting that 'in contrast to certain utopian ideas of cultural hybridity, creolization is just as likely to have a dystopian, even apocalyptic, outcome, and one must finally ask how it could be otherwise, given the historical conditions in which Caribbean creolization came into being, and the ongoing, unresolved effects of that history.'

[18] James, p. 25.

[19] Dessens, p. 167.

significant proportion of the migrant population and contributed to the doubling of New Orleans's existing free-coloured population).[20] Redefining patterns of settlement in the city, these groups created distinct ethnic sub-districts,[21] including the Faubourgs Trémé and Marigny (which owed their development to the labour of free black tradesmen and the expansion of 'shotgun' style Creole cottages which had evolved from urban housing styles in Saint-Domingue).[22]

Cumulatively, they represented a redoubtable force, pushing back (or rather 'rising up') against the sweeping tide of Americanization that occurred in the lower South after the Louisiana Purchase. The lability of their Creole identities was reinforced by the fact that they had shared the experience of diasporic removal. As Hunt notes, the migrants 'were bound together in a strange land by their Creole culture and by the harrowing violence in St. Domingue.'[23] Of course, these migrants were by no means a unified group; they harboured enmities borne of historical colonial prejudices, which fuelled ideas of 'exceptional' Creole identities and subverted the transactional openness of Creole exchange. Nevertheless, this revolutionary diaspora occurred at a time when America was attempting to strengthen its literal and ideological borders, and thus threatened to counteract the nascent project of Americanization.

The migrants introduced Louisiana to opera, schools for people of colour, and freemasonry, but they also reaffirmed and refined existing Creole institutions, including print culture (and thus, by extension, the French language),[24] the Catholic faith, and the theatre. Louis Tabary, a refugee who, like many Saint-Domingan Creoles, suffered financial ruin after he fled the conflict-riven colony, turned his fortunes to theatrical management upon his arrival in New Orleans, and became the manager of the Théâtre Saint Philippe in 1807—the same theatre that Cable anachronously sites as the location for the Grandissimes's *bal masqué* in 1803.[25] He also initiated plans to build a separate 'salle de spectacle' which would eventually assume the form of

---

[20] Hunt, p. 49.
[21] Richard Campanella, 'An Ethnic Geography of New Orleans', *The Journal of American History*, 94 (2007), 704-715 (p. 705).
[22] Hunt notes that 'almost every skilled craft in New Orleans had St. Domingan free black youths as apprentices' including trades such as 'tinsmithing, carpentry, […and] bricklaying'. See Hunt, p. 51. Moreover, Edwards notes that '[a]s Tremé, the Esplanade Ridge, and Marigny were being populated, the shotgun became a symbol of establishment and identity for an important segment of society. […] Free Creoles of color creatively reformulated elements of their heritage in building a new urban landscape.' See Edwards, 'Shotgun', p. 86. For a more detailed account of the evolution of the shotgun house and its Haitian origins see in particular pp. 65-67.
[23] Hunt, p. 41.
[24] Ibid., p. 54.
[25] Ibid., p. 69.

the Théâtre d'Orleans. In a letter written to the mayor of New Orleans (who was in fact the Saint-Domingan émigré James Pitot) in 1805, in which he appeals for funding and an official licence for the commencement of the project, he expounds the benefits of the endeavour in terms of an 'embellissement'.[26] That migrants viewed their cultural contributions as a form of 'embellishment' to the existing Creole culture is significant, and serves as an apt motif for the 're-creolization' to which the migration gave rise.[27] While the theatre that was built would take on numerous different life forms over the course of its history, its Saint-Domingan roots remain firmly entrenched, bound up with the historic landscape of New Orleans. A city plan drawn up in 1817 demonstrates the force of the connections between the city and its Saint-Domingan landmarks (see Figure 15).

Indeed, to this day, the physical landscape of New Orleans reflects the 'embellishments' of Saint-Domingan migrants, which are reflected in the distinct character of the Faubourgs, the endurance of Perseverance Lodge (see Figure 14),[28] and the remains of the old Orleans Ballroom, which now form part of the Bourbon Orleans Hotel.[29] The Afro-Creole folk songs made popular by Creole musicians such as Louis Moreau Gottschalk and his sister Clara Gottschalk Peterson (who were descended from Saint-Domingan émigrés) were heavily informed by West African musical traditions that found their expressive outlet in 'Congo Square'.[30] The Creole 'revolution' was in this sense continuous and irrepressible; in accordance with Glissant's idea of creolization, it was a process of 'diffraction', creating new layers while preserving the old. The migrants left a deep impression which would live on long after they and their descendants had died out, for which there is perhaps no better metaphor than the obtrusive tombs of New Orleans's much lauded cemeteries, where a number of the émigrés and their descendants have been laid to rest. The bodies buried beneath these tombs have long since

---

[26] Tabary wrote: 'Comme magistrate immédiate de cette ville vous applaudirez sans doute à un projet qui peut contribuer a son embelissement et lui être utile sous tous les rapports.' (Translation: As magistrate of this city, I'm sure you will applaud a project which can contribute to its embellishment and be beneficial to it in every respect.) Louis Tabary, 'directeur du spectacle de la Nouvelle Orleans a Monsieur le Maire, et mes-[ieurs] les aldermen …', MSS 909., Louisiana Research Collection, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA.

[27] Dessens, p. 167.

[28] Pesévérence No. 4 was a masonic lodge founded in Saint-Domingue. The cover page from the members list of 1808 shows that it reassembled in Cuba before it was eventually re-formed in New Orleans. See Figure 1.

[29] The Orleans ballroom was developed by John Davis, another Saint-Domingan émigré, as an extension to the Orleans Theatre. See Hunt, p. 70.

[30] As Johnson notes, Congo Square was the site of a public marketplace in the colonial era, but it also afforded slaves and free people of colour a communal space to meet, dance, sing, and worship. See Jerah Johnson, *Congo Square in New Orleans* (New Orleans: Louisiana Landmarks Society, 1995), p. 5.

decayed, but their tombs have largely held fast, and their names remain etched in the stones by which they are memorialized (see Figure 16).

Figure 14: Cover Page from Perseverance Lodge Members List from 1808, Freemason records, Courtesy of Manuscripts Collection 895, Manuscripts Department, Howard-Tilton Memorial Library, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA 70118. The list consists predominantly of Saint-Domingan Creoles. The frontispiece reads 'Table of Members who compose the Respectable Lodge of Saint John of Jerusalem, under the distinctive title of the Reunion of Hearts, by the order of Jérémie, constituted by the general order of France. Order of Santiago de Cuba, the 24th day of the 4th month [?]'

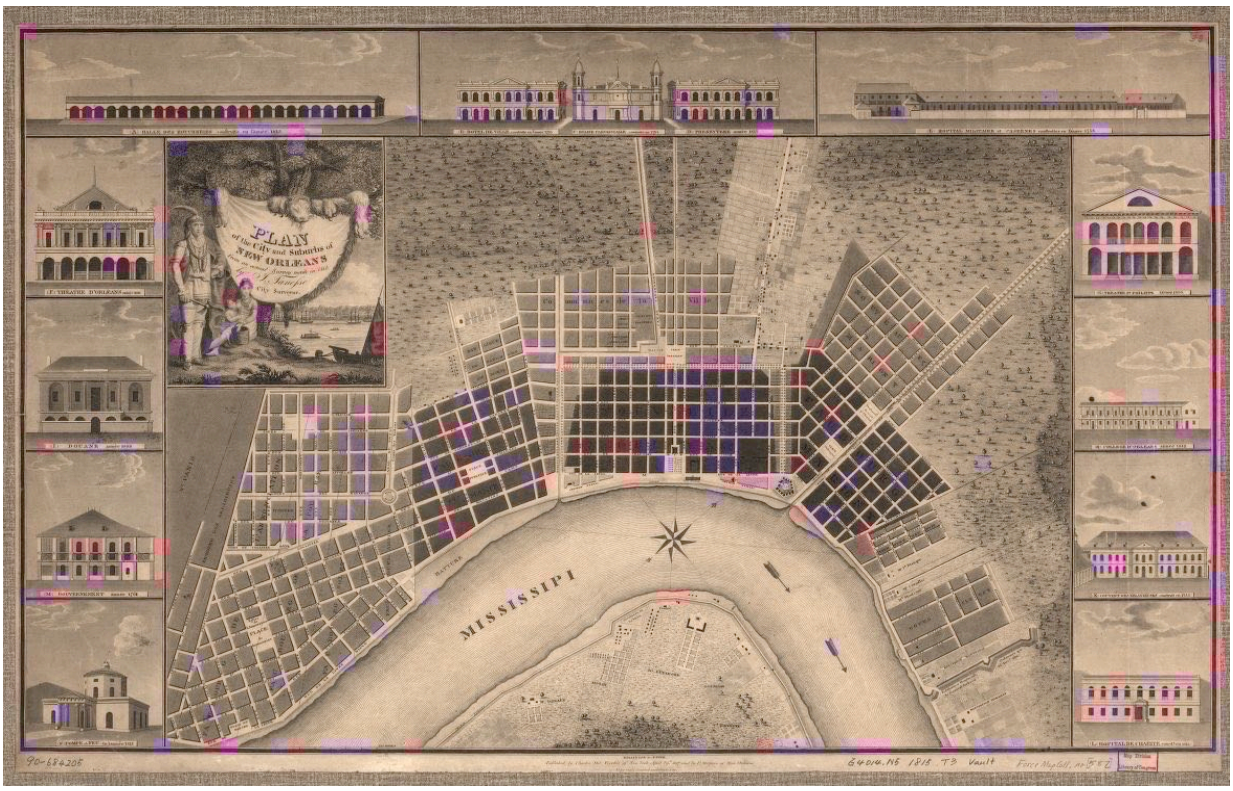


Figure 15: J. Tenasse, 'Plan of the City and Suburbs of New Orleans from an Actual Survey made in 1815' (New Orleans: P. Maspero, 1817). Courtesy of Library of Congress Geography and Map Division, Washington, D.C. 20540-4650. The plan depicts the new Faubourgs and is bordered by illustrations of notable edifices such as the the Théâtre Saint Philippe and the Théâtre d'Orleans (both overseen by Saint-Domingan Louis Tabary). The Théâtre d'Orleans was damaged by fire in 1815, but was rebuilt in 1817 with the adjoining Orleans Ballroom by another Saint-Domingan John Davis.)

Figure 16: Tombstone of Francois Meynier and his son Adolpe Meynier, St. Louis Cemetery No. 1, New Orleans, LA 70112. The tomb is a testimony to the circuitous routes taken by Saint-Domingan refugees in the wake of the revolution; while Francois Meynier is shown to have been born in Saint-Domingue ('née à l'Ile S. Domingue'), his son ('son fils') Adolphe Meynier is recorded to have been born in Cuba ('née à Yarayaba, Ile de Cuba').

As Thompson highlights, New Orleans is 'haunted' by '[m]emories of the Haitian Revolution and imitations of an irrepressible Haitian influence'.[31] Phantoms of Creole revolution(s) thus recall the 'trauma' of Creole pasts and signal the ever-present reality of

continuing creolizing migrations. This chapter seeks to purge these phantoms of revolutionary creolization and, in so doing, penetrate the anxieties surrounding America's own Creole identity.

To do so, it endeavours to understand how an ahistorical, republican 'American' identity was constructed in the wake of American independence, thereby demonstrating how the ideological infrastructures of the United States sought to contain its connection to a Creole past, and its complicity in continuing creolizing 'revolutions'. The first section thus follows the phantomogenic traces of revolutionary creolization in Charles Brockden Brown's gothic novel *Arthur Mervyn*, which offers a contemporaneous insight into the revolutionary impact of Saint-Domingan migrants who threatened to 'contaminate' the nascent republic during the revolutionary diaspora. It builds on the scholarship of Sean Goudie, who has made a significant contribution to understandings of Creole identity in the American literary imagination, and in the work of Charles Brockden Brown in particular. In drawing attention to the presence of Saint-Domingan 'specters' in the landscape of *Arthur Mervyn*,[32] he demonstrates how Brown secretes America's connection to a revolutionary, creolistic heritage and creates an ideological dualism between a 'creole regenerate U.S. America and a creole degenerate West Indies'.[33] By uncovering the phantomogenic echoes of the Haitian Revolution within the text, he reveals how this dualism and disavowal encrypt 'disturbing affiliations between U.S. and West Indian creole characters, cultures and economies at the turn of the nineteenth century.'[34] Whereas Goudie views creolization as a 'backdrop' to the revolutionary climate, this discussion nevertheless seeks to push the boundaries of this discussion by establishing creolization as a definitive 'strand' of the revolution itself—one that had significant cultural and political reverberations on early national America and the emergent national consciousness. In this sense, it synthesizes Thomas Lawrence's observations about the 'apocalyptic politics of contamination' in Brown's writing with Munro's ideas about 'apocalyptic creolization' to dramatize the threat that Creole confrontations and crossings posed to a nation that was attempting to establish itself as 'exceptional'.[35] The phantom that haunts Brown's *Arthur Mervyn* thus encrypts a republican

---

[31] Thompson, pp. 103-104.
[32] Goudie, p. 179.
[33] Ibid., p. 10.
[34] Ibid., p. 199.
[35] Thomas Lawrence, 'Arthur Mervyn and the Apocalyptic Politics of Contamination' (paper presented at the Modern Language Association Convention 2004 Special Session, *Philadelphia Infections: Charles Brockden Brown, Disease, and the Distempered Imagination,* December 2004)

disavowal of irrepressible creolizing relations that were magnified by the Haitian Revolution and its attendant revolutionary diaspora.

The second section pursues the encrypted spectre of republican disavowal in George Washington Cable's *The Grandissimes*. Pushing forward, yet looking back, Cable's text secretes multiple phantoms of revolutionary creolization, offering a fictional account of Purchase-era New Orleans and the cultural collisions that took place across the revolutionary diaspora. Written in retrospect and published in the Redemption Era, Cable's novel attests to the continuing resonance of Creole histories and affirms the need to counteract cycles of historical 'American' disavowal by adopting a more 'creolistic' vision of the nation and its borders. This section therefore seeks to peel back the manifold layers of ideological encryptment that bury the connections between diverse creolistic worlds. While scholars such as Barbara Ladd and Jerah Johnson have identified echoes of Saint-Domingue in Cable's Creole romance, pointing to the noticeable parallels between the characterization of the mythical Bras-Coupé and the Saint-Domingan maroon leader François Makandal, this chapter posits that these 'echoes' of slave insurgency represent a phantomogenic foil to the more subtle traces of 'revolutionary' creolization in Cable's text, which are located in the encrypted secrets of language, plantation infrastructures, and the built landscape. It is in these traces, this chapter seeks to show, that the enduring force of Saint-Domingan culture is most enduringly felt. This culture helped to reinforce the existing Creole infrastructures at the time of the Louisiana Purchase, immortalizing the historical roots of a continually creolizing community, and thereby working to counteract, or rather 'circumvent', as Jay D. Edwards would argue, the waves of Americanization that swept across the nineteenth-century South.[36] Like Brown, Cable is thus seen to use the political climate of the revolutionary diaspora to comment on the state of the nation—and demonstrate how 'nation', as a concept, became increasingly disembodied for 'southerners' in the wake of the Civil War. In this way, it extends on Ladd's argument that Creole histories represent a 'counternarrative that [run] submerged' in Cable's text about 'division and recalcitrance and defeat by history'.[37] It nevertheless seeks to deconstruct the ideological dichotomy between

---

<https://www.academia.edu/221697Arthur_Mervyn_and_the_Apocalyptic_Politics_of_Contamination> [accessed 6 July 2015]; Martin Munro, 'The Revolution's Ghosts', Cf.

[36] Jay D. Edwards, 'Shotgun: The Most Contested House in America', *Buildings & Landscapes: Journal of the Vernacular Architecture Forum*, 16.1 (2009), 62-96 (p. 85).

[37] Barbara Ladd, *Nationalism and the Color Line in George W. Cable, Mark Twain, and William Faulkner* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1996), p. 28.

'Creole' and 'American' identities by acknowledging the revolutionary force of a creolization that unites and binds *all* Creole worlds in the South, the North, and beyond, thereby presenting opportunities for cultural redemption and uplift.

Creole Beginnings: Nationhood, Borders, and the Rhetoric of Disease

As Edward Brathwaite asserts, the process of creolization in America **'**created, by its very nature […], a way of life essentially different from the metropolitan model, [which] would tend to make for the creation of attitudes which in their evolution would alter the very nature of colonial dependence.'[38] Republican America was borne of the shared political interests of an increasingly distinct Creole American community. However, as Goudie contends, English-speaking North Americans never really identified as 'Creole'.[39] In fact, 'Creole' identity became increasingly anathema to the ideology of an exceptional republican identity. This was undoubtedly fuelled by the pervasive presence of 'other' Creoles (and particularly Saint-Domingan Creoles) in the turbulent decades following independence. This sense of creolistic coherence was thus supplanted by a republican exceptionalism that secreted its Creole history (and its echoes within Creole 'others'). America's repudiation of its own Creole historicity was shaped, as Ross suggests, by an emergent 'nationalism' whose contours were defined by a combination of nonconformist Protestantism and Enlightened republicanism.[40] *This* 'America' was envisaged as exceptional and redemptive: a millennial sanctum whose libertarian-republican future was determined and fixed and categorically divorced from its colonial past.

It is perhaps for this reason that Anderson suggests that 'Protestant, English-speaking creoles' in North America 'were much more favourably situated for realizing the idea of "America" and indeed eventually succeeded in appropriating the everyday title of "Americans".'[41] This appropriation encrypted a vast network of transactions between diverse and conflicted interests within the emergent 'United' States and across the larger Americ*as*. The term

[38] Edward Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica 1770-1820* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 101.
[39] Goudie, p. 9.
[40] Dorothy Ross, 'Historical Consciousness in Nineteenth-Century America', *The American Historical Review*, 89 (1984), 909-928 (p. 912). Ross emphasizes the prehistoricist nature of American nationalism and sees it as a characteristic that was maintained late into the nineteenth century. See also Ian Tyrrell, 'American Exceptionalism in an Age of International History', *The American Historical Review*, 96 (1991), 1031-1055.

'American' is thus unconsciously expansive while simultaneously delimiting a particular group of people and a set of characteristics that are assembled within an ideology of (white, Protestant, republican) American 'nationhood'. Its absorbability has undoubtedly been bolstered by the same kind of totalizing arrogance for which Glissant has criticized writers of 'the South with a capital S'; it is an assumption of the absolute, of an 'America' that is defined, fixed, and singular. Discourses of early republican 'America' thus reflect the challenge of extricating the fact of America's inherently Creole history (a Creole history that had promulgated the rise of a nationalistic community distinct from the European metropole) from the idea of an 'American' nationhood that was constructed in complete contradistinction to 'other' Creole communities.

The unstable and binary nature of early republican politics also renders the task of defining a singular or cohesive 'nationalism' difficult. 'Nation', as Anderson suggests, 'is an imagined community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.'[42] Of course, in this sense, the idea of 'nation' always contains complex, composite and Creole histories, and is by no means unencumbered. However, during the eighteenth century, ideas of nationhood were being formulated based on ideas of community, sovereignty, and (male) civic responsibility. As Anderson further notes, these ideas began to spread across North America owing to the rise of print journalism in the eighteenth century.[43] As a result, a vision of republican America began to cohere around these values, which were channelled through its constitutional documents, its legal infrastructure, and its system of state and federal government. The sense of administrative community fostered across English-speaking North America inevitably led to the rise of a nationalist consciousness. This was no doubt facilitated by the spread of Atlantic republican*isms* which distinguished themselves ideologically from *ancien régimes*;[44] ideas of '*la patrie*' and '*la république, une et indivisible*' became central to the discourse of nationhood in the wake of the revolution in France, for example.[45] This idea of the *patrie* resonated with the unified republican consciousness.[46] However, its leading statesmen had divergent, if not resolutely oppositional views on what the 'nation' should represent and whom it was supposed to serve. Whereas the

---

[41] Anderson, p. 63.
[42] Ibid., p. 6.
[43] Ibid., p. 61.
[44] Ibid., p. 65.
[45] Clive Emsley, 'Nationalist Rhetoric and Nationalist Sentiment in Revolutionary France', in *Nationalism in the Age of the French Revolution*, ed. by Otto Dann and John Dinwiddy (London and Ronceverte: The Hambledon Press, 1988), pp. 39-52 (p. 39).

ascendant Federalist Party, led by the first president of the United States George Washington, campaigned for a centralized, Federal approach to government and an open gateway for global commerce, the Democratic-Republicans, led by Thomas Jefferson, favoured a more autonomous, state-regulated form of government and agricultural self-sufficiency. While an idea of 'American' nationhood that was perhaps superficially bound together by the unstable and contentious paradigm of 'Enlightened republicanism' and embodied physically by the neoclassical temples that paid homage to the virtues of the civic *patrie* articulated a vision of nationalistic coherence,[47] this was by no means representative of a resiliently nationalistic consensus.

Of course, these temples also harboured phantoms of a 'sinful' creolized past. Secreted within their foundations, and obfuscated by large Palladian pillars were the enslaved Africans who had laboured to build them and the native peoples who had been displaced, defrauded, and systematically cleansed in the acquisition of land on which they had been erected. Contemporary observers such as Charles Brockden Brown, who is credited by Fiedler as 'the inventor of the American writer',[48] reflected the secretive patterns of American *patrie*-archalism by using, in Bridget Bennett's words, 'the built environment of the landscape to comment on nation-building and displacement.'[49] She notes that in his novel *Wieland*, the slaves that are introduced early in the narrative 'emerge, but then disappear, never to be seen again, but are still there.'[50] They have contributed to the making of the neoclassical landscape from which the reader is supposed to derive a sense of civic virtue and are thus encrypted at the heart of it. By recording this burial, Brown demonstrates an acute awareness of America's more implicated and morally tarnished

---

[46] For more on the wider resonance of this term, see Chapter 2 of Liah Greenfeld's *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).

[47] Caroline Winterer notes that '[n]eoclassical architecture, which flourished after the [American] Revolution […] stated the immediate relevance of classical antiquity to the political agenda of the young republic', and quotes Thomas Jefferson as stating that public buildings 'should be more than things of beauty and convenience; above all, they should state a creed.' See Caroline Winterer, *The Culture of Classicism: Ancient Greece and Rome in American Intellectual Life 1780-1910* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), p. 29.

[48] Fiedler, p. 145.

[49] Bennett demonstrates how Brown's novel challenges the classical republican models that America strove to emulate. Drawing on contemporary watercolours of Jefferson's Monticello, she demonstrates how such artwork brings the neoclassical structures to the fore, but pays no heed to the slave cabins and the presence of enslaved people on the plantation. In Mettingen's watercolours in particular, the slave dwellings of Monticello are obscured by the Mulberry trees of Mulberry Row, therefore substantiating her claim that slave bodies and slave histories are 'hidden in plain sight.' Bridget Bennett, 'Invisible Slaves and the American Revolutionary Picturesque' (paper presented for the British Association of Nineteenth-Century Americanists' seminar series *Transatlantic Conversations*, Senate House, London, UK: 16 May 2014).

[50] Ibid.

Creole history, and frequently draws upon the gothic tropes of native wilderness and decay to focalize his readers' gaze into the peripheral spaces that his protagonists are unable to see. Brown's early fiction thus inaugurates a gothic tradition of entombment, simulating and critiquing a larger national burial beneath which the 'real' America ultimately lies.

Such narratives suggest that the fact of Creole nationhood—of exchange, contact, and colonial/frontier society-formation—was present, but remained decisively and continually muted in the grand narratives of the new 'nation'. As Goudie has noted, 'the shadowy presence of Creole American identities underlies anxious efforts to construct exceptional U.S. "American" identities and literary and cultural traditions.'[51] The nebulous ideal of American 'nationalism' was thus formulated in contradistinction to the fact of a more diasporic, osmotic, historic, and circulatory (indeed, *revolutionary*) system that continued to operate in 'America' both before and *after* independence. The struggle to reconcile the paradoxes of an 'Enlightened' republicanism that was regenerative and exemplary with a degenerate, tainted, 'Creole' history would subsequently see national anxieties displaced onto 'other' Creole bodies who were distinguished in terms of *their* excesses, *their* monstrosity, and, above all, *their* history. What has been termed by the likes of Ross as 'American nationalism' is in this sense better understood as a reactionary and paranoid policy of 'stabilization' (characterized by the reinforcement of borders, the regulation of internal economies, and the expansion of national 'frontiers'). A sense of 'national' paranoia was certainly most acute in the wake of the Haitian Revolution, when thousands of Creole refugees fleeing the conflict sought asylum in North America, simultaneously reflecting back the horrors of America's Creole history and forming a convenient receptacle for its displacement.

The gothic horror of creolization during the early republican period should not be understated; migrations took place alongside—and in response to—colonial commerce, social revolution, and the spread of tropical disease across the Atlantic world, compounding anxieties about the solubility of borders and repetitive, cyclical, and violent assaults thereon. Just as the United States came into literal and metaphorical being, it also had to contend with an influx of refugees who had migrated to America to escape escalating revolutionary violence in Saint-Domingue. The Haitian Revolution represented an 'unthinkable' phenomenon, but the reality of Creole cultural suffusion within the United States ultimately rendered it unforgettable; after all,

[51] Goudie, p. 9.

Saint-Domingan Creoles were to leave an indelible impression on the architectural designs, fashions, educational practices, religious customs, social pursuits, culinary preferences, commercial activities, and local demographics of the new republic. Although, admittedly, the majority of Saint-Domingan refugees found asylum in Francophone Louisiana, this cultural 'suffusion' occurred all along the Eastern Seaboard of the United States. Refugees established settlements in the Carolinas, New York, Maryland, Virginia, and even (and especially) in the (provisional) seat of the new Federal government in Philadelphia. Their creolizing influence upon the nascent republican public sphere is thus of particular interest. Within this context, they became a prominent force. Brought into contact with the paragons of what the likes of the Duc de la Rochefoucauld-Liancourt scorned as a provincial and uncouth Philadelphian *société*,[52] their variety of colonial sociability would insert itself at the centre of public life, creating waves, and calling attention to the inherent instabilities that underlay the project of American 'nationalism'.

Indeed, the Saint-Domingan migrants arrived in America with a creolized and cosmopolitan sense of 'Enlightened' sociability that was easily adapted to a New World setting. Fraternal and philosophical societies that had been disbanded as a result of revolutionary conflict in Saint-Domingue often regrouped when they arrived in America (such as the Masonic Lodge, Perseverance), galvanizing isolated minorities through unified collective public bodies. Members of these bodies often occupied a dominant presence within the public sphere.[53] For instance, Moreau de Saint-Mèry, who was himself a prominent freemason, became a key player in the business of Philadelphian literary production, establishing himself as a successful printer, and creating a publication stream for numerous Saint-Domingan Creoles.[54] In Saint-Domingue, he had been a member of the *Cercle des Philadelphes*, a learned society established in Cap Français in the 1780s and described by James E. McClellan as 'the tropical equivalent of a French

[52] He famously noted in his *Voyage dans les Etats-Unis d'Amérique, fait en 1795, 1796 et 1797* that 'ce que nous appelons société n'existe pas dans cette ville. […] Voilà le véritable état de la société à Philadelphie: grands dîners, grands thés, pour les arrivans d'Europe, Anglais, Français, étrangers de tous pays, de toute classe, de tout caractère: philosophe, prêtre, homme de lettres, prince, arracheur de dents, homme d'esprits ou idiot'. Translation: 'what we call society does not exist in this city. […] This is the real state of society in Philadelphia: great dinners, great teas for the comers of Europe, English, French, foreigners from all countries, of all classes, of any character: philosopher, priest, man of letters, prince, tooth puller, man of wits or fool.' François-Alexandre-Frédéric de la Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, qtd. in Allan Potofsky, 'The "Non-Aligned Status" of French Emigrés and Refugees in Philadelphia, 1793-1798', *Transatlantica* [En ligne], 2 (2006) <http://transatlantica.revues.org/1147> [accessed 1 July 2014].

[53] I refer, here, to a 'public sphere' in the Habermasian sense of a 'literary' public sphere.

[54] Catherine A. Hebert, 'The French Element in Pennsylvania in the 1790s: the Francophone Immigrants' Impact', in *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 108 (1984), 451-469 (p. 465).

provincial academy'.[55] Although this society was dissolved by the revolutionary conflict in 1792,[56] Moreau's Philadelphia bookshop became the locus of French and Saint-Domingan social commerce; it was here that some of the most respected and celebrated members of the Republic of Letters convened to discuss matters of civic interest. As Allan Potofsky notes, the 'Philadelphia circle included Talleyrand, de Noailles, Talon, le comte de Moré, de Beaumetz, Démeunier, La Colombe, the future Louis-Philippe, and, La Rochefoucald-Liancourt.'[57] It was also from this base that the newspaper *Courrier de la France et des Colonies* was launched, circulating vital information about political developments across the Atlantic world through a robust public channel, harnessing migrant public sentiments and strengthening cosmopolitan ties.

As Philadelphia helped to demonstrate, this culture of Creole sociability was not entirely incongruous to the interests of republican Americans. The revolution that precipitated American independence was, after all, spurred by the exchanges of an 'Enlightened' fraternity, and the 'Declaration of Independence' is undergirded by each member's 'mutual pledge to each other'.[58] This fraternity also operated within the same economic, social, and scholarly networks as the Saint-Domingan migrants. Both Benjamin Rush and Benjamin Franklin, for example, were members of the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia, which had strong links with the Saint-Domingan *Cercle des Philadelphes*.[59] More broadly speaking, of course, the interests of Saint-Domingan migrants and republican Americans coalesced around global commerce, and the domestic and international slave trade in particular.[60] In the immediate aftermath of the first wave of Saint-Domingan migration in 1792, furthermore, U.S. Americans showed Creole refugees great compassion, raising funds for clothes, food, and shelter for those whom the

---

[55] James E. McClellan III, *Colonialism and Science: Saint Domingue in the Old Regime* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 186.
[56] 'Background Note: Cercles des Philadelphes du Cap François Collection', *American Philosophical Society* <http://www.amphilsoc.org/mole/view?docId=ead/Mss.506.7294.C33.1-ead.xml;query=;brand=default#bibliography> [accessed 9 July 2014].
[57] Potofsky.
[58] 'The Declaration of Independence: A Transcription', *The Charters of Freedom* <http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/declaration_transcript.html> [accessed 4 November 2015].
[59] McClellan, p. 227.
[60] Although the state of Pennsylvania passed an act for the gradual abolition of slavery in 1780, slavery still persisted in a number of neighbouring northern trading states, including New Jersey, New Hampshire, New York, and Rhode Island. The International Slave Trade, furthermore, was not abolished in America until 1808. Although by 1810 the importation of slaves had been effectively banned, a third wave of Saint-Domingan migrants flooded into America at around this time, and measures were adopted that allowed the migrants to settle on the mainland with their slaves.

revolution had impoverished.[61] While the migration of Saint-Domingan refugees to America led to a Creole 'suffusion' within the United States, the process of migration was ultimately facilitated by the Creole infrastructures that were *already* in place.

That the Haitian Revolution was epicentral to the birth of Atlantic Modernity is unquestionable, but it should also, in this sense, be understood as a *product* of the Creole circulations going on in the wider Atlantic at that time. As Benítez-Rojo has suggested, it disseminated itself, repeating, across the Atlantic imaginary,[62] and that repetition was all the more pronounced owing to the diasporic movements of Saint-Domingan Creoles throughout the Atlantic world. America was likewise a member of the chaos that Benítez-Rojo claims was characteristic of the wider revolutionary Atlantic (including the darker, degenerate, and 'creolized' *other* Americ*as*). In the wake of the Haitian Revolution it was also host to the creolizing chaos that was taking place within its 'borders' (the process of contact and exchange with the Haitian/Saint-Domingan/West Indian Creole 'other' which created a 'bridge' between nationhood and chaos).[63] The diaspora was therefore an affirmation of American creoleness. Although these chaotic motions embodied an internal instability that early republican America endeavoured to guard itself against, they possessed an agency that was beyond America's stabilizing control, not merely seeping, but surging out of the unconscious tombs (and temples) that it had built, and casting a dubious shadow over the nervous shape of American 'nationalism'. While the positive effects of a broad and cosmopolitan socio-economic commerce (existing prior to and amplified by Saint-Domingan migration) were visible in numerous spheres of American public life, this was an uncanny reminder of the fertile ground upon which a culture of Creole sociability was cultivated. Diaspora, exchange, and the negotiation of violent history was an inevitable force of the Creole Atlantic that early national America was unable to curtail, because it was itself part of the 'interconnected world of creolizing "relations"'.[64]

As early republican accounts of foreign and 'Creole' others would nevertheless demonstrate, creoleness could be contained by a discourse of alterity. Indeed, fortification against 'aliens', 'disease', and 'degeneracy' became the rhetorical foundation of early American politics. Circulations and exchanges that may have been characterized as socially-generative

[61] White, *Encountering Revolution*, pp. 70-78.
[62] Benítez-Rojo, p. 3.
[63] Ibid.

were in this way inverted. 'Contagious' Saint-Domingans became the phantomogenic 'host' for Creole 'degeneracy' in the American imaginary. Saint-Domingan migrants were an easy target for the displacement of anxieties surrounding national degeneration: as a palpable reminder of colonial misrule, 'Creole' excess, and 'contagious' slave rebellion, their communal presence in North America also coincided with the yellow fever epidemic that ravaged Philadelphia in 1793. The connection between Creole Saint-Domingans and the 'contamination' of national 'American' values was therefore all too easily formulated. Deep-seated anxieties about the contradictions inherent within America's own constructed vision of 'nationhood' were thus evaded through an ideological focalization on a degenerate, 'infectious' Creole 'otherness'. While political discord over The Alien and Sedition and Naturalization Acts of 1798 reflected dichotomous attitudes between America's principal parties on the subject of immigration and settlement in early republican America,[65] policies that followed a more precautionary approach toward immigrants (especially those of French and Saint-Domingan origin) increasingly became the norm in the wake of the Haitian Revolution and the subsequent diaspora, reflecting a more paranoiac and reactionary middle ground. Even Thomas Jefferson, whose Democratic-Republican party vehemently opposed the Federalist policies of the 1790s, later showed distrust toward the French, especially when it became clear that they might impede America's nationalistic vision as it advanced into the lower South.[66] American 'nationalism' was constructed as a bulwark against migration and exchange. Border anxiety (and, ultimately, anxiety about the dissolution of established nationhood) was projected onto the Saint-Domingan Creole double, and it relied on the presence of this double in order to cohere.

This anxiety is magnified by the eponymous hero of Charles Brockden Brown's 1799 novel *Arthur Mervyn*, over whom the phantom of a revolutionary, creolistic Saint-Domingue looms large. Set in Philadelphia at the height of the yellow fever epidemic, Mervyn's narrative

---

[64] Glissant, qtd. in Chris Bongie, *Islands and Exiles: The Creole Identities of Post/Colonial Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 15.
[65] White, *Encountering Revolution*, p. 121.
[66] Jefferson expressed in a letter to Pierre Samuel Du Pont de Nemours in 1802 that 'this little event, of France possessing herself of Louisiana, which is thrown in as nothing, as a mere make-weight, in the general settlement of accounts, this speck which now appears as an almost invisible point in the horizon, is the embryo of a tornado which will burst on the countries on both shores of the Atlantic and involve in it's effects their highest destinies. [T]hat it may yet be avoided is my sincere prayer, and if you can be the means of informing the wisdom of Buonaparte of all it's consequences, you will have deserved well of both countries. [P]eace & abstinence from European alliances are our objects, and so will continue while the present order of things in America remains uninterrupted.' See 'Letter from Thomas Jefferson to Pierre Samuel Du Pont de Nemours, 25 April 1802', in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson* (1950-), ed. by Barbara B. Oberg, vol. 37 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), p. 333.

opens mid-way through his quest for an independent existence; the reader first encounters him as a convalescent yellow fever victim in the frame narrative of the 'benevolent' Dr Stevens, who, taking him into his home and nursing him back to health, embodies the virtues of productive, rational, and 'Enlightened' commerce. Brown thus introduces Mervyn as a character who is already 'infected', whose past is obfuscated by a series of diversionary, creolistic narrative layers. Although he strives to banish all memory of his early life, thus replicating the republican American evisceration of America's Creole historicity, he is forced to relate his personal history after a spectre from his past returns to haunt him (namely, the corrupt, philandering Welbeck), compromising his position in the Stevens household. Narrating his story in retrospect, he revisits his past, and thus confronts the creolistic spectre of his former life.

From the onset of his narration, accounts of the serial misfortunes to which he has been subjected issue forth in a continual stream, surging and building pace, simulating the contagious nature of epidemic disease, and suggesting the inevitability of widespread infection. His 'affliction[s]', occasioned by his descent into poverty and ruin, are initially imputed to Betty, the 'rude, ignorant, and licentious' maid who marries his father shortly after his mother's death and thereby complicates the assurance of patriarchal heredity and threatens Mervyn's claim to his father's estate.[67] Reflecting on her ascension within the household, he affirms his resentment, exclaiming:

> To think that such a one should take the place of my revered mother was intolerable. To treat her in any way not squaring with her real merits; to hinder anger and scorn from rising at the sight of her in her new condition, was not in my power. To be degraded to the rank of her servant […] was not to be endured. I had no independent provision; but I was the only child of my father, and had reasonably hoped to succeed his patrimony. On this hope I had built a thousand agreeable visions. I had meditated innumerable projects which the possession of this estate would enable me to execute. I had no wish beyond the trade of agriculture, and beyond the opulence which a hundred acres would give.[68]

As this passage makes clear, however, 'Betty' is only a symbolic receptacle for Mervyn's projected fear of outsiders who might penetrate his agrarian 'American' idyll. In this way, Betty encrypts the impermanence and solubility of the internal space that Mervyn inhabits and the

[67] Charles Brockden Brown, *Arthur Mervyn; or, Memoirs of the Year 1793*, 2 vols (Philadelphia: David McKay, Publisher, 1889), vol. 1, p. 20.

superficial ideal of 'nation' that he aspires to recreate upon the vestiges of his paternal estate. Brown employs irony to great effect, here. While Mervyn champions the merits of independent husbandry, he requires at least 'a hundred acres' of land to be able to realize this ideal. The language that he uses is steeped in the ethos of Old World feudalism and aristocratic inheritance. The terms 'estate', 'rank', and 'patrimony' in particular conjure in the mind of the reader ideas associated with the English landed gentry and the deeply inculcated and inflexible class-system that was rejected by 'universal' republicanism. This is compounded by Mervyn's vague geographical allusions that, were it not for the narrative intervention of Dr Stevens who situates the reader firmly within the contextual frame of early republican Philadelphia, the reader might reasonably mistake for the English countryside. The language that Brown deploys in service of Mervyn is synonymous with that of the pastoral tradition, and Mervyn's account of his intrepid departure from his father's 'estate' evokes the image of the quixotic knight-errant,[69] affirming his relation to a mythic, Old World aristocracy.

His scorn for Betty's elevated 'condition' is thus reflective of an entrenched, inherited European pride, and underscores the paradox of the meritocratic and individualistic vision of agrarian self-sufficiency advocated in Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia*, which contains a version of his agrarian treatise. Indeed, read alongside the solipsistic, landowning vision of Mervyn, Jefferson's view, expounded in his *Notes*, that 'an immensity of land' courts 'the industry of the [Virginian] husbandman',[70] takes on new meaning, and bears out the encrypted paradox of conquest and plunder embedded at the heart of his agrarian 'republicanism'. Through Mervyn and his Jeffersonian solipsism, Brown nevertheless demonstrates how the disavowal and displacement of such 'foreign' attributes, and the effacement of national sins more generally, clears the path for a narrative of American entitlement which is distinct from those of its European predecessors. Fears of America's Creole past, and of its potential future degeneration, were thus entombed, while the presence and circulation of 'other' Creoles, seen as outsiders, infiltrators, and contaminants, facilitated their externalization.

As the narrative propels Mervyn forward in time, the reader sees him engaging in a series of 'crossings' between the country and the city. The bordered environment is represented in the toll bridges, gates, doors, windows, and thresholds that he has to negotiate along the way. By

---

[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid., p. 59.
[70] Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, p. 176.

inserting these bordered constructions into his narrative, he affirms his conformity to the ideal of an enclosed, whole, and impenetrable America. However, the 'urban/rural dualism' that Lawrence suggests Brown 'is at pains to construct',[71] is really only superficial. While the country idyll that Mervyn repeatedly retreats to may appear remote and distinct from the republican metropolis, the manner in which the disease takes hold, spreading from one to the other, is a reminder of their deep interconnection. When Mervyn recovers from the disease that he contracts in the city (the locus of Creole and metropolitan exchange and the supposed epicentre of the disease), he returns to the country dwelling of the Hadwins, the family with whom he had sought refuge prior to the Philadelphian excursion that brought him into contact with Dr. Stevens. However, when he reaches the household, he discovers that most of the family have also been afflicted. The spread of disease beyond the city's limits intimates the possibility of 'seepage' and overflow and highlights the permeability of notions of boundary and centre. Borders are only imaginary defences, and they cannot prevent the possibility of Creole circulation.

Anxieties about the disease's potential 'overspill' and its spread by 'infected' migrants were also channelled in contemporary yellow fever literature and fed into theories about its medical treatment. Many of the physicians who tended the afflicted drew correlations between the presence of Saint-Domingan migrants in Philadelphia at the time of the epidemic and its diffusive spread throughout the city. In a letter written to his wife at the time of the crisis, Benjamin Rush, the esteemed American physician and signatory of the Declaration of Independence, concluded that the yellow fever had been

> broughth by a vessel from Cape Francois in the island of St. Domingo which not only broughth some sick, & it is said 2 or more [sailors] were taken in the night from the vessel after they dyed, to bury them. The [ship] laying at Smith's wharf … also brought much damaged coffee, said to have been very offensive, & which lay on the wharf many days.[72]

The motif of 'rotting coffee' that Rush draws upon here unites the themes of mercantilism and disease. In this way, Rush correlates trade (and trade with Creole Saint-Domingans in particular) with unhealthfulness. Rush was not alone in thinking that the disease may have migrated with the

---

[71] Lawrence.
[72] Benjamin Rush, qtd. in P. Sean Taylor, '"We Live in the Midst of Death": Yellow Fever, Moral Economy, and Public Health in Philadelphia, 1793-1805' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Northern Illinois University, 2001), p. 99.

Saint-Domingan refugees, and many of his contemporaries were in agreement over the idea that it had at least been 'imported'. An anonymous pamphlet which circulated in 1793, offering *An Account of the Rise, Progress, and Termination of the Malignant Fever Lately Present in Philadelphia* stated that:

> By the unfortunate divisions in St. Domingo, one of the French islands, many of its inhabitants, to avoid fire and sword of their stronger antagonists, had fled from their homes, and, about the time the contagion took place in Philadelphia, a large number of them sought refuge among us. Before they had left their own burning and bloody shores their hearts had been appalled by scenes of the most atrocious cruelty, and by the sight of numerous bodies of the slain which had remained unburied for many days: so that the air must have been polluted for healthful respiration, had they been permitted to stay. […] About this time, likewise, the licensed plunderers of the Ocean, belonging to the same nation, brought in their prizes for condemnation and sale.[73]

Drawing upon the excessive and melodramatic language that became characteristic of print accounts of Saint-Domingan 'horrors', the author of this anonymous tract locates the source of contagion in the decaying corpses of the revolutionary conflict. This fantasy of violent excess converges with anxieties about migration, trade, and piracy, compounding the idea that a 'healthy' American nation had been violently co-opted by a contagious Creole 'plunderer'. Within this context, the 'suffusive' presence of Creole Saint-Domingans in republican Philadelphia was thus magnified.

The excesses of the Haitian Revolution, brought to bear in the contemporary imagination by the presence of Saint-Domingan migrants, echoed the unbridled excess of the disease itself, which, popular opinion held, was generated from 'effluvia'; in other words, contagious elements seeped out from another source.[74] Although some physicians believed that the disease originated from a more local source (and although this notion would gain ground in later medical enquiries),[75] anxieties about excess, overspill, and seepage invariably governed early American attitudes toward treatments of feverous diseases. Drawing on the tradition of Hippocratic

---

[73] Anonymous, *An Account of the Rise, Progress, and Termination of the Malignant Fever Lately Present in Philadelphia Briefly Stated from Accompanying Documents* (Philadelphia: Benjamin Johnson, 1793), pp. 4-5.
[74] This view, propounded by William Currie, was contested by Noah Webster. See Noah Webster, 'Letters on Yellow Fever Addressed to Dr. William Currie', in *Supplements to the Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, ed. by Henry Sigerist, No. 9 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1947), p. 19.
[75] Taylor, p. 103.

'humourism' and Galen's theory of 'plethora' which had been long established in the medical doctrine of early modern Europe,[76] early American medicine often favoured practices such as purging and bloodletting, which sought to relieve the afflicted patient of humouristic excess. Benjamin Rush, amongst others, stressed the 'efficacy of moderate purging and bleeding in preventing the disease'.[77] Such purgative therapy was nevertheless criticized by medical practitioners such as Jean Devèze, an immigrant from Saint-Domingue who, as Catherine Hebert notes, ran the Bush Hill hospital 'along with the help of refugee nurses, cooks, and other assistants'.[78] Indeed, Devèze and other Creole doctors who had experience of treating tropical disease 'promoted the notion that it was better to work with rather than to combat nature in order to cure the sick.'[79] Their approach was, in essence, a creolistic one, based on experience of settlement in a tropical environment and its impact on the Creole (and perhaps, crucially, the slave) economy.[80] Devèze, along with Dr. David Nassy (another migrant doctor from the West Indies), were in fact able to demonstrate through autopsies carried out on the bodies of fever victims that purgation was itself degenerative and likely to impede, rather than assist, recovery.[81]

The conflict between the 'creolistic' approach of West Indian doctors and traditional forms of North American medicine is brought to bear in the ailing Arthur Mervyn's repudiation of the Bush Hill hospital, which he describes as a 'contagious and abhorred receptacle'.[82] Indeed, when Mervyn succumbs to the fever on his return to the city, he anticipates that death will ensue, lamenting:

> Whether I should live or die was easily decided. The sickness which assiduous attendance and powerful prescriptions might remove would, by negligence and solitude, be rendered fatal […] I had indeed a roof over my head. I should not perish in the public way; but what was my ground for hoping to continue under this roof? My sickness being

[76] Medical practitioners believed that certain illnesses (such as fever) were induced by an excess of a particular humor, and that treatment should necessarily endeavour to effect a 'release'. Galen believed that fever was caused by an excessive buildup of blood; hence, bloodletting became the popular preserve of surgeons and persisted well into the nineteenth century. See Roy Porter, *Blood and Guts: A Short History of Medicine* (London: Allen Lane, 2002), p. 115 and Gerry Greenstone, 'The History of Bloodletting', *BC Medical Journal*, 52.1 (2010), 12-14.
[77] Benjamin Rush, *An Account of the Bilious remitting Yellow Fever, as it Appeared in the City of Philadelphia, in the Year 1793* (Philadelphia: Thomas Dobson, 1794), p. 35.
[78] Hebert, p. 462.
[79] Ibid., p. 463.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid., p. 462.
[82] Brown, *Arthur Mervyn*, Vol. 1, p. 149.

> suspected, I should be dragged in a cart to the hospital; where I should, indeed, die, but not with the consolation of loneliness and silence.[83]

In this passage, Brown combines gothic melodrama with the themes of creolizing motion and excess, thereby accentuating Mervyn's sense of foreboding. Mervyn's fatalism is ultimately undergirded, however, by his preconceptions of the Bush Hill hospital and his larger fear of crossing into the degenerate Creole epicentre. The cart, a symbol which Brown frequently deploys to express diasporic movement and crossing, links Mervyn with this contagious epicentre, and is in this way constructed as a symbolic vector for life-threatening disease. He maintains a steadfast belief in the contagious threat represented by yellow fever victims, and recoils from the prospect of hospitalization. Repudiating the curative possibilities established through Creole exchange, Mervyn champions his belief in a redemptive American nationhood divorced from Creole connections, and implies that the only 'cure' for the American Creole 'condition' is the expulsion of the foreign Creole 'other'.

The belief in Galenic theory likely had an impact on emergent American attitudes about race, which linked a rhetoric of 'disease' and 'contamination' with ideas about blood. Thought to be the source of sperm, blood was valorized in early modern medicine as the source of life and the conservator of posterity. As Patricia Crawford notes, blood was thus 'the key concept by which early modern people understood the relationship between a man, his children and his kin.'[84] Blood undergirded patrimony and lineage as it related to the law, land, and property. Although regular purges were understood to regulate passions and temper fevers, medical practitioners thus guarded against excessive purging for fear that the valuable 'essence' of life could be wasted; in this way, bloodletting was important to maintaining the 'purity' of the bloodline, but so too was moderation and regulation. Drawing heavily on these ideas about blood, the body, and genealogy, American ideas of race articulated how bloodlines could be rendered impure as a result of interracial 'amalgamation' (a term deployed by both Jefferson and Lincoln).[85] In the elaborate racial cosmology of Moreau de Saint-Mèry, the name of 'sang-mêlé'—literally translated as 'mixed-blood'—is accorded to a person who is between 125 and

---

[83] Ibid., p. 155.
[84] Patricia Crawford, *Blood, Bodies and Families in Early Modern England* (Harlow: Pearson, 2004), p. 113.
[85] Eric J. Sundquist, *Faulkner: The House Divided* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1983), p. 102.

128 parts white.[86] Of course, the very fact that a person 128 times removed from a black ancestor could still be 'classified' as non-white reflects the intensity of colonial anxieties about the pollution of white bloodlines by black bodies. These racial anxieties penetrated the political discourse of early national America, becoming magnified during the yellow fever crisis, when the 'racial' diversity of Saint-Domingan Creoles was visibly manifested in the stream of Creole migrants seeping into republican America. Indeed, suspicions concerning the 'contaminating' influence of Saint-Domingan Creoles were coupled with anxieties about the supposed immunity of Afro-Creoles. So convinced were practitioners such as Rush that black people were uniquely 'immune' to contamination, that he compelled the black inhabitants of Philadelphia to come forward and nurse the sick.[87] Contamination, it appeared, operated on a scale, and this scale replicated the Moreauvian racial system.

While Rush's estimations were grossly inaccurate, black people made up a sizeable number of the many Saint-Domingans who *were* in fact immune to the disease,[88] which was probably owing to their acclimatization in either the tropical Caribbean or Africa.[89] If the refugees were vectors of contamination, and susceptibility to contamination was, like racial 'purity', dictated by a scale, then they occupied a precarious position on this scale. Saint-Domingan Creoles thus became bound up with a narrative of genealogical and 'racial' contamination, further compounding their collective otherness in the American imagination.

The racial 'impurity' of the Saint-Domingan 'Creole' is imputed by Brown in a passage which documents Mervyn's attempt to recover Clemenza Lodi, the forsaken lover of the villainous Wellbeck, as he journeys into the country. In this passage, Mervyn describes the experience of mounting a stagecoach, in which he finds himself:

> in the company with a sallow Frenchman from Saint Domingo, his fiddle case, an ape, and two female blacks. The Frenchman, after passing the suburbs, took out his violin and amused himself with humming to his own *tweedle tweedle*. The monkey now and then mounched an apple, which was given to him from a basket by the blacks, who gazed with stupid wonder, and an exclamatory *La! La!* upon the passing scenery; or chattered to each other in a sort of open-mouthed, half articulate, monotonous, and sing-song jargon.

[86] Moreau, *Déscription*, vol. 1, pp. 71-99.
[87] Rush, *Account*, p. 93.
[88] Ibid., p. 92.
[89] Kenneth F. Kiple, *The Caribbean Slave: A Biological History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 179.

> The man looked seldom on either this side or that; and spoke only to rebuke the frolicks of the monkey, with a Tenez! Dominique! Prenez garde! Diable noir!
>
> As to me my thought was busy in a thousand ways. I sometimes gazed at the faces of my *four* companions, and endeavoured to discern the differences and sameness between them. I took an exact account of the features, proportions, looks, and gestures of the monkey, the Congolese, and the Creole Gaul. I compared them together, and examined them apart. I looked at them in a thousand different points of view, and pursued, untired and unsatiated, those trains of reflections which began at each change of tone, feature, and attitude.[90]

The link between Saint-Domingan Creoles, disease, blood mixing, and degeneracy is nowhere rendered more systematically clear. Mervyn's vision is decidedly Moreauvian; fixing his attention initially on the 'sallow Frenchman', he then works his way to the 'ape, and two female blacks', before proceeding to assess the similarities and differences between them. He simulates the tendency of natural historians such as Linnaeus to create taxonomical formulas for understanding the tropes of common families. That the Frenchman is described to have 'sallow' features adds another uncanny layer to this description, as it leads the reader to speculate whether he too is racially mixed (or whether, indeed, he might be 'infected'),[91] thus compounding the connection between race-mixing and disease). As Goudie notes, '[w]hat the scene is obviously meant to denote are the grotesque effects of cultural and racial mutations between ostensibly discreet species.'[92] Significantly, Mervyn then turns his attention to the bordered environment, observing 'the country as it successively appeared before [him]', and 'examining the shape and substance of the fence, the barn, and the cottage, the aspect of earth and heaven.'[93] Cataloguing each separate element, he continues to frame his thinking in terms of systems. The system upon which he draws in this instance relates to enclosure, and ranks the various categories of enclosure from smallest to largest: fence, barn, cottage, earth, and heaven. The juxtaposition of these perceptions suggests that while there is no area too expansive for American 'enclosure', enclosed spaces remain at risk of external penetration and degeneration.

The same taxonomy is also deployed in Mervyn's assessment of human behaviour. Welbeck invariably ranks low on this scale, harbouring numerous moral 'taints'; he is the

---

[90] Brown, *Arthur Mervyn*, vol. 2, p. 153.
[91] Rush suggested that, on contracting the fever, the skin could turn yellow and that this often 'denoted great danger'. See Rush, *Account*, p. 69.
[92] Goudie, p. 192.

harbinger of incest, illegitimacy, and fraudulent activity, all of which are embodied by the phantom of the diseased and degenerate Creole. This is compounded by his commercial connection with Saint-Domingue. However, despite Mervyn's efforts to create moral distance between Welbeck and the other characters in the novel, the reader observes that even the most 'virtuous' Americans become susceptible to the imported fever, and despite all efforts to 'purge' Welbeck, he returns repeatedly with a vengeance to torment Mervyn, serving as an irrepressible reminder of the repetitive and unavoidable spectre of the Creole past, and of Mervyn's inextricable connection with it. This 'systematic' mode of thinking is thus generated, as Goudie suggests, 'in reaction to the turbulent West Indies,' and 'exposes in unflattering ways the classificatory mechanisms used by the budding empire to constitute national character, to establish the boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable terms of identity for the national citizen, and to devise frameworks for belonging and removal.'[94]

The negative and degenerative effects of immigration and exchange in *Arthur Mervyn* are firmly entrenched in the themes of disease and crossing. Despite its centrality to this discourse of Creole contagion, however, Creole Saint-Domingue maintains a spectral presence within the narrative, and its role as 'vector' is never really made manifest by the novel's protagonist. Indeed, although the clues are pervasive, they emerge, like the 'invisible slaves' on the estate in *Wieland*, only to immediately disperse, and Mervyn, like the solipsistic Amasa Delano, makes no attempt to tease out the connections from the clues that lay before him. Its encryptment suggests a reluctance to openly acknowledge Creole 'otherness' and points more generally to the uncertain state of early republican politics, which had to reconcile the problem of migrant foreign bodies with the necessity of mercantile exchange. Indeed, as Taylor stresses, '[a]s the debate over the origins of the disease increased, the participants in the debate recognized the seriousness of the trade issue as each side tried to explain why the disease was not a threat to foreign nations.'[95] Initial theories about the 'contagious' threat of Creole bodies and Creole commerce were increasingly mitigated by arguments to the contrary, and even Benjamin Rush retracted his initial hypothesis about West Indian contagion, conclusively stating in his *Account of the Bilious remitting Yellow Fever* that '[i]t does not appear to be an imported disease'.[96] The

---

[93] Brown, *Arthur Mervyn*, vol. 2, p. 153.
[94] Goudie, p. 182.
[95] Taylor, p. 216.
[96] Rush, *Account*, p. 20.

College of Physicians exhibited a similar ambivalence, neither seeking to affirm nor deny the contagion/importation theory. Clearly, this ambivalence was a reflection on the essential vitality of trade and Creole exchange to the lifeblood of the new republic. Policies that sought to inhibit 'contagion' by foreign bodies would have to be mindful of the networks of trade that kept the national economy alive. Responses to the yellow fever epidemic in this way echoed early republican policy toward revolutionary Saint-Domingue and the resulting migrational circulations.

Indeed, during the Adams era in particular, Saint-Domingan migration added fuel to anti-immigrant sentiments which ultimately culminated in the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798 and a trade embargo against Saint-Domingue. This was nevertheless countered, shortly after, by a more open policy which actively sought to bridge trade relations. This openness facilitated the 1799 trade agreement that was brokered with Toussaint Louverture. Indeed, as Clark notes, these 'actions were calculated to appeal to America's merchant elite, particularly those in the nation's largest port [namely, Philadelphia] who had invested heavily in cultivating the Dominguan trade in the early 1790s.'[97] While Federalist policy attempted to push back against migrants seeping in, symbolically 'purging' the threat of creolization, it also sought to maintain trade networks, thereby expanding the possibilities of internal creolization and subverting the constructed identity of republican nationhood.

This dichotomy within public policy is likewise embodied by Mervyn. Although Mervyn frequently represses his involvement in mercantile encounters, and while Brown encrypts the connections between commerce, creolization, and disease, it is nevertheless shown to be vital to the city and to its wider inhabited surroundings. Even the isolated country environs of Mervyn's innocent youth—home to the wholesome and virtuous Hadwins—is connected to the city via these mercantile currents. The country dwellers that live in the vicinity of the Hadwins are primed with knowledge of the disease before it arrives thanks to the farmer who 'persisted to visit the city daily with his market-cart.'[98] Despite their geographical isolation, therefore, the country inhabitants of *Arthur Mervyn* are as much bound up with the networks of cosmopolitan exchange as the 'foreign' Creole frequenters of Moreau de Saint-Méry's Philadelphia bookshop. Because of the rootedness (and indeed *routed*ness) of these connections, it is both necessary and

[97] Clark, p. 25.
[98] Brown, *Arthur Mervyn*, p. 132.

fatal to the life-blood of the city (like Saint-Domingue and its dual promise of creolization and trade). The encryptment of Saint-Domingue within the narrative thus reflects the central paradox of the nascent republic: of needing to repress and displace the fact of national instability, while also needing to keep the doors of international commerce open. Therefore, as *Arthur Mervyn* shows, the phantom of America's Creole history cannot be purged, because creolization is deeply intertwined with America's relationship with the outside world, and particularly with currents of Atlantic trade and migration.

By peeling back the phantomogenic layers beneath which the Saint-Domingan Creole is entombed in Brown's narrative, the reader perceives that the 'Creole' is not the 'other' who threatens to penetrate the wholesome republican ideal, but is rather part of a reflexive, circulatory, and transactional network which is embedded within. Anxieties concerning Creole 'migrations' in Brown's America thus reflected the encrypted fear that America's Creole past was being played out in its exceptional republican future. In this sense, the Saint-Domingan Creole is the ultimate gothic doppelgänger, reflecting the continuing exchanges that were integral to America's emergent nationhood and its territorial expansion in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. At the cryptic root of the American 'patrie' was thus a continuing creolization that marked it out not as 'exceptional', but as essentially the same.

Subsidiary Sediments: Confrontation, Conservatism, and the 'Whiting' of Creole New Orleans

In the decade that followed the 1791 slave insurrection, Saint-Domingue was imagined as the locus of a 'contagious' creolization whose unstoppable revolutions were enveloping the wider slaveholding Atlantic. The simultaneous diffusion of migrants and tropical illness was too great a coincidence, and a discourse of contagion became a convenient ideological crypt for American anxieties about this encroaching threat to republican nationhood. By projecting an image of degenerate 'Creole' identity onto incoming Creole migrants, republican America attempted to sever its ties from interconnected, rooted, colonial world histories. This was nevertheless confounded by the persistent reality of America's continuing creolization. In spite of its emphatic break with the British metropole, and its commitment to a republican 'independence', America depended heavily on networks of 'Creole' exchange—both local and global—for its survival,

and the apparatus of the colonial past remained embedded in the republican infrastructure, not least where slavery was concerned.

Recognizing the necessity to preserve commercial and diplomatic relationships outside of America, both Federalists and Democratic-Republicans championed the merits of Atlantic trade, even while they contested the terms by which it was to be achieved.[99] Thomas Jefferson epitomized this paradox; while he favoured an economic policy founded on self-determination and independent husbandry, his plantation at Monticello produced both tobacco and grain for the commercial market.[100] The enclosed ideal of Mervyn's Philadelphia with its boundaries, centres, and peripheries is thus illusory, and masks the liminal reality of the early republican landscape, whose borders were constantly shifting, expanding, and being re-negotiated. Though upheld by the values of republican virtue, Creole history, and the continuous creolizing motions of the future, remained essential to the framework of America.

Creole 'revolutions' at home and abroad also inadvertently facilitated the consolidation and expansion of the United States. The diaspora sparked by the slave uprising in Saint-Domingue inevitably created a market shift, generating new economic opportunities for the United States and diverting the flow of Atlantic capital. The mass-migration movement effected a re-colonization of the Americas, and as the U.S. American populace swelled to accommodate the displaced Creole migrants, it also swelled geographically. In the short term, the revolution also precipitated the Louisiana Purchase. The human and financial cost of Charles Emmanuel Leclerc's campaign to re-enslave the black population of Saint-Domingue was so great that it forced France to liquidate some of its colonial assets. Louisiana represented the low-hanging fruit of France's colonial empire (despite its strategic importance as a link between the Antilles and the North American mainland), and generated relatively little profit when compared to France's other colonial possessions (it was not, after all, a leading producer of sugar cane or other export crops by this point).[101] However, for the United States the territory represented a

[99] The Federalists adopted a trade policy that favoured the British, whereas the Democratic-Republicans argued for a more pro-French trade policy. Cf.

[100] Monticello, like many Virginia plantations, was forced to transform its main crop from tobacco to grain, owing to growing competition. Jefferson's *Farm Book* offers a complex inventory of the slaves and livestock on his Virginia plantations, and, from 1795 (Jefferson returned to Monticello in 1793), offers timelines for the planting and harvesting of successive grain crops. See Thomas Jefferson, 'Farm Book', *Thomas Jefferson Papers: An Electronic Archive* <http://www.masshist.org/thomasjeffersonpapers/farm/> [accessed 20 August 2014].

[101] Johnson notes that 'Louisiana did not develop a mature plantation economy until planters perfected sugar granulation and introduced cotton during the last decade of the eighteenth century, on the very eve of the U.S.

golden opportunity, with its trade links to the Mississippi and Gulf Coast and an abundance of 'free' land amenable to settlement and cultivation.[102] For these reasons, Louisiana presented the United States with significant opportunities for expansion, settlement, and trade. In 1803, at the height of the French crisis in Saint-Domingue, United States government officials were therefore dispatched to negotiate a purchase of the territory, which was reluctantly granted by the French.[103] As a result, the United States achieved an effective monopoly over a significant proportion of North American land.[104] The Creole revolutions of Saint-Domingue thus not only coincided with, but directly facilitated, America's territorial expansion, and the acquisition of Louisiana promised to strengthen the foundations of the nascent republic and facilitate the annexation of external Creole threats.

However, Louisiana's existing Creole roots and its persistent links with Creole migrants undergirded its culture and its ecology. As Sylvia Hilton argues, the vast territory could only be commanded by abandoning the '[t]raditional cultural imperialism' strategies adopted by colonial governments and mediating the interests of the various Indian nations.[105] In this way, it operated in a very different way to the British colonies of North America, promoting a conciliatory approach to diplomatic relations between the diversity of cultures that inhabited the expansive region. Its colonial history was of course tumultuous, marked by diverse, intersectional Creole layers. Established as a settlement by the French in the late seventeenth century and sold to the Spanish half a century later, it acquired a distinctly Latinate and Catholic character. It is hardly

---

purchase.' See Jerah Johnson, 'Colonial New Orleans: A Fragment of the Eighteenth-Century French Ethos', in *Creole New Orleans*, Cf., pp. 12-57 (p. 19).

[102] During the period of French and Spanish occupation, the colonial activity of Louisiana had mainly centred around New Orleans and the surrounding lower Mississippi Valley. Previous to the 1803 Purchase the Louisiana territory had remained largely unsettled and uncultivated, although the Spanish established military outposts to police borders and maintain territorial control in the late eighteenth century. The territory was vast, and settlement was often a complex process that involved negotiating encounters with Native tribes that continued to occupy the land. It is for this reason that many commentators have analysed colonial Louisiana within the frame of a 'frontier' society. See Cécile Vidal, 'Louisiana in Atlantic Perspective', in *Louisiana*, Cf., pp. 1-17 (p. 10) and Sylvia Hilton, 'Spanish Louisiana in Atlantic Contexts: Nexus of Imperial Transactions and International Relations', in *Louisiana*, Cf., pp. 68-86 (p. 74). While the Purchase did not automatically provide access to 'free' land, it created opportunities for Anglo-American movement.

[103] Given their attempts to preserve France's colonial interests in the Americas (not least through the re-acquisition of Louisiana from Spain), Napoleon's brothers were especially outraged by the decision. See Edward E. Baptist, 'Hidden in Plain View: Evasions, Invasions and Invisible Nations', in *Echoes of the Haitian Revolution 1804-2004*, ed. by Martin Munro and Elizabeth Walcott-Hackshaw (Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2008), pp. 1-27 (p. 7).

[104] The Louisiana territory, which equated to roughly 530,000,000 acres, was bought by the United States government for the sum of fifteen million dollars. 'Milestones: 1801-1829', *U.S. Department of State: Office of the Historian* <http://history.state.gov/milestones/1801-1829/louisiana-purchase> [accessed 4 June 2014].

[105] Hilton, p. 80.

surprising, therefore, that it is regarded as a colony that had more in common with the diverse cultures of the Caribbean and Latin America than with the Anglo-Protestant culture of North America.[106] Indeed, as Hunt notes, Louisiana was often identified in wider U.S. America 'with the tropics, its association with the arduous production of sugar, and its French and Catholic flavor.'[107] The links between Louisiana (and New Orleans in particular) and Saint-Domingue were especially strong and were strengthened in the immediate aftermath of the revolution and the migratory 'waves' that it generated. Admittedly, links between the two colonies had been long established by the early French settlers, and Creole inhabitants often migrated between colonies for the purposes of business, trade, and colonial administration.[108] Laura Foner, amongst others, has also drawn parallels between patterns of social development, which were reflected in the nature of certain types of sexual relationships (such as the open practice of *mésalliance*) and in the character of racial demographics.[109] In this way, Louisiana represented a haven for refugee migrants who were forced to abandon their own Creole way of life in Saint-Domingue. These strong links were inevitably etched in the minds of migrants who chose Louisiana as a site of refuge and permanent settlement. Although it became an 'American' possession, therefore, Louisiana was reinforced by its contours of Creole intersectionality in the decades after the Haitian Revolution.

---

[106] Although Johnson challenges this idea, positing that 'it can be applied most effectively to Louisiana only in the late eighteenth and antebellum nineteenth centuries' (see Johnson, 'Colonial New Orleans', p. 19), significant parallels have been drawn between patterns of social development in Louisiana (an emerging Creole society)—and New Orleans in particular—and colonial societies in the Caribbean. Common characteristics included the practice of Catholicism, the use of slave labour, the development of Creole language and vernacular culture, and the emergence of syncretic spiritualities. There were many similarities between colonial laws, and both Louisiana and Saint-Domingue enforced a black code or *Code Noir*.

[107] Hunt, p. 7.

[108] Dubé argues that French naval officers were often deployed as colonial administrators, frequently moving between the colonies. He draws on the particular example of Sébastien-François-Ange Lenormant de Mézy, a French naval officer who had had success as a plantation owner in Saint-Domingue and was sent to Louisiana in 1744 to try to remedy the colony's unfavourable financial situation. See Alexandre Dubé, 'Making a Career out of the Atlantic: Louisiana's Plume', *Louisiana: Crossroads of the Atlantic World*, Cf., pp. 44-67. Vidal, furthermore, looks beyond the 'impact' of the late eighteenth-century migrations to explore how 'important connections developed between the Antilles and Saint-Domingue as early as the first half of the eighteenth century'. See Cécile Vidal, 'Caribbean Louisiana: Church, *Métissage*, and the Language of Race in the Mississippi Colony during the French Period', in *Louisiana*, Cf., pp. 125-146 (p. 126).

[109] In her article, 'The Free People of Color in Louisiana and St. Domingue: A Comparative Portrait of Two Three-Caste Slave Societies', Cf., Foner explores the similarities between the types of interracial relationships that were formed in both Saint-Domingue and Louisiana and the opportunities for social advancement that they yielded. While more recent studies by the likes of Emily Clark suggest that free people of colour in antebellum Louisiana were not as upwardly mobile as Foner and others have suggested, and while there is little qualitative information that informs us about the real nature of these relationships, the parallels that she draws are useful in helping us to build a wider understanding of comparable colonial societies.

George Washington Cable was keen to emphasize these intersections as he mapped a geography of New Orleans and its outlying areas inhabited by the illustrious (if imagined) Creole families of *The Grandissimes*. As Stephanie Foote notes, 'this book is haunted by the many national histories that produced the territory of Louisiana.'[110] Indeed, his 'Greater' New Orleans encompasses a remembrance of—and persisting links to—the expansive region formerly inhabited by the Natchez and the Tchoupitoulas/Chapitoulas Indians, along with the plantations lining the River Road at Fausse Rivière (False River) and Cannes Brulées (which, by the time Cable was writing, had become absorbed into the district of Kenner). The wilderness that is seen through the eyes of Cable's Joseph Frowenfeld as he enters New Orleans by way of the Mississippi is therefore an apt metaphor for Louisiana's cultural ambivalence and unruliness, entangled and embedded as it is with other Creole histories, geographies, and ecologies. Although the Frowenfelds are disappointed by the absence of 'high land' on their approach to New Orleans, they quickly learn that it is composed of multiple 'layers' when the riverboat pilot transporting them informs them that the city is 'higher than the swamp, but not higher than the river.'[111] This evokes not only a sense of depth, but also a sense of sedimentation. This sedimentation is of course both literal and metaphorical in New Orleans. Connecting the ecology with the creative energies it has given rise to, the New Orleanian funk musician, George Porter Jr, describes it in the following terms:

> You know, you've got solid, and then you've got solid, and then you got moisture. Then up under there, it's solid—you got the rock. But it's like a cushion. I believe it's a floating cushion that can allow the other things to happen.[112]

As Cable was evidently aware, the geological sediments of New Orleans echoed its Creole historicity—and the numerous 'layers' which were seen to compose its Creole core operate in *The Grandissimes* to form a resilient foundation that is not so easily effaced by interloping *Américains*.

---

[110] Stephanie Foote, *Regional Fictions in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2001), p. 99.
[111] Cable, *Grandissimes*, p. 9.
[112] George Porter Jr, 'The Floating Cushion', in *Unfathomable City: A New Orleans Atlas*, ed. by Rebecca Solnit and Rebecca Snedeker (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 2013) pp. 116-120 (p. 120).

The concentrated dispersal of Saint-Domingan migrants across Francophone Louisiana would reaffirm the resilience of these Creole sediments, which threatened to undermine the nationalistic vision of 'Enlightened' republicans such as Joseph. Louisiana bore witness to a steady stream of migrations from the outbreak of the Haitian Revolution in 1791, but, as Hunt notes, these migrations occurred in a succession of waves, several of which 'coincided with key events'—the first with the slave insurrection of 1791-92, the second with the conclusion of the revolution in 1803-1804, and, the third with Napoleon's invasion of Spain in 1809, when around 10,000 Saint-Domingan refugees were ejected from the Spanish colony of Cuba and settled in New Orleans, virtually doubling the population of the city.[113] Although the majority of migrants settled in the vicinity of the urban centre, others settled on the rural fringes, or even further afield, within the broader Creole plantation community, reinforcing the connections between the city, the plantation, the Mississippi Valley region, and the wider Atlantic.[114] With each new wave of migrants, Louisiana adapted to accommodate Creole interests, thus succumbing to a Creole counterrevolution *against* Americanization. Far from 'manifest', America's destiny was increasingly unsettled by a succession of Creole confrontations.

In Edwards's terms, the migrations effected by the Saint-Domingan diaspora were 'circumventional'.[115] This circumvention features as the principle spectre of Cable's narrative, encrypted in the republican idealism of Joseph Frowenfeld. In Joseph, Cable presents a character who, like Melville's Delano, Faulkner's Sutpen, and Brown's Mervyn, remains naively assured of his own sense of right; he perceives himself, in other words, as the 'good American' who promises to 'redeem' the 'Creole' core of New Orleans. Joseph's moral righteousness is shaped less, however, by encounters with 'other' external Creole worlds (as is the case in *Arthur Mervyn*) than it is by blind devotion to the American *patrie*. Like the parochial New Englander Delano, Joseph fails to account for the revolutionary Creole circulations taking place in early nineteenth-century Louisiana to which he, and republican America at large, are indisputably connected. Delimited by his own provincialism, he buries the phantom of revolutionary

---

[113] Hunt, pp. 38-43. See also Angel Adams Parham, 'Caribbean and Creole in New Orleans', in *American Creoles: The Francophone Caribbean and the American South*, ed. by Martin Munro and Celia Britton (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012), pp. 56-76 (p. 62).

[114] For example, in William Scarborough's index of major slaveholders in the South, a Pierre M. Lapice, born in Saint-Domingue (St. Domingo) in 1798, is listed as owning a substantial plantation in Concordia Parish in 1850. This reflects the dispersal of migrants whose interests were centred around plantation capital across the Louisiana territory. See William Kauffman Scarborough, *Masters of the Big House: Elite Slaveholders of the Mid-Nineteenth-Century South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), p. 430.

creolization by presenting the Creoles that define the city's culture and heritage as the harbingers of conservatism and degeneracy and establishing himself as a pillar of 'Enlightened' modernity.

The Grandissimes dramatizes the nuanced reality of Louisiana's 'Americanization' during the transitional Purchase period. While this transition is principally overseen by the territorial governor, William Claiborne, who maintains a spectral presence within the narrative, it is narrated predominantly from the perspective of Joseph. In one sense Joseph is, as Fertel suggests, 'an obvious stand-in for the outsider author'.[116] Like Joseph, Cable was of Anglo-German descent. However, unlike Joseph, he grew up on the fringes of New Orleans, where he spent the majority of his working life, and thus acquired a deeper 'insider' perspective upon Creole culture than the unseasoned and 'unacclimated' foreigner that Joseph represents.[117] Cable's critique of Creole culture was also founded on a more cosmopolitan worldview that brought to the foreground phantoms of Creole circumvention and their larger disavowal. The nationalism that he advocates is thus both cohesive and reflexive, rejecting the conservatism fostered by Creole elites and emphasizing the pertinence of historic and ongoing creolization within (and beyond) America. Joseph thus channels Cable's liberalism, but also presents a challenge to the *limits* of 'American' liberalism at large.

Through the subtlety of verisimilitude, Cable encrypts the connections between the national psyche and the Creole past, demonstrating the circumventional force of the Saint-Domingan diaspora. His vision of Purchase-era New Orleans is pervaded by allusions to real Saint-Domingan personalities such as the Delachaises, the Lafittes, the Davezacs, Pitot, and Étienne De Boré, who is described in parentheses as 'the father to all such as handle the sugar kettle'.[118] Catalogued within a definitive list of eminent Louisiana Creoles (among whom the fictional Grandissimes are also enumerated), De Boré's shadowy presence is perhaps most significant. Like the names of Claiborne and Toussaint, he features as one of a handful of 'real' historical anchors within a narrative that focuses mainly on the exploits of a fictional 'Creole' family. Given his notoriety, it is not unusual that his name should figure here; De Boré was, after all, the first mayor of New Orleans, inaugurated at the beginning of the Purchase period. Cable's

---

[115] Edwards, 'Shotgun', p. 85.
[116] Rien Fertel, *Imagining the Creole City: The Rise of Literary Culture in Nineteenth-Century New Orleans* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2014), p. 80.
[117] Although Cable was, in a sense, exiled from the Creole community, his rift with the Creole literati did not occur until *after* the publication of *The Grandissimes*, which earned him the title of 'the most cordially hated little man in New Orleans'. Joseph Pennell qtd. in Fertel, p. 86.

parenthetical aside nevertheless brings to the reader's attention De Boré's contribution to the sugar industry, and to the plantation economy of the lower South more generally. The distillation technology that De Boré brought with him from Saint-Domingue was revolutionary: facilitating the conversion of cane juice into sugar granules, it transformed sugar into a viable export commodity. As a result of his innovations, an increasing number of planters in the region turned their fortunes to sugar production, to great success. This success was fuelled by the destruction of the plantation infrastructure in Saint-Domingue which, up until the revolution, had been the primary exporter of sugar.[119] However, while the narrative encrypts this phantomogenic link between De Boré and the Creole plantation revival that was so central to this period, it also appears to counteract this phantom of circumvention by presenting Creole plantation society as a society in decline.

Perceived initially at one remove, through the tragicomic disguises they espouse at the *bal masqué* and through the sensational and protracted narrative of Charlie Keene, the Grandissime family is shrouded in mysticism. Evoking a sense of nostalgia for a once resplendent Creole society, they are shown to be out of step with the modernizing and cosmopolitan city. The family name, which harbours the memory of New Orleans's Creole founding, is the only 'asset' with any remaining value, although Cable is keen to assert that this, too, has been rendered 'ubiquitous' by the 'compound' fusions of 'Brahmins, Mandarins and Fusiliers'.[120] While the magnanimous (white) Honoré Grandissime is represented as 'the flower of the family, and possibly the last one',[121] he is juxtaposed by distant relatives such as Raoul Innerarity, whose poor spoken English and gratuitous pride reflect the generational and interfamilial 'corruption' of the proud, noble, and 'pure' Grandissime line.[122] Over the course of sixteen years, the reader learns, the 'greater' New Orleans that is occupied by the novel's noble Creole families is gradually reduced, and the plantation estates upon which their fortunes are built are laid to waste. The Nancanou estate at Fausse Rivière is lost in a duel to Agricola Fusilier; the paternal home of Aurore De Grapion-Nancanou at Cannes Brulées is liquidated to pay her father's debts (occasioned less by profligacy than by a stubborn commitment to an

---

[118] Cable, *Grandissimes*, p. 80.
[119] Dubois, *Avengers*, p. 20.
[120] Cable, *Grandissimes*, p. 80.
[121] Ibid., p. 101.
[122] For example, Raoul demands 'two hun'red fifty dollah' for a painting (or '*pig-shoe*') that Joseph candidly describes as a 'passably good example of Creole art'. Ibid., p. 115.

unprofitable crop);[123] the plantation estate of Don José Martinez (ironically named 'La Renaissance') is brought to ruin by the scourge of infestation (which, according to Grandissime lore, was the result of a Vodou curse laid by the rebel slave Bras-Coupé); and the plantations of the Grandissimes are eventually sold off by Honoré to remunerate the Nancanous. The former inhabitants of these once grand estates are forced to retreat from the abundant and fertile environs of the Mississippi Valley to the city—the centre of mercantilism. The remnants of their Creole pride nevertheless keep the legacy alive, which roots itself in a conservative salon culture that offers a forum for their collective discontent. However, this culture is characterized by dissipation and unruliness, which is brought to light in the scene at Maspero's coffee house in which the Creole Grandissimes give in to drunken excess (borne out in a violent confrontation with Joseph), which pathetically reinforces their loss of purpose within the shifting community.[124] Unsympathetic and uncompromising, the reader is inevitably led to conclude that the 'great' and 'noble' houses connected to Louisiana's founding—and the plantation economy that undergirds them—are essentially doomed to die.

As the economy gives way to the kind of 'Enlightened' commerce and urbanization endorsed by the likes of Joseph Frowenfeld and 'reformed' Creoles such as Honoré Grandissime, the redemptive force of Americanization appears, on the surface, to inhibit the circumventional waves of Creole revolution. The pharmacy that Joseph opens on the Rue Bienville grows so profitable that he expands into larger premises in the Rue Royale.[125] Arriving in New Orleans with nothing—a fact that is compounded by the loss of his family—he quickly establishes a small empire. Yet, beneath this façade of modernization lies the phantom of a persistent creolization. The urban revolution in which Joseph participates was defined by Saint-Domingan migrants such as Joseph Pilié, the city surveyor who was responsible for the subdivision of plantation land in New Orleans and the creation of the Faubourg (Nouvelle) Marigny.[126] The centrality of the migrants to this wave of modernization is subtly acknowledged in a conversation that Honoré has with his mortgager about the 'development of a four-story brick building on the corner of Royale and St. Pierre.' While these men are shown to doubt the feasibility of

[123] Ibid., p. 32.
[124] Ibid., p. 239.
[125] Ibid., p. 276.
[126] Roulhac Toledano, *A Pattern Book of New Orleans Architecture* (Gretna: Pelican Publishing, 2010), p. 21.

constructing such an edifice, they note that the project is endorsed by both De Boré and Pitot,[127] two Saint-Domingan migrants who came to play a prominent role in the public life of New Orleans, both exercizing mayoral duties in the city in the immediate aftermath of the Purchase. In these subtle allusions to Creole innovators, Cable shows that in spite of the diminution of the Grandissime plantation empire, the city is still fuelled by a vast, interconnected Creole network that buttresses, rather than counteracts, Frowenfeld's advancement.

Like the name of De Boré, the unknown origins of the wealth that Joseph accumulates also encrypts the spectre of a Creole exchange matrix to which he is invariably (though perhaps unwittingly) connected. Cable's subtle observation that Joseph appears to prosper 'in a little city where wealth was daily pouring in' brings this spectre to bear.[128] The unspecified and ambiguous source of this wealth invite speculation about its possible origins. By probing these origins, the reader is of course reminded of the 'favorable wind and tide of fortune that the Cession had brought',[129] which opened the city up to '*Américains*' such as Joseph. At the same time, though, they are also reminded (through these subtle narrative allusions) of the interventions being made by Creole migrants—such as De Boré—who were at this very moment 'pouring in' to the city. Though the Creole plantation and the families whose legacies depended upon it are gradually broken up and consolidated within the city, the wealth 'pouring in' to the newly-acquired territory was more evenly distributed between the urban centre and the rural fringes. Like in Mervyn's Philadelphia, the circulations occurring in Frowenfeld's New Orleans filter out to the rural fringes, whose growth, in turn, bolsters the growing city.

As a merchant, and as the principal heir to the Grandissime estate, Honoré Grandissime vacillates between two worlds, underscoring the necessity for transaction and reciprocity between the new 'Enlightened' economy, and the historic Creole infrastructure. Committed to a vision that is expansive and inclusive, he indicates early in the narrative that Joseph will have to compromise his ideals if he wishes to prosper, insisting that '[i]t is not to condemn that you want; you want to suc-*ceed*.'[130] Certainly, Joseph does prosper, and prospers quickly. Although he continues to represent himself as a paragon of progress and difference, his 'fortune' is generated off the back of unspecified Creole circulations occurring inside (and, most likely,

[127] Cable, *Grandissimes*, p. 247.
[128] Ibid., p. 140.
[129] Ibid., p. 247.
[130] Ibid., p. 38.

outside) the city. Like the real William Claiborne, who struggled to mediate the circumventional force of Creole culture in the wake of the diaspora, Frowenfeld embodies the complex nature of this transactional period, during which republican ideals often gave way to the motions of creolization.

This fact was made apparent in a letter that William Claiborne wrote to James Madison in 1804. Defending himself against criticisms levelled against him in his role as governor of the new territory, he takes pains to assure Madison that he has done all he can '[t]o conciliate public opinion and to promote harmony' in Louisiana, stressing that 'the seeds of discontent were Sown' before his arrival.[131] Claiborne's letter refers specifically to the controversy surrounding the importation of Saint-Domingan slaves by their masters. At this time, the importation of enslaved people was not against international slave trading laws, and the acquisition of the Louisiana territory stimulated an unprecedented need for slave labour that locals believed had not been fulfilled in the decades before abolition.[132] This was also a time, however, when a number of states in the Union were moving towards gradual emancipation and the threat of slave insurrection spreading throughout the southern states was becoming particularly pressing.[133] Anxieties about the expansion of the slave population were thus evidently at the forefront of Claiborne's mind as he attempted to mandate migratory controls over Saint-Domingans and their slaves. Louisiana 'locals' were, it seems, piqued by this affront, and were quick to jump to the defence of their Creole brethren. As a result, Claiborne was forced to give way. As he made forcefully clear in a letter that he wrote ten days later, his agents were ill-equipped for dealing with such a powerful display of resistance from the combined Creole community. He notes that

> Had an administration rigid, coercive and unjust been introduced into the Ceded Territory, under the authority of the United States, I am persuaded there would have been less murmuring, and a delusive appearance of Popular approbation: But under a mild and just Government, which admits of freedom of Speech, and of opinion, the man indeed,

---

[131] William Claiborne, 'Letter to James Madison, New Orleans, October 16th 1804', in *Interim Appointment: W. C. C. Claiborne Letter Book 1804-1805*, ed. by Jared William Bradley (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002), p. 43.

[132] The International Slave Trade was abolished in America in 1808, after which point it was illegal to import slaves into the nation. As Clark points out, however, 'Claiborne could do little to control the flood of humanity making its way to New Orleans.' See Clark, p. 42.

[133] Especially after the Pointe Coupée uprising in Louisiana in 1795 and the Gabriel Prosser conspiracy in Virginia in 1800.

> must be little acquainted with human nature, who would expect to find in Louisiana union in expression and Sentiment[.][134]

Evincing bitter contempt for the compromised position in which he finds himself, he articulates the inability to promote a cohesive 'American' community in the face of an unruly and circumventional Creole coalition. His suggestion that the Creoles might be more receptive to a coercive and totalitarian government (one that is neither 'mild', 'just', nor amenable to 'freedom of speech') reinforces the Creole connection to a perceived 'Old World' degeneracy. By concluding his letter with the assertion that his **'**conduct throughout, has been directed by the purest motives of Honest Patriotism',[135] he harnesses emotive republican rhetoric to reinforce his commitment to the American *patrie*. Yet despite this display of rhetorical certitude, his acquiescence to the demands of the Creole community reinforces his diminished position within the territorial nexus of power. Conversely, the voice of the Creole community is preserved intact, and indeed amplified by the force of numbers. Transplanting to Louisiana both an advanced model of plantation society and the labour force and technology to recreate it, Saint-Domingan migrants reaffirmed the existing infrastructures of Creole society. And as Louisiana's governing authorities made an increasing number of concessions to conciliate the migrants, the social and political landscape of Louisiana became increasingly welded to the aspirations of that society. Far from in decline, the Creole plantation was very much at the vanguard of southern expansion in the post-Purchase United States.

This tension between republican ideal and administrative reality in post-Purchase Louisiana is echoed in Joseph's flawed reformist vision. As Honoré Grandissime points out after he tells Joseph the tragic story of Bras-Coupé, 'you are a great man for causes, Mr. Frowenfeld; but me, I am for results, ha, ha! You may ponder the philosophy of Bras-Coupé in your study, but *I* have got to get rid of his results, me.'[136] Joseph evinces empathy for the plight of this tragic hero, and condemns the cruelty he was shown by his Creole masters; like Brown's Mervyn, he is nevertheless shown to be a dreamer who offers more shadow than substance. Moreover, he fails to live by example and, despite his best efforts to 'improve' his Creole neighbours and inspire activist sentiments within the free black community, his words merely paper over the cracks of

---

[134] William Claiborne, 'Letter to James Madison, New Orleans, October 26 1804', in *Interim Appointment*, Cf., p. 53.
[135] Ibid.

this contradiction. This is magnified by the omniscient narrator's cutting critique, which mediates one of Joseph's diatribes with the bold observation that

> Inexperience is apt to think that Truth will be knocked down and murdered unless she comes to the rescue. Somehow, Frowenfeld's really excellent arguments seemed to give out more heat than light. They were merciless; their principles were not only lofty to dizziness but precipitous, and their heights unoccupied, and—to the common sight—unattainable. In consequence, they provoked hostility and even resentment.[137]

Joseph's efforts to 'enlighten' his compatriots are thus nothing short of a metaphorical whitewash; in other words, he attempts to supplant one form of hypocrisy with another. This idea is foregrounded in Honoré's initial perception of Joseph. Indeed, after their first encounter, Honoré remarks to himself '[h]e will make his mark', but qualifies this with the rejoinder 'it will probably be a white one'.[138] Though Honoré is himself white, a fact that the omniscient narrator takes great pains to underscore,[139] Joseph's 'whiteness' is prefigured here as distinct—at least ideologically—from his own Creole identity. The 'white mark' that Honoré anticipates Joseph will make is thus configured here as a signifier for the sweeping tide of Americanization that he embodies. Honoré's buoyant remark that he will 'subscribe to the adventure' of this Americanization nevertheless reflects an insouciance that suggests he may be sceptical of the ambitions of this project. Ever sagacious, Honoré ironically holds up to scrutiny the fallibility of the Anglo-American endeavour.

Viewed through this critical lens, Joseph's ideological 'whitening' of Creole plantation society can be seen as analogous to the physical whitewashing of Creole plantation structures that occurred along the Louisiana River Road in the century after the purchase. Architecturally, Creole plantation houses typical of the Louisiana River Road region presented a glaring contrast to the all-white neoclassical plantation styles that were becoming increasingly popular throughout the slaveholding United States. Indeed, stylistically, Creole plantation houses

---

[136] Cable, *Grandissimes*, p. 198.
[137] Ibid., pp. 46-47
[138] Ibid., p. 35.
[139] Attempting to piece together the Grandissime family tree, Charlie Keene tells the newcomer Joseph that 'the true, main Grandissime stock […] has kept itself lily-white ever since France has loved lilies.' Ibid., p. 22. The narrator later compounds this image of emphatic whiteness by asserting that Honoré presents 'a dazzling contradiction to the notion that a Creole is a person of mixed blood.' Ibid., p. 38.

commonly incorporated bright colours such as ochre, red, and green (see Figure 17).[140] Moreover, Creole plantation houses were built predominantly from cypress wood (which was hardy and resistant to rot). These houses were supported by a raised platform that was undergirded by a brick foundation that went deep into the earth.[141] Their design and construction reflected a deep understanding of the challenges posed by the natural environment of the Mississippi Valley region—characterized by a tropical climate that often brought floods and an unruly river that could effect soil erosion and subsidence. This prospect is realized in the gothic climax to Cable's earlier short story 'Belles Demoiselles Plantation' when the ancestral home of the De Charleus family dramatically sinks into the 'merciless, unfathomable flood of the Mississippi.'[142] Echoing structural forms found in West Africa and elsewhere in the Francophone Caribbean (especially Saint-Domingue), Creole plantation structures also reflected the accumulations of knowledge acquired through Creole exchange.[143] However, as an increasing number of Anglo-Americans moved into the region after the purchase, the edifices were adapted to more closely resemble favoured 'republican' architectural styles. Exteriors were 'whitewashed' and sometimes subjected to a complete structural overhaul. More often than not, though, these structures were often taken on as they were, with all of their Creole accoutrements. The twin River Road plantation houses of Whitney (Figure 18) and Evergreen (Figure 19) thought to have been built between the 1780s and 1790s by Christophe and Jean Jacques Haydel,[144] were both subjected to this architectural 'Americanization', the latter to a more considerable degree. Although both houses were painted in the uniform white, the exterior form of Evergreen was completely remodelled in the neoclassical taste.[145] The Whitney house

[140] In Kate Chopin's 'Desiree's Baby', the Aubigny house is also described as being 'stuccoed' in yellow. See Kate Chopin, 'Desiree's Baby', in *The Awakening and Selected Stories* (Minneapolis: Filiquarian Publishing, LLC., 2007), pp. 219-227 (p. 220).
[141] Jay D. Edwards, 'The Origins of Creole Architecture', *Winterthur Portfolio*, 29.2-3 (1994), 155-189 (p. 158).
[142] George W. Cable, 'Belle Desmoiselles Plantation', in *Old Creole Days* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1897), pp. 48-87 (p. 64).
[143] Edwards suggests that experimental architectural methods employed in the construction of Creole plantations 'would have been found in both contemporary France and along the Guinea Coast of west Africa. In both places, wood was being used more economically (i.e., open studding). But because it was enslaved Africans who constructed most of the buildings in Lower Louisiana, the methods adopted, although traditionally French, also had to be easily and quickly learned by the slaves under the extremes of the pioneering conditions. […] it appears that a multi-ethnic process of cultural selection was at work in the architecture of Lower Louisiana.' See Jay D. Edwards, 'Creole Architecture: A Comparative Analysis of Upper and Lower Louisiana and Saint-Domingue, *International Journal of Historical Archeology*, 10 (2006), 241-271 (p. 267).
[144] Samuel Wilson, Jr., 'The Building Contract for Evergreen Plantation, 1832', *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association*, 31 (1990), 399-406 (p. 399).
[145] Ibid., p. 400.

nevertheless retained its exterior form and both houses in the main retained their classic Creole interiors.[146] While the Greek revival style advocated by Thomas Jefferson and made popular by Benjamin Latrobe eventually filtered through to Louisiana, the Creole plantation structure remained largely unaltered throughout much of the nineteenth century.

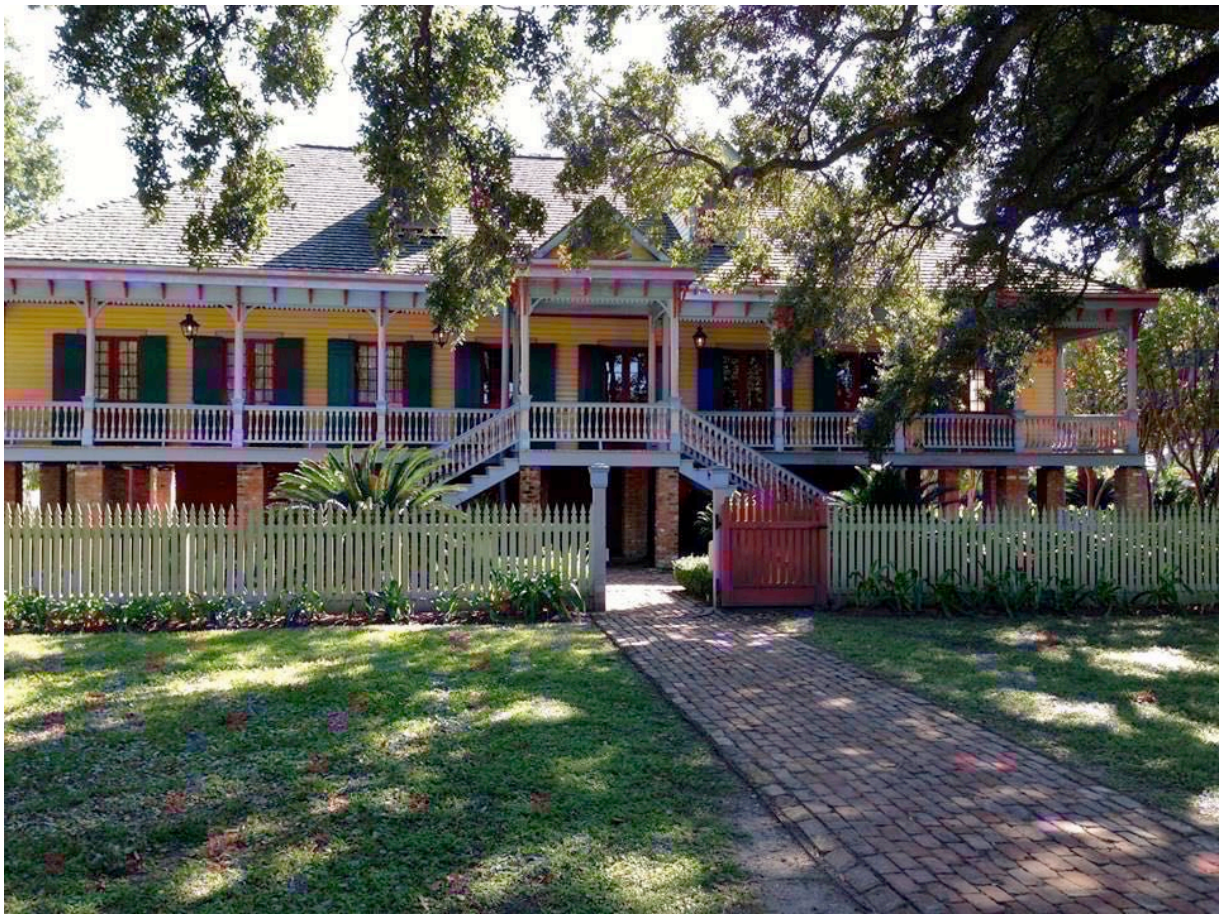


Figure 17: Laura Plantation, River Road, Vacherie, LA 70090. Ancestral home of the French Creole Duparc family, built in 1804. During the renovation of the big house at Laura, renovators peeled back two layers of white paint on the exterior (from 1922 and 1954) to discover the original yellow façade. It has since been restored to its original Creole colour scheme.

[146] This was revealed by restoration work undertaken at the various River Road plantations during the 1980s by the River Road Area Historical and Genealogical Society. Norman Marmillion (personal communication, June 27, 2014).

Figure 18: Whitney Plantation, River Road, Wallace, LA 70049. Built in the 1780s-90s in the traditional raised Creole style, the big house was later painted white. However, unlike Evergreen Plantation, it has retained most of its original features. Reprinted with permission from Whitney Plantation.

Figure 19: Evergreen Plantation, River Road, Edgard, LA 70049. Built around the same time as the Whitney plantation, the main house was subjected to a complete architectural overhaul in the 1830s. The light columnettes and brick platform have been replaced with tall doric columns which stretch from the ground to the roof, and the façade is now completely white. Inside, the house nevertheless retains the original Creole floorplan. Reprinted with permission from Evergreen Plantation.

Furthermore, regardless of the extent of the 'cosmetic' preservation, it is clear that, in the main, the agricultural infrastructures were maintained, incorporating the industrial innovations acquired from Saint-Domingan Creoles and expanding throughout the entire southern region in the nineteenth-century United States. To this day, Laura Plantation, a notable Creole plantation along the river road in Vacherie (depicted in Figure 17), still farms sugarcane, and the descendants of slaves lived on the estate until the 1970s.[147] Unlike in revolutionary Saint-Domingue, where the destruction of plantation homesteads and crops by rebel slaves signalled a symbolic rejection of the plantation system (albeit a temporary one), the expanding American republic yielded increasingly to the economies of the Creole past, unable to make the complete ideological break with 'Old World' cultural values. Attempts at architectural overhaul thus reflected more of a cosmetic 'renovation' of Creole culture, which sought to create the illusion of exceptionalism while preserving its ultimate utilitarian and exploitative function. In a similar vein, Cable demonstrates how Joseph's republican ideals are diminished by the embeddedness of the prevailing Creole infrastructure, giving way to a more pragmatic (if less altruistic and empathetic) lived reality. As the archive demonstrates, the process of Americanization was fraught with contradiction, which despite the gloss of exceptionalism continued to encrypt the rebellious phantom at America's Creole core.

During their initial encounter, Honoré impresses upon Joseph the conservatism of Creole culture, but also insinuates that Joseph is likely to succumb to this way of life. Recalling other idealists that have preceded Joseph, Honoré observes that '[t]hey hold out a little while—a very little; then they open their stores on Sunday, they import cargoes of Africans, they bribe the officials, they smuggle goods, they have colored housekeepers. My-de'seh, the water must expect to take the shape of the bucket; eh?'[148] Despite Joseph's emphatic retort that '[o]ne need not be water', he gradually moulds his lifestyle around existing (and evolving) Creole infrastructures, taking up residence in the Rue Royale and entering into a business partnership (that leads to a 'perpetual copartnership')[149] with Clotilde Nancanou, fulfilling Honoré's initial prophecy that, like 'all who come' he is destined to become 'acclimated'.[150] While the immortality of Creole culture is held up to scorn, the prevailing legacies of Creole culture remain

[147] Ibid.
[148] Cable, *Grandissimes*, p. 37.
[149] Ibid., p. 334.
[150] Ibid.

a phantomogenic challenge to exceptional ideas of republican 'progress'. By the end of the novel, the dying pledges of Agricola Fusilier—the cantankerous Grandissime patriarch and relic of Creole conservatism—have effected the reconciliation of the community and safeguarded the future of the Creole endeavour. While Joseph has been forced to bury the bodies of his German Protestant family in unmarked graves outside the city's limits,[151] Agricola is consigned to his tomb in the Grandissime family crypt with the words 'Louisiana forever'.[152] His death and burial thus become a fitting emblem to the ineradicable legacies of the Creole past and to the enduring promise of a revolutionary Creole circumvention.

Yet although the novel criticizes the naive exceptionalism evinced by Frowenfeld, it also condemns the conservatism and entitlement embodied by the Creole Grandissimes, and, by holding the Creole elite up to scrutiny, Cable creates a series of dialectic layers encrypting divergent cultural perspectives on alternate revolutionary stories. This sedimentary structure is brought to bear in the cyclical retelling of the story of Bras-Coupé (a rebellious slave who meets his tragic demise at the hands of Agricola Fusilier), which is first told by Honoré f.m.c., and then successively retold by Honoré and Raoul.[153] This retelling reinforces the cultural memory of Bras Coupé and thereby affirms the embeddedness of Afro-Creole cultures within wider Creole society and the whole diversity of cultures that it represents. However, it also fuels a white mythology that encrypts authentic Afro-Creole voices. In this way, the various incarnations of Bras-Coupé elicit a penetrative enquiry into the deeper, intersected Creole histories that the white Creole elite conspire to disavow. Though Joseph is complicit in repressing the intersections between his own world and the circumventional Creole world, the defiant pride of the Grandissimes—reinforced by Saint-Domingans such as De Boré and Pitot—masks the revolutionary imprint of Afro-Creole cultures upon their own. By mining these 'sediments', the reader is thus forced to confront the depth of connections uniting diverse Creole histories, routes, and identities in the national psyche.

Certainly, Cable's regional focus upon the colonial history of New Orleans brought a whole world of 'local' others sharply into focus for his contemporary readers, particularly for those whose ideological detachment from the former slaveholding South prevented them from negotiating the uncanny reality of their own Creole ancestry. The romantic history of the Indian

[151] Ibid., p. 91.
[152] Ibid., p. 328.
[153] Ibid., p. 169.

princess Lufki-Humma, embraced as Agricola Fusilier's 'most boasted ancestor',[154] is, however, set in stark contrast to the histories of the Vodou priestess Palmyre, the slave and calas-vendor Clémence, and the mythical renegade 'Bras-Coupé', who resonated with Cable's contemporaries for their connection to a diasporic world that could trace its routes through West Africa, Saint-Domingue, and the wider slaveholding Atlantic. These characters encrypt the revolutionary force of Afro-Creole cultures and their rootedness within the larger Creole culture of the Gulf South and the Caribbean. Though at times complicit in fuelling the racial dichotomy that he critiques, Cable's attempt to reconnect ideologically disparate Creole cultures confronts the multidimensional assaults on Afro-Creole heritage and the spectrum of detachment to which he bore witness among white American communities.

Cable's efforts to rehabilitate Afro-Creole cultures are made manifest in a letter he wrote in 1875 to a Louisiana Creole named only in his correspondence as 'Monsieur Savini'. In this letter, Cable demonstrates a curiosity in the peculiar superstitions of the region, and particularly in black folk histories. Soliciting Savini for an interview, he states his intention to 'visiter quelques personnes parmi les Creoles afin de recueillir des faits dans l'egard de les superstitions de notre Louisianaises, et blancs et noirs.'[155] His express desire to 'recueillir des faits' (or obtain/collect/gather the facts) reflects his commitment to restoring the oral histories and, in particular, the lesser-known histories of the Afro-Creole South, to their rightful place within the larger Creole cannon. While Cable undoubtedly consulted a range of sources that would help him 'recueillir' Afro-Creole voices,[156] he drew heavily on the account of colonial life in Saint-Domingue offered by Moreau de Saint-Méry's *Déscription*, from which he copied 'meticulous records of facts that struck him as useful.'[157] Ladd in fact suggests that Moreau's account of the rebel maroon François Makandal served as the inspirational basis for the story of Bras-Coupé.[158] Although Cable consulted a number of sources that likely had considerable influence upon his 'Story of Creole Life', his use of the *Déscription* and its echoes in *The Grandissimes* secrete the connections of a wider, transatlantic diaspora which link the creolistic revolutionary convulsions

---

[154] Ibid., p. 18.
[155] George Washington Cable miscellany, Mss. 1162, Folder 2, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, LA. Translation: 'to visit some people within the creole community in order to gather some facts relating to the superstitions of Louisianians, white and black.'
[156] His vast archive at Tulane University, and other sources dispersed across the Historic New Orleans Collection and Louisiana State University archives, testify to the extensive range of sources and correspondents with whom he consulted.
[157] Ladd, *Nationalism and the Color Line*, p. 66.

in Haiti with Creole New Orleans and the wider Atlantic diaspora (which invariably encompasses the United States). This link is strengthened by Honoré f.m.c., who situates himself in between the revolutionary ambitions of the mythical Jollof prince Bras-Coupé and the Saint-Domingan general and revolutionary leader Toussaint Louverture.[159]

In *The Grandissimes* these connections are repeatedly confounded by the proud Grandissime clan (who represent, in microcosm, the past and present interests of white Creole elites). This Creole elitism is satirized in the conservative ramblings of Agricola Fusilier, who, on his deathbed, entrusts to Joseph a copy of his '*Philippique Générale*', which articulates his conservative arguments against equal rights among the races and inculcates his hierarchical vision of Creole society which locates 'arch above' and 'pier below'.[160] This rejection of Afro-Creole culture by the Creole 'mainstream' reflected a culture of occlusion among Cable's Creole contemporaries, who, as Fertel notes, had 'turned [increasingly] toward championing their whiteness'.[161] Indeed, one wonders if Charles Gayarré was so outraged by Cable's representation of white Creole culture in *The Grandissimes* because he saw in the character of Agricola an uncanny reflection of himself. However, this occlusion is contrasted by the pervasive echoes of Afro-Creole voices and their absorption by the Grandissime clan. For example, the 'authentic' voice of Bras-Coupé, which is inscribed in a popular Creole folksong, is brought to life through the voice of Raoul Innerarity.[162] In dramatizing this tension, Cable encrypts elite Creole anxieties about the depth and breadth of revolutionary creolization, and the eradication of a 'pure' white Creole lineage.

This creolization was enacted through the oral, musical, spiritual, and linguistic traditions of the revolutionary diaspora—traditions upon which Cable frequently drew in his representations of Creole life. As a communal space that bore the imprint of a long tradition of diasporic performance, 'Congo Square' reflected the diverse intersections of a multitude of Creole cultures, and features in Cable's work as an important motif, simultaneously occluded by and reacting against conservative Creole elitism. Linking the themes of spirituality, resistance, diaspora, and performance that Cable located at the core of Creole culture, Congo Square encrypts the unwritten testimonies of Afro-Creole performers across the diaspora. In *The*

---

[158] Ibid., p. 67.
[159] Cable, *Grandissimes*, p. 196.
[160] Ibid. p. 326.
[161] Fertel, p. 73.

Grandissimes, Congo Square is a site of communal performance and transformation. Of course, as Cable shows through his use of this cultural site, the performative and *trans*formative possibilities that it offers to Afro-Creole communities are inhibited by white Creole elites. It is here, after all, that Bras-Coupé exhibits his performative prowess and thereby lays himself open to capture by 'Spanish police'.[163] Following his capture, he is hamstrung for the 'crime' of 'attempting to be a free man', and is thereby divested of the performative power that corporeal movement and dance in particular affords. The metamorphic and diasporic possibilities of Congo Square are thus constrained by the oppressive vigilance of white authorities.

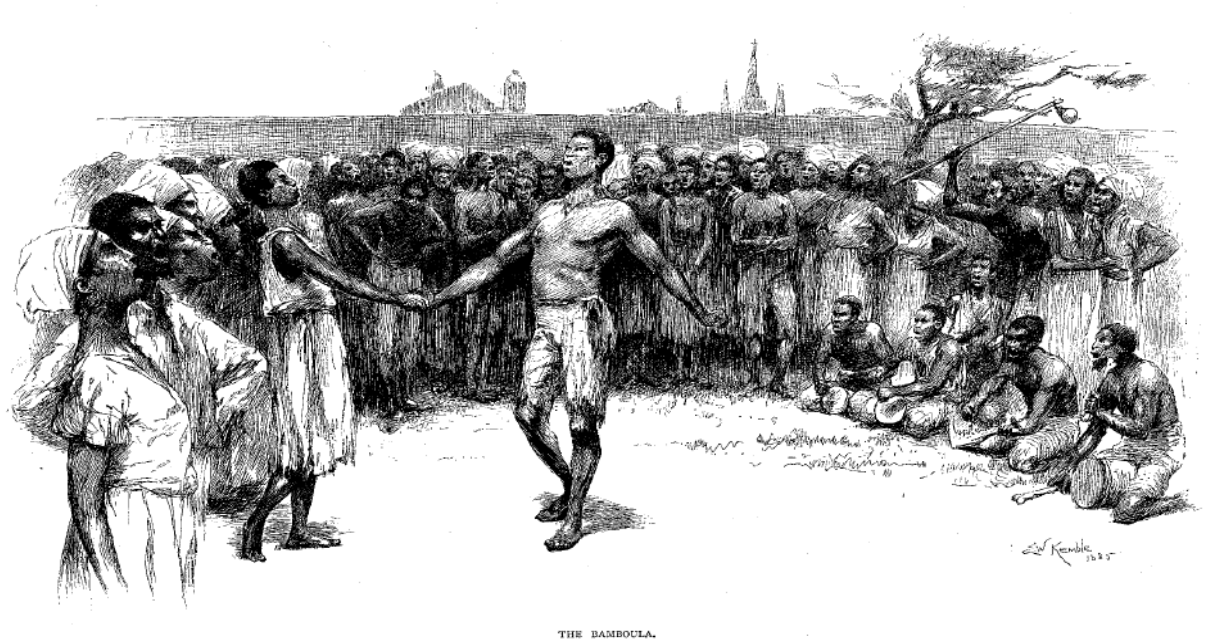


Figure 20: Edward Kemble, 'The Bamboula', from George Washington Cable, 'The Dance in Place Congo', in *Century*, 31 (1886), 524.

Accounts of communal dances performed at the original site of Congo Square, located off the Rue des Remparts (now Rampart Street), which were heavily influenced by Afro-Creole migrants from Saint-Domingue, became absorbed into Louisiana folklore.[164] Cable's fascination with this site and its centrality to Creole culture in New Orleans, perceptible across his entire

[162] Ibid., p. 167.
[163] Cable, *Grandissimes*, p. 190.
[164] Johnson, *Congo Square*, p. 5.

corpus of work, and especially in the series of articles he produced for *Century* magazine (Figure 20), reflected its continued resonance within the local imaginary. However, the dearth of written accounts upon which Cable had to draw points to a pervasive history of white Creole disavowal that worked to counter the force of wider, diasporic Creole connections and revolutionary diaspora.[165] In this sense, although the revolutionary Creole performances that characterized the secret life of 'Congo Square' became a rich part of Louisiana's Creole history, they were often absorbed by the larger 'public transcript' of white Creole culture.

This antagonism between the public transcript of white Creole culture and the 'hidden' transcript of a more intersectional performance culture that spanned a diverse range of Creole communities is reflected in accounts of carnival and masquerade in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It is commonly accepted that African and Afro-Creole masking traditions left a significant imprint on carnival customs across the diaspora;[166] as Reid Mitchell notes, for those 'who strove to keep African traditions alive, Carnival, like Congo Square, presented a festive space in which to do so.'[167] However, this culture of performative preservation is undercut by the silences within the historical archive, which tends to favour dominant white Creole voices which occlude the intersectional reality. These voices are most prominent in Creole print culture, where numerous allusions to the 'Grand Bals' and 'Bals Parés' (costume balls) held during the Mardi Gras season overshadow the more diverse and transactional processions that undoubtedly took place alongside them.[168] Excepting a handful of early nineteenth-century accounts which are largely attributed to foreign observers who passed through New Orleans during the carnival season,[169] the only time that carnivalesque exchanges across Creole cultures enter the public transcript is through the medium of legislation; in an edict

---

[165] Benjamin Latrobe documented his observations of the performances at Congo Square in his diaries, but these were not published until 1951. See Benjamin Henry Latrobe, *Impressions Respecting New Orleans: Diary & Sketches, 1818-1820* (New Orleans: Columbia University Press, 1951), pp. 49-51.

[166] These diasporic connections are embedded in Lafcadio Hearn's *Two Years in the French West Indies* which offers a unique insight into Afro-Creole masking traditions. His description of the carnival in Martinique, where he witnesses a 'troupe of girls *en bébé*', who wear 'a loose embroidered chemise, lace-edged pantalettes, and a child's cap', resonates with the 'Babydoll' tradition of New Orleans carnival, and his account of the '"molasses-negro"' who he describes as wearing 'nothing but a cloth around his loins;—his whole body and face being smeared with an atrocious mixture of soot and molasses', resembles the *lansetkòd* figure of Haitian *kanaval*. His observations record important transactional moments, reflecting the overlap between masking traditions across the Atlantic. See Lafcadio Hearn, *Two Years in the French West Indies* (1890; New York: Interlink Books, 2001), p. 162.

[167] Reid Mitchell, *All on a Mardi Gras Day: Episodes in the History of New Orleans Carnival* (1995; repr. Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 34.

[168] Throughout the Mardi Gras season between 1803 and 1811, neither the *Moniteur de la Louisiane* nor the *Louisiana Gazette* make any reference to the joint celebrations shared by the masquerading public.

issued by the colonial government in 1781, it was decreed that 'all kinds of masking and public dancing by the Negroes be prohibited during the Carnival Season'.[170] This decree is revelatory, and underscores the existence of an encrypted culture of exchange that operated across a wide spectrum of Creole communities. However, its provisions also reinforce the legislative power of the dominant Creole elite in suppressing these diasporic and revolutionary exchanges. This suppressive force is echoed in the opening chapter of *The Grandissimes*, which introduces the reader to the Creole Grandissimes and the wider extended Creole nexus, through the frame of masquerade. Within this forum, the Creole maskers take on roles that reflect their (predominantly) French (and white) Creole heritage; the 'promenaders' encompass a dragoon, a monk, and a Huguenotte *fille à la cassette*, for example. Connections with a broader, intersectional Creole culture are brought to bear by the intrusion of Charlie Keene, dressed as the 'Indian queen' Lufki-Humma. However, the audacity of Charlie Keene's 'disguise' is attributed to his use of the 'Creole' language rather than to his choice of costume (Lufki-Humma, after all, is represented as a 'legitimate' and noble connection in the Grandissime chain).[171] Repelling this linguistic intrusion, Agricola Fusilier retaliates, affirming the value of his own 'Louisiana French' which the narrator distinguishes from the 'slave dialect' adopted by Charlie Keene as 'unprovincial'.[172] Mimicking the strictures of Creole government, Agricola suppresses hybrid and intersectional Creole voices.

Counteracting this white Creole silence, the Creole folk songs reproduced in the narrative nevertheless point to a vast archive of undocumented (and unrecorded) Afro-Creole narratives, rehabilitating the linguistic Creoles that operated outside of the public transcript of colonial (and Anglo-American) language. Unlike similar works celebrating the broad cultural trajectory of Creole language, such as Lafcadio Hearn's *Gombo Zhèbes* and Clara Gottschalk-Peterson's *Creole Songs from New Orleans in the Negro Dialect*, which mediate between the public transcript of elite Creole language (namely, French and English) and the 'hidden' transcripts of linguistic Creoles through the act of translation, Cable offers no such bridge for the non-Creole speaker. In *The Grandissimes* the Creole language thus operates as a secret covenant understood only by those characters who operate within its linguistic framework. Joseph clearly exists

---

[169] Such as Timothy Flint, a New Englander who visited New Orleans in 1823. See Mitchell, p. 29.
[170] 'Chronological Digest of the Acts and Deliberations of the Cabildo—1781', *City Archives* (New Orleans Public Library, 2002) <http://nutrias.org/~nopl/inv/digest/digest1781.htm> [accessed 30 September 2015].
[171] Cable, *Grandissimes*, p. 2.

outside of this framework. This secrecy is exemplified in an exchange between Joseph, Honoré Grandissime, and Clémence, the calas-vendor, which proceeds thus:

> "*Bou zou, Miché Honoré!*" called the *marchande*.
> "*Commen to yé*, *Clémence*"
> The merchant waved his hand as he rode away with his companion.
> "*Beau Miché*, *là*," said the *marchande*, catching Joseph's eye.
> He smiled his ignorance and shook his head.[173]

Like the non-Creole reader, Joseph is detached from this exchange; unable to translate, this sense of detachment is heightened, serving to reinforce the secrecy of the Creole 'code' that is shared between Honoré and Clémence. Language thus functions as a cohesive agent that binds diverse cultures within the Creole community. This encoded cohesion in turn accentuates the 'hybridization' of culture that white Creole elites attempted to guard against. Institutions such as the *Athénée Louisianais*, for example, attempted to preserve a filiation between the white Creole elite and a 'pure' French language, and Creole purists such as Gayarré rejected outright Cable's vision of a hybrid language.[174] Ultimately, however, as Gavin Jones suggests, 'Cable's ambiguous allusions had the power to suggest the pervasiveness of hybrid modes—whether genealogical, linguistic, or musical—throughout white culture.'[175] The antagonism between 'public' linguistic transcript and the 'hidden' or countercultural transcript of a linguistic Creole that Cable creates within the text demonstrates that while language was used as a means of colonial control throughout the slaveholding Americas, it was also a site of rebellion, through which Afro-Creole communities asserted their cultural routes—routes which were shared with the wider Creole community, and especially with Afro-Creoles from Saint-Domingue.

These Afro-Creole routes were reinforced by the diasporic migrations sparked by the Haitian Revolution and the cultural transactions that it stimulated. This is made manifest in Cable's description of the *Calinda* dance in Congo Square. As Johnson notes, Cable resurrected the Afro-Creole voices encrypted in the public transcript of white Creole culture using accounts

---

[172] Ibid.
[173] Ibid., pp. 82-83.
[174] Fertel, p. 85.
[175] Gavin Jones, 'Signifying Songs: The Double Meaning of Black Dialect in the Work of George Washington Cable', *American Literary History*, 9 (1997), 244-267 (p. 247).

of similar dances from Saint-Domingue.[176] Although perhaps inauthentic, he might be forgiven for seeking out sources that shed light on the silences of archives closer to home; his description of the *Calinda* reinforces the centrality of Creole connections across the revolutionary diaspora. Bras-Coupé, who celebrates his runaway freedom through this medium,[177] inheres these connections, the resonance of which are channelled through his successive narrative reincarnations.

Towards a 'No South': A Creolistic Vision of Trans-America

The multiple currents of Creole history which coursed beneath the surface of American national identity threatened to burst in the wake of the Haitian Revolution. Containing the revolutionary force of these currents depended on the ideological assumption that America was not 'Creole' and that 'Creole' was not 'American'. The spectre of Haiti in Charles Brockden Brown's *Arthur Mervyn* spoke to the contemporary anxieties of early national America and the contemporary effects of Creole circulations, dramatizing the inherent complexities of New World 'nationhood' and the ideological challenges presented by national 'borders' in an age of global circulations. Transporting his readers back to a historic and exotic South that extended beyond the parochial bounds of what Glissant called '"the South," with a capital "S,"'[178] Cable's *The Grandissimes* recognized the continuing force of revolutionary Creole connections and their spectral presence within the fissures of national America, upon which ideas of identity were successively constructed and *re*constructed. This was especially pertinent in the wake of the Civil War. Indeed, within this context the torture and murder of Clémence and the maiming of Bras Coupé spoke to the racial violence of the Redemption era South. However, this violence was also a metaphor for the larger ideological violence perpetrated against the Creole past and its continuing 'revolutions' in the present.

In a lecture that Cable gave at the University of Mississippi in 1882, he challenged the idea of the 'New South' in literary culture by advancing his commitment to what he called the 'No South'. In response to his own question, '[d]oes the word sound like annihilation?', he

[176] Johnson, *Congo Square*, p. 38.
[177] Cable, *Grandissimes*, p. 190.
[178] Glissant, *Faulkner*, p. 30.

answered that '[i]t is the farthest from it. It is enlargement. It is growth. It is a higher life.'[179] His own vision of the national thus strove to erase the imaginary borders that created divisive, alternate, and displaced identities and celebrate the continuing possibilities of revolutionary creolization and 'perpetual collision'.[180] For Cable, the Haitian Revolution presented a spectral reflection of the American national crypt and the fear of Creole infiltration combined with the fear of self-recognition; the Creole 'chaos' embodied by Haiti was, after all, only a reflection of the chaos at the heart of America. These fictional phantoms provide a route to this uncanny recognition, confirming Fiedler's belief that American literature is a 'chamber of horrors' which presents its readers with 'a series of inter-reflecting mirrors'.[181] Although Cable's nationalism may have been 'redemptive',[182] his vision of a revolutionary, creolistic, and expansive America was, for the majority of U.S. Americans, unnervingly apocalyptic.

[179] George Washington Cable, qtd. in Katharine A. Burnett, 'Moving Toward a "No South": George Washington Cable's Global Vision in *The Grandissimes*', *The Southern Literary Journal*, 45 (2012), 21-38 (p. 21).
[180] George Washington Cable, 'Letter to Doctor Rice' (1912), George Washington Cable miscellany, Mss. 1162, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, LA., Folder 6.
[181] Fiedler, Cf.
[182] Ladd, *Nationalism and the Color Line*, p. 45.

Chapter 4 | Rebellious Polyphony: Rhythm, Spirituality, and Undead Kinships in Haiti's Diaspora

> although the Afro-Caribbean world came to life on the plantation and in part because of the plantation, Afro-Caribbean cultural patterns and practices emerged against the expectations and wishes of plantation owners and their European patrons. They were not meant to exist.
>
> — Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past* (1995)

> From the hills came the thump of drums, monotonous, mysterious, interminable.
>
> — John Houston Craige, *Black Bagdad* (1933)

> Tout moun se moun.[1]
>
> — Kreyòl motto.

Historicizing Roots; Preserving Routes

In the popular historical narrative, Bois Caïman ('Alligator Wood') is held to be the originary location of Haiti's slave insurgency. It was here, in the secluded environs of a plantation on the outskirts of Cap Français, that a secret Vodou ceremony was purportedly performed, and the seeds of revolution were sown.[2] Attended by the leading agents of the slave insurgency, who included Jean-François Papillon, Georges Biassou, Jeannot, and Boukman Dutty, the gathering mobilized slaves and maroons across the entire northern plain of Saint-Domingue against the colonial authorities. The congregation is said to have sacrificed a Creole pig—a breed of pig peculiar to Haiti but now extinct, owing to a USAID eradication campaign in the 1980s.[3] In most accounts, the assembly drank the blood of the sacrificial pig, upon which they swore an oath to

---

[1] Translation: all people are people. This phrase was made popular by Jean-Bertrand Aristide, Haiti's first democratically-elected president.

[2] Geggus notes that, while some accounts give the date of the Bois Caïman ceremony as 14th August 1791, others claim that it did not take place until the following week. In all likelihood, he affirms, it took place on 21st August 1791. See Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, Cf., pp. 83-87

[3] The pigs were thought to be the cause of a swine fever epidemic that had broken out in neighbouring Dominican Republic. Paul Farmer, *AIDS and the Geography of Blame* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 2006), pp. 37-40.

the destruction of white colonial rule.[4] Through the shared language of Vodou, a religion forced into being through geographical displacement, and indeed, solidified and nurtured in Afro-Creole experience, this unruly assembly articulated a collective vision of a new Creole society authored by those at the lowest rungs of the colonial order.

This narrative has been immortalized in the written archive of western history, and, in this way, reflects the reductionism that has pervaded histories of the Haitian Revolution from the early nineteenth century to the present: a reductionism that presents Haiti as a monstrous, incomprehensible 'other'. Yet although this narrative has been sustained by discourses of white imperialism, it has also been re-appropriated by the Haitian populace; it is now enshrined in nationalist rhetoric as a story of revolutionary Afro-Creole founding, celebrated on feast days and holy days in the Haitian calendar, memorialized by monuments, and retold to successive generations of Haitian schoolchildren.[5] And certainly, for most Haitians, but for Vodouisants in particular, Bois Caïman encapsulates the symbolic interrelationship between revolution and religious praxis. The Bois Caïman story thus unlocks the crypt to a revolutionary spiritualism that is simultaneously both exceptionally Haitian and a construct of the western imaginary. It is a narrative that repeats: transforming, expanding, and accruing potency as it does so.

Recent scholarship has sought to penetrate the mystique surrounding the narrative, attempting, through archival excavation and creative speculation, to anchor events, dates, personalities, and geographies in the history of the revolution. Although the elusive site of 'Bois Caïman' has been bitterly contested—owing partly to variations in the colonial nomenclature—and although scholars have disputed the date on which the purported ceremony took place, a select few have endeavoured to peel back the layers of mythology in order to build more satisfying conclusions, tracing the movements and scrutinizing the strategies deployed by the agents involved.[6] Some, of course, maintain that no such ceremony ever took place. At a

---

[4] This is how it is represented in the first known account of the Bois Caïman ceremony written by former Saint-Domingan colonist Antoine Dalmas in 1814. See Léon-François Hoffman, 'Un mythe national: La cérémonie du Bois-Caïman', *La République haïtienne: État des lieux et perspectives*, ed. Gérard Barthélemy and Christian Girault (Paris: Karthala, 1993), p. 435 and Antoine Dalmas, 'History of the Revolution of Saint-Domingue, 1814', in *Slave Revolt in the Caribbean*, Cf., pp. 89-93.

[5] McAlister also notes that '[i]n 1991 the Aristide government sponsored a bicentennial commemoration of Bois Caïman at the National Palace, and the Haitian parliament voted to make Boukman a national hero and the site a national landmark.' See Elizabeth McAlister, 'From Slave Revolt to a Blood Pact with Satan: The Evangelical Rewriting of Haitian History', *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses*, 41.2 (2012), 1–29 (p. 11).

[6] Geggus reaffirms the hypothesis of Dalmas who located Bois Caïman (or possibly a swamp referred to as 'Lagon à Cayman') within the parameters of the Choiseul Plantation in the outlying region of Cap Français. He challenges other accounts which have suggested that it took place in the Acul parish or on the Lenormand de Mézy plantation

conference held in Paris in 1991 to commemorate the bicentenary of the outbreak of the Haitian Revolution, Léon-François Hoffman posited that 'il ne s'agit pas d'un événement historique mais d'un mythe, dont l'origine est, paradoxalement, imputable à la malveillance d'un Français de Saint-Domingue.'[7] According to this subversive *counter*narrative, the story of Bois Caïman is a historical fabrication which has been repeatedly redeployed to serve the ideological agendas of capitalists and proselytes from the colonial era to the present.[8] The 'real' history is thus a significant point of contention among scholars, representing, on the one hand, a dangerous and provocative myth propagated by a (para)colonial West keen to undermine Haiti's role in the genesis of Atlantic modernity, and, on the other, a crucial link in an ancestral chain, binding Afro-Creole spiritualities with a proud revolutionary tradition.

As Laënnec Hurbon argued in response to Hoffman, however, 'on n'a pas le discours des esclaves eux-mêmes. On a uniquement un discours sur des pratiques supposées et ces pratiques ont été tenues secrètes pendant longtemps.'[9] These practices—embedded in the oral and performative traditions of Afro-Creole communities—eluded the written archive. The only known archival testimonies of the purported events of Bois Caïman thus inevitably reflect the biases of literate white colonists who had little understanding of the nuances of Afro-Creole religion. Even, then, if such accounts are to be credited as reliable—and the Haitian intellectual Jean Price-Mars credited the white Creole Moreau de Saint-Méry as offering some of the most valuable insights into Vodou in the colonial period—uncertainty pervades the validity of sources that actively attempted to obscure themselves from white authorities.[10] Moreover, although Moreau's *Déscription* offers a complex account of the symbolism, origins and practice of

---

in the Plaine du Nord. Geggus suggests that a meeting at Lenormand de Mézy did take place, but argues that this was most likely not the site of the famed 'blood pact' immortalized in the story of Bois Caïman. See Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, p. 86.

[7] Translation: Bois Caïman was not a historical event but a myth whose origin is, paradoxically, due to the malice of one Frenchman [namely, Dalmas] from Saint-Domingue. See Hoffman, p. 434.

[8] Throughout the course of Haiti's history, a number of writers and religious missionaries have hijacked the story of Bois Caïman for their own ends, beginning with Dalmas in the early nineteenth century and continuing into the present with the Spiritual Mapping movement (to which the controversial 'televangelist' Pat Robertson adheres). See McAlister, 'From Slave Revolt', pp. 1-29.

[9] Translation: we do not have access to the testimony of the slaves themselves. There is only an account about the supposed practices, and these practices were kept secret for a long time. Laënnec Hurbon, 'Débat', in *La République haïtienne*, Cf. p. 447.

[10] Jean Price-Mars, *So Spoke the Uncle (Ainsi Parla l'Oncle)*, trans. by Magdaline W. Shannon (Washington, D.C.: Three Continents Press, 1983), p. 112. McAlister notes that Dalmas's 'report was based on the interrogation of prisoners'. See 'From Slave Revolt', p. 8.

'*Vaudoux*') in Saint-Domingue,[11] it offers no clear account of how Moreau came upon these insights. Perhaps, we might speculate, his own encounters in the colony were able to supply him with the requisite knowledge. Price-Mars certainly draws this conclusion.[12] More likely, his account is a compendium of various accounts assembled from a host of colonial observers from across Saint-Domingue and perhaps even elsewhere in the slaveholding Americas (Moreau was, after all, a native of Martinique). It is also important to question the validity of accounts that attempt to penetrate and circumscribe the elusive countercultures that were often formed in secret, and operated outside of the parameters of colonial authority—especially when they are viewed within the 'encyclopaedic' context of Moreau's *Déscription*. The need of such histories to witness, document, and tell betrays a culture of possession and control; what remains undocumented and unnarrativized (at least in the formal histories) was intended to remain secret, because Haitian Vodou was in itself an insurgent response to colonial control. The deliberately occlusive nature of religious practice within Afro-Creole communities in the colonial Americas therefore remains the most significant impediment to the possibility of forming a true and finite history of the Vodou ceremony that sparked the revolution.

Like other Afro-Creole religions, such as Jamaican Obeah and Cuban Santería, Vodou is a 'syncretic' religion, which synthesizes aspects of the Catholic faith with tenets of West and Central African belief systems. In Saint-Domingue, and in other American colonies where African slavery was the mainstay, tribal beliefs had to mediate the gaps within colonial law.[13] As Dayan notes, 'the ability to keep *expressing* the self' meant 'acceding […] to a form of power that defies compromise.'[14] Vodou bears the visible trace of religious traditions from Guinea and the ancient kingdom of Dahomey, not least where vocabulary, divinities, and liturgical practice

---

[11] Moreau describes *Vaudoux* as one of the dances brought from Africa to the colony, but he also goes on to note that it carries a wider significance; for the Arada slaves, for example, he notes that *Vaudoux* 'signifie un être tout-puissant & surnaturel' (signifies an all-powerful and supernatural being) which is embodied by the figure of the serpent. He provides a complex description of the ceremonial practices of this 'Serpent Cult', and makes allusions to the making of fetishes and the possession of adherents during ceremonial dances. See Moreau, *Déscription*, vol. 1, pp. 45-51.

[12] He notes that the *Déscription* contains 'the stamp of authenticity' in its account of Vodou, further noting that '[a]lthough the author tells us that the sect was a secret one—and it still is in our time [1928]—his report to us leaves the impression that he was an eye witness. Moreover […] even if the ritual of worship has been perceptibly modified since the colonial era, those peculiarities pointed out in the famous description still remain intangible. They appear to us to constitute the fundamental elements of Voodoo.' See Price-Mars, pp. 112-113.

[13] Article II of the Saint-Domingan *Code Noir* dictated that all slaves were to be baptized as Catholic. See 'The Code Noir', p. 50.

[14] Dayan, p. 74.

are concerned,[15] but it also encompasses a multitude of diverse African belief systems whose forced encounter in the New World promulgated their absorption through new spiritual channels.[16] It is in this sense a monument to the victims of Atlantic slavery who, as Alfred Métraux suggests, 'contrived to resurrect, in exile, the religious framework in which they had been brought up.'[17] Furthermore, by incorporating the pantheon of Catholic saints, adherents of ancestral African belief systems were able to mask and preserve elements of that framework, and thereby elude colonial authorities. Of course, as most Vodouisants would argue, the spiritual framework of Catholicism offered more than a convenient guise. While Christian iconography offered enslaved people a secret repository for their ancestral beliefs, it also presented possibilities for adaptation.[18] As Helen Timothy notes, 'adherents undoubtedly [saw] these systems as related in profound ways at the spiritual level.'[19] Embedded within Vodou is thus the idea that spiritual systems of all kinds speak profound 'truths' that transcend cultural divides.

It is nevertheless important to remember that the syncretization of religious practice across free black and enslaved communities in the colonial Americas was stimulated by the force of a colonial apparatus that sought to secure complete ideological domination of its subjects. It sought to undermine and eviscerate every aspect of inherited African identity, supplanting tribal languages, names, and customs, dispersing tribal groups, and obliterating kinship networks. Consequently, Vodou not only had to circumvent the proscriptions of colonial law, but it also had to bridge the fissures wrought by the violence of colonization more broadly. Its language was thus necessarily codified and metamorphic, providing adherents who had a shared diasporic experience with a route of 'relation', and uniting them across time and space.

Even in post-independence Haiti, Vodou has had to recast itself in order to evade the legislative and ideological assaults of ruling elites. With the exception of perhaps François

---

[15] Alfred Métraux, *Voodoo in Haiti*, trans. by Hugo Charteris (London: Andre Deutsch, 1959), pp. 26-28.
[16] The Rada *lwa*, for example, can trace their roots to the Arada nation, whereas the Petro *lwa* are associated with Angolan/Congolese traditions. Ibid., p. 86.
[17] Ibid., p. 30.
[18] Apter notes that 'the reinterpretation of Catholic saints as African gods in Haitian Vodou […] was recast by the model of Yoruba deep knowledge as a mode of political revaluation and revision. Less a screen for maintaining African traditions than a form of collective appropriation, the saints were Africanized by New World blacks as double agents in their religious sanctuaries and societies. If the public identity of a saint was European Catholic, then its secret, deeper, and more powerful African manifestation could be invoked and manipulated by initiates.' See Andrew Apter, 'On African Origins: Creolization and Connaissaince in Haitian Vodou', *American Ethnologist*, 29 (2002), 233–260 (p. 238).
[19] Helen Pyne Timothy, '(Re)Membering African Religion and Spirituality in the African Diaspora', *Journal of Haitian Studies*, 8.1 (2002), 134-149 (p. 140).

Duvalier, who exploited Vodou to bolster his *noiriste* agenda,[20] the majority of Haiti's leaders have attempted to denigrate and peripheralize Vodou. This proscriptive hegemony began during the colonial reign of Toussaint Louverture and extends into the present.[21] As Haiti attempted to establish diplomatic relationships as an independent nation, it also strove to assert its monotheistic, Catholic heritage. As such, it is unsurprising that Fabre Geffrard's emigration campaign in the 1860s 'coincided with the arrival of a stream of Catholic priests'.[22] Essentially, then, the anti-Vodou policies of political elites can be seen as reflective of historical anxieties about the effects of negative and retrogressive stereotypes generated by 'outsiders'—anxieties that were fuelled in the latter half of the nineteenth century by a surge of ethnographic writings about Haiti and about Vodou in particular.[23] Ever since its founding, therefore, Haiti has attempted to mould itself upon other modern nation states across the Atlantic, often stressing its French colonial over its Afro-Creole inheritance.

Of course, efforts to circumvent Vodou praxis, particularly in the early twentieth century, also speak to more deeply embedded anxieties which transcend racial divides—anxieties concerning the force of Vodou among Haiti's lower classes. Indeed, Vodou is at the foundation of a Haitian peasant community culture that has shown itself to be resilient in the face of powerful historic adversaries. In this way, Vodou encapsulates the resurgent countercultural threat to the political establishment. Throughout Haiti's history, Vodou has signified to ruling elites the resurgent energies of a peasant class increasingly marginalized by widening social inequalities. Despite the early efforts of Dessalines, who attempted to eradicate social divides represented by 'race', inequalities persisted in his independent, monoracial Haiti. The inequalities that exist in present-day Haiti between rich and poor, and between the political elite and the Haitian masses, reflect the legacies of a colonial complex ingrained within the political infrastructure. This is largely because the plantation economy that was decimated by rebellious slaves in the earliest stages of the revolution was resurrected again by Haiti's new ruling elites

---

[20] Dubois, *Aftershocks*, p. 332.
[21] Toussaint L'Ouverture, Sténio Vincent, and even the incumbent president Michel Martelly are amongst those who have enforced proscriptions on the practise of Vodou. See Willson, 'A New "Kanavalesque"', Cf. p. 7.
[22] Dubois, *Aftershocks*, p. 156.
[23] One of the earliest and most sensational accounts of Haitian Vodou was offered by Spenser St. John in his *Hayti, or, the Black Republic*, published in 1884. See Louise Fenton, *Representations of Voodoo: The history and influence of Haitian Vodou within the cultural productions of Britain and America since 1850* (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Warwick, September 2009), p. 111.

who sought to emulate the model of Atlantic capitalism that had bred its colonial prosperity.[24] A succession of diktats (passed by a succession of rulers) forced former slaves to work on plantations; all the while, the political establishment grew more powerful, and the lauded values of Dessalines's 'black republic' were subsumed by the covetousness of powerful men who repudiated democratic republicanism in favour of titles such as 'emperor' and 'king' (including Dessalines himself).[25] Of course, as Fick notes, it was not until the 1820s that a definable Haitian 'peasantry' that was not solely tied to plantation labour began to take shape.[26] Any prospect of economic aggrandizement for Haiti's peasant classes was virtually annihilated, however, by the crippling debt enforced upon Haiti following Boyer's indemnity agreement with France. The imbalance between the ruling elite and the Haitian masses thus became increasingly palpable throughout the course of the century following independence, and Vodouistic languages of resistance were generated in response to this imbalance. As each new leader was deposed or assassinated, Haiti's elite became increasingly sensitized to the instability of political authority; to offer some context, ten coups were launched against various leaders between 1804 and 1915, six of which occurred in the short period from 1911 to 1915. In order to preserve the capitulation of the masses, Haitian elites have attempted to sever the links to common languages of resistance, especially to Vodou.

As Métraux notes, Vodou has always been regarded as 'a popular religion';[27] it is the rallying point of the *ti nèg*, or the 'small man', as McAlister might suggest.[28] The small men and women of Haiti stand in furtive opposition to the litany of *gwo nègs*, or big men, who have sought to maintain absolute control over the lower classes through a Machiavellian blend of power and persuasion. Often denied access to conventional forms of self-representation by Haiti's *gwo nègs*, Haiti's *ti nègs* have sought alternative routes to political participation through Vodou. Despite successive attempts to banish it from the popular imaginary, Vodou has thus

---

[24] Carolyn Fick, 'Competing Sovereignties and Nation Building in Revolutionary and Post-Independence Haiti: Legacies of an Incomplete Revolution', *After Revolution*, Cf.

[25] Dessalines and Soulouque both crowned themselves 'emperor', while Christophe remains the only known 'king' of Haiti. Furthermore, he only reigned over the northern portion of the nation (the so-called 'kingdom' of Haiti); the Southern portion (the 'republic') was governed by Alexandre Pétion.

[26] Fick, 'Competing Sovereingties'.

[27] Métraux, p. 58

[28] McAlister makes the distinction between the cult of the *gwo nèg* (or big man) and *ti nèg* (or small man) in Haitian politics and the wider community. She notes, 'I use the Kreyòl phrase *ti nèg* (small man), seeking to understand how the "small man" positions himself in the political patronage system that anthropology calls "big man-ism."' See Elizabeth McAlister, *Rara! Vodou, Power, and Performance in Haiti and Its Diaspora* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 2002), pp. 15-16.

proven resilient, and the masses have succeeded in reconstituting languages of spiritual protest on the periphery. These languages continue to find their expression in performative outlets such as *kanaval*, *Rara*, visual art, sculpture, and oral folklore. Perpetually transforming and resisting, Vodou has survived numerous acts of colonial and postcolonial violence, demonstrating the preeminent power of ancestral and Creole discourses over colonial hegemony and western capitalism. Therefore, even if, as naysayers like Hoffman attest, no such ceremony took place at 'Bois Caïman', its prevailing significance among Haiti's lower classes testifies to the revolutionary resilience of African cultures and spiritual identities given voice through Vodou. As Dayan puts it, 'what matters is how necessary the story remains to Haitians'.[29]

Understood in this light, the revolution's 'origins' transcend the parameters of the historical archive. Although historical explorations into the 'true' revolutionary significance of Bois Caïman are no doubt important, and help us to get closer to the voices that have been systematically purged from the revolutionary canon, they have little bearing over the enduring potency of the story itself, through which the majority of Haitians 'continue to construct their identity'.[30] Regardless of its specific historical accuracy, the narrative has turned its recipients into witnesses of a profound historical moment that has elsewhere been muted or co-opted, reinforcing the multivalence and resilience of the Haitian Revolution more generally. Attempting to deconstruct Bois Caïman is thus an attempt to retrofit a popular narrative of history that revolves around nation states, social and political upheaval, and significant events onto a revolutionary heritage that—through Vodou, has shown itself to be diverse, complex, and resurgent. It also compounds the historical dependency on archives, and demonstrates a scholarly reluctance to probe what might lie beneath: in the hidden archē. As Trouillot and James demonstrate, archives serve often only to bolster a particular historical narrative and do more to bury and encrypt voices than they do to preserve them.[31] In other words, it is a desperate bid to create order within the destabilizing (and ultimately threatening) chaos of ancestries, narratives, and exchanges that occurred at different times and in multiple locations across the Atlantic

[29] Dayan, p. 29.
[30] Ibid.
[31] In *Silencing the Past*, Trouillot in fact delineates a systematic process of historiographical encryptment composed of a number of 'layers' or 'levels' of silence. Archival silence is just one 'layer' of silence, and further silences enter the process of historical production after the archive has been mined. James likewise discredits the validity of archives and those who use them, noting that '[m]en will say (and accept) anything in order to foster national pride or soothe a troubled conscience […] professional white-washers are assisted by the writings of a few contemporary observers who described scenes of idyllic beauty.' See Trouillot, p. 26 and James, p. 11.

diaspora. This 'chaos' is embedded in Vodou and enshrined in the memorialization of Bois Caïman. If Bois Caïman is to be understood as a metonym for Haiti's spiritual founding, then, it is necessary to expand that metonym, and to see it as part of the larger diasporic chaos of Vodou—not as the 'root' of the revolution, but rather as a *route*, as Paul Gilroy might say. Indeed, Bois Caïman presents a historical conundrum for the modern West precisely because it is still being relived through its many discursive, performative, and geographical routes. By tracing these routes, it is possible to negotiate the complexity of revolutionary spiritualism in Haiti, which is anchored not in a discourse of origins or momentary event-ness but in a culture of *preservation*. The preservation of Afro-Creole folklores, spiritualities, and performance cultures within Haiti's lower classes reflects the continuing *routed* threat that Haiti's spiritual heritage poses to the hegemony of ruling elites and the (para-/neo-) colonial ambitions of outsiders.

It is this routed culture of preservation that is found in the traceable similarities of Afro-Creole cultures throughout the diaspora. That is not to say that these cultures are not in many ways distinct, but that they each record the secreted memory of colonial experience and survival across multiple (diasporic) routes. In this way, they form the most reliable and enduring testament to the spiritual revolutions borne of the colonial experience. The burgeoning black (inter)nationalism that emerged in the early twentieth century, flowering in the inter-war period, reflected the continuing revolutionary resonance of these routed cultures, and Haiti, in particular, became a site of revolutionary convergence during this period, linking artists and intellectuals with an interest in Vodou and associated cultural expressions thereof. At the same time, jazz music, which, as Munro notes, 'has deep roots in the traveling aesthetics of the Saint-Dominguan refugees, notably in Vodou ritual and rhythm',[32] began to captivate the western world. In short, the multiple, transnational routed expressions of African cultures across the diaspora captured the energies of the rebellious spiritualities bound up with the story of Bois Caïman.

This routed resurgence was, as Lara Putnam suggests, 'in part built in opposition to the racist imperialism of U.S. military intervention'.[33] This imperialism reached its apex during the U.S. Marine occupation of Haiti that extended from 1915 to 1934 which generated widespread international discontent, mobilizing black organizations such as the NAACP (National

[32] Martin Munro, *Different Drummers: Rhythm and Race in the Americas* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2010), p. 42.
[33] Lara Putnam, 'Transnational Circuits, the Interwar Caribbean, and the Black International', in *From Toussaint to Tupac*, Cf., pp. 107-129 (p. 109).

Association for the Advancement of Colored People) and the UNIA (Universal Negro Improvement Association), and fuelling the energies of the international women's movement, the American Communist Party, and various other radical organizations.[34] However, it is also true to say that the routed energies generated within these movements were at the foundation of a Haitian culture undergirded by resurgent resistant spiritualities. This routed resistance in turn stimulated white American anxieties about America's own cultural endurance. At a time when America was attempting to assert its own national coherence through acts of imperialistic aggression, this was particularly resonant.

By following Haiti's spiritual routes and seeking to understand their revolutionary resonance, we are thus able to unpack the anxieties that have anchored its *roots* in the American imaginary. America's occupation of Haiti was enacted not only through the requisition of land, labour, and bodies, but through ideology. This was exacerbated by the diffusion of literary memoirs written by American Marines who had been deployed to Haiti during the occupation, such as John Houston Craige and Faustin Wirkus, and the popularity of ethnographic travelogues such as William Seabrook's 1929 *The Magic Island*. Replete with stories of Vodou mysteries, such accounts reflect a synecdochic vision of the revolutionary spirituality embodied by Haiti's lower classes, and constrain this spirituality within the stable paradigms of barbarism and primitivism. These ideological efforts to contain Haiti's multivalent spiritual energy supported the imperialist agenda of interwar America, and highlighted its fears of the routed traditions that united Afro-Creole cultures across the diaspora. These fears were tied not to the bizarre, exotic, or indefinable phenomena associated with Haitian Vodou (although they ultimately found their phantomogenic expression therein), but to the force of the *ideas* that united communities across borders. Fighting these ideas with physical and ideological violence, the occupation encrypted the uncanny realization of America's own instability as an idea.

Diffracted through curiosity, scepticism, and terror, the explosive possibilities of Haiti's revolutionary spirituality are repeatedly recast in American narratives of the interwar period, where the routed spectre of Bois Caïman looms large. Nowhere is this spectre more apparent than in the genre of cinematic horror, where Vodou, and the stock figure of the zombie in particular, converge to form the ultimate American phantom. The trope of the zombie contained

[34] See Mary A. Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), pp. 264-270.

within it the threat of lower-class agency, but it also embedded anxieties about its resurgence and revolutionary 'return'. Such tropes, authored by white Americans, reduced the metamorphic, creolized language of Haitian spiritual resistance to static paradigms of savage monstrosity, severing the diasporic and political links for those whom such languages had empowered. By the beginning of the 1930s, when the occupation was nearing its end, these monsters had become embedded in the popular imaginary, absorbing the encrypted secret of America's own cultural and ideological instability.

Ingesting Haiti

Reflecting a modernist turn in literature and culture in which 'native' or 'primitive' cultural forms were increasingly celebrated as routes of escaping the constraints of industrial modernity, the popular fascination with Haitian Vodou was situated within a larger context of 'exotic' consumption. Such forms were redeployed and re-appropriated during the Harlem Renaissance. White Americans nevertheless drew on the Caribbean, and Haiti in particular, as a readily (and geographically) accessible example of cultural exoticism. In this way, ideas of white America were constructed in contradistinction to Haiti, reinforcing America's economic and ideological preeminence in the western Atlantic. This idea was a central pillar of the Marine occupation of 1915-1934.

For most early twentieth-century Americans, Haiti represented the apogee of cultural primitivism; as Clare Corbauld notes, it was often perceived 'as the Africa of the New World.'[35] What this meant, in effect, was that all of the cultural diversity, history, and tradition embedded in the African continent was compressed into an idea of a singular, primitive, and ahistorical Africa. In the same way, the complex and many-layered cultural heritage of Haiti, from settlement through colonialism, revolution, and independence, was contained within the 'Africanist imagery of "voodoo" sorcery and terror.'[36] This imagery was sustained throughout the nineteenth century by such clichés as 'the horrors of St. Domingo' which fuelled a mythos of Haitian barbarism that was brought to bear in subsequent stories of Bois Caïman and the

[35] Clare Corbould, *Becoming African Americans: Black Public Life in Harlem, 1919-1939* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2009), p. 165.
[36] Mimi Sheller, *Consuming the Caribbean: From Arawaks to Zombies* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 146.

infamous 'blood pact' that purportedly took place at the ceremony. The visceral and sensational imagery deployed in the service of this mythopoeic Vodou was quickly absorbed into American popular culture (particularly, and ironically, at a time when Haiti was gaining increasing acceptance and legitimacy in the Atlantic world). An etching by Adalbert John Volk entitled 'Free Negroes in Haiti' (Figure 21), produced one year after the United States had granted Haiti official diplomatic recognition, is a testament to this cultural ambivalence.

Figure 21: Adalbert John Volck, 'Free Negroes in Hayti', from *Sketches from the Civil War in North America, 1861, '62, '63*. Elliott Cross and James A. Cross Civil War Collection. Courtesy of Florida Atlantic University Digital Library, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton: FL.

This sensational image depicts a group of Haitian peasants assembled in the mountains engaging in the ritual sacrifice of a baby (seen at the centre of the group, on a rock, with a knife in its chest). The presence of percussion instruments and the suggestion of dance-like motion combine to affirm the spiritualistic significance of this ritual. Although there is no demonstrable association with Vodou, such sensational imagery became the foundation for popular

constructions of the Vodou faith from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. Of course, those that had no experiential knowledge of Vodou in Haiti inevitably capitalized on imagery drawn from the original Dalmas account of the Afro-Creole 'blood pact' supposedly forged on the eve of the revolution. In this sense, the popular mythos generated from these images bore no resemblance to the reality of religious practice in Haiti. The reality was ultimately inaccessible and intangible—even to those ethnographers that sought to penetrate its secreted mysteries. To American outsiders, Vodou encapsulated the idea of the Burkean sublime.[37] The provocative nature of these representations thus in part represented an attempt to conquer the obscure impenetrability of Haitian Vodou, its multiple ancestral routes, and the fear generated therein. By creating a stable paradigm of monstrous otherness—of Vodou as 'evil' and barbarous—America was able to circumscribe the limits of Haiti's routes.

During the early twentieth century, when the Marine occupation brought white Americans into close contact with Haitian peasants and Vodouisants, more authoritative printed accounts began to emerge criticizing the superficiality of these earlier depictions.[38] Ultimately, however, authenticity often gave way to sensation, paternalism, and outright racism, and less authoritative accounts (such as William Seabrook's *The Magic Island*) drew heavily on the sensation imagery that was bound up with the nineteenth-century mythos of Haitian Vodou, reverting to stereotypes of depravity and barbarism to fill the gaps of the unknown or the banal.[39] Nevertheless, these 'vivid, exoticized depiction[s] of Vodou' helped to make such accounts 'a commercial success'.[40] Clearly, the American mainstream had little interest in an 'authentic' Haiti or its traceable routes, but sustained a voracious appetite for a monstrous Haitian 'other'.

The desire to sustain this mythical otherness reflected a continued fear of Haiti's spiritual, routed past and present. This was invariably exacerbated by the motivations of contemporary cultural movements that sought to rehabilitate these routes, reaching across the diaspora, connecting people with ideas, histories, and creative energies. Spurred by the Harlem Renaissance, writers such as Langston Hughes reacted, as Renda notes, against 'the prevailing

---

[37] Cf.

[38] The American anthropologist Melville Herskovits, for example, was 'subtly critical of U.S. actions in Haiti' and 'offered a direct critique of the exoticism that so pervaded white discussions of Haiti.' See Renda, p. 273.

[39] Dubois notes that although Seabrook travelled to Haiti to document his observations of Vodou ceremonies, he had little luck in finding subjects willing to open up their secrets and expose themselves to the threat of imprisonment (Vodou had been outlawed, once again, under the occupation). He suggests that, in the absence of first-hand experience, he 'got much of his information from marine reports about their raids on temples.' See *Aftershocks*, pp. 296-297.

racism of U.S. discourses by placing the Haitian situation in its international contexts.'[41] Indeed, in his 1932 poem 'The Same', Hughes acknowledges that the 'black blood' that 'ran' into the global slaveholding economy also ran 'into the deep channels of Revolution', fuelling a united movement spanning

> Sierra Leone
> Kimberley
> Alabama
> Haiti
> Central America
> Harlem
> Morocco
> Tripoli […].[42]

This concatenation of diasporic locations that connects Africa with the Americas and locates Haiti at its centre inheres the idea that routed black cultures form a link to revolutionary cultural convergence and indeed *resurgence*. Within this context of routed preservation, Vodou presented one of the greatest ideological challenges to America's imperialist ambitions in Haiti, re-forming and reconstituting itself within the lower-frequency channels of Haiti's lower classes, and continually resisting containment.

By rendering the revolutionary complexities of Afro-Creole culture in Haiti—and Vodou in particular—dark, savage, and peculiar, American travel writers effectively severed the ancestral links connecting forms of routed resistance in the Creole slaveholding Americas. As bell hooks would argue, this was a process of 'decontextualization':[43] in other words, a conscious process of disavowal and disconnection. Frequent allusions to Haitian people as 'natives' were a potent evocation of this principle. This is substantiated by the rhetoric of Craige's *Black Bagdad*. In one episode, for example, Craige recalls an encounter with the local population at a military base in Hinche. These people (whom Craige refers to as 'natives'), are described as 'poor,

---

[40] Ibid., p. 297.
[41] Renda, p. 262.
[42] Langston Hughes, 'The Same', in *African Americans and the Haitian Revolution*, Cf., pp. 212-213 (p. 213).
[43] hooks argues that discourses of generalized monstrosity that are used to frame narratives of cultural others deny the historical specificity and trauma of Afro-Creole identity. She notes that 'the commodification of difference promotes paradigms of consumption wherein whatever difference the Other inhabits is eradicated, via exchange, by

primitive, [and] ignorant beyond the comprehension of a modern, civilized community.'[44] Set within this rhetorical frame, the resonance of this word and its negative, ahistorical, and exotic connotations are brought to bear. Although the 'natives' to whom he alludes are indeed native to Haiti, his linguistic imperialism secretes the historic legacy of the original 'native' Taino Arawak population that was devastated by the effects of European colonialism. Seabrook invariably drew on similar nativist imagery when devising his title for *The Magic Island*, which, in a similar way, occludes the complex history of the larger 'island' upon which the sovereign nation state of Haiti is situated (namely, the island of Hispaniola). This island, divided between Haiti and the Dominican Republic, contains within it the contested histories, multiple conquests, and divergent colonialisms of a shared geographical territory. By constructing Haiti as an 'island', Seabrook effectively negates the history of Haiti's popular sovereignty and *nation*hood. In this way, he reinforces the idea of its virgin 'nativity' and pre-coloniality. In turn, he thus eviscerates the history of the *real* 'native' population who accorded the 'island' the name of Ayiti.

By reducing Afro-Creole cultures and peoples to a set of gothic and exotic tropes associated with a pre-colonial Africanized 'nativity', writers like Craige and Seabrook in effect rendered Haiti *less* threatening. As Chris Vials notes, '[m]uch like imperialism, which ingests another country without allowing it to become a valid part of the national culture, exoticism injected Haiti into American culture while maintaining its foreignness and presumed inferiority.'[45] In this way, the popular consumption of archetypal Haitian 'others' was a 'safe' form of consumption that could be exercized without serious reprisals. Such an ethos validated the occupation project; routed cultural symbols were subsumed into American popular culture in the same manner that Haitian people were subsumed into the neo-colonial economy and forced to labour by the white American administration (under the auspices of a Haitian 'puppet' government).[46] These nativist constructions provided the inspirational foundation for numerous films and documentaries, where (especially after the advent of the 'talkie') the horror of Haitian Vodou and Afro-Creole culture could be rendered all the more evocative through the multimedia effects of sights and sounds.

---

a consumer cannibalism that not only displaces the Other but denies the significance of that Other's history through a process of decontextualization.' See bell hooks, qtd. in Sheller, p. 144.

[44] John Houston Craige, *Black Bagdad* (New York: Milton, Balch & Company, 1933), p. 41.

[45] Chris Vials, 'The Origin of the Zombie in American Radio and Film: B-Horror, U.S. Empire, and the Politics of Disavowal', in *Generation Zombie: Essays on the Living Dead in Modern Culture*, ed. by Stephanie Boluk and Wylie Lenz (Jefferson: McFarland & Company Inc., 2011), pp. 41-53 (p. 42).

Popular 'documentary' narratives written by the likes of Wirkus, Craige, and Seabrook thus sought to preserve America's Atlantic preeminence by consuming, and thereby inverting the threat of a routed Haitian spirituality. Primitivist discourses constrained the threat of revolutionary overspill and the guilt of consumption (perpetuated under the occupation). These discourses combined a 'silence about the political and economic impact of the occupation on the one hand, and a great deal of noise about the supposed nature of Haiti and its culture on the other',[47] reflecting a clever sleight of hand that enabled America to continue to exploit Haiti as a resource and as an idea into the twentieth century. As Dubois notes, these discourses 'remain startlingly powerful to this day.'[48] The co-optation of 'zombie' folklore and its evolution in cinematic horror from the 1930s to the present is perhaps the most pervasive expression of Haiti's 'ingestion' into the American imaginary. As Kyle Bishop notes, '[o]nce travelers from the United States became aware of the folk tales and local legends' that were associated with the zombie, it was not long before the trope was adopted by Hollywood, where it was recast for 'a completely new population.'[49] For this population, 'Hollywood zombie movies brought the ethnological sensationalism of travel in Haiti to the big screen,' and, as a result, the zombie became 'a creature more terrifying than even the cannibal had been.'[50] Of course, the folklore of the zombie, made popular by Seabrook's *The Magic Island*,[51] encapsulated America's innermost fears about the mysteries of 'Vodou-magic'. However, as a narrative borne out of diasporic exchange, routed in the experience of slavery and colonialism and sustained in the postslavery Americas (not least during the occupation), it also encrypted rebellious Haitian voices of the past and present. It was thus an expression of Haiti's metamorphic, routed spiritual agency. Its redeployment in western horror stories as a consumable, and readily marketable monster invariably contained this unruly agency, but occasionally it bore itself out, revealing the secrets of routed revolutionary identity encrypted therein.

---

[46] Dubois, *Aftershocks*, p. 239.
[47] Ibid., p. 296.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Kyle William Bishop, *American Zombie Gothic: The Rise and Fall (and Rise) of the Walking Dead in Popular Culture* (Jefferson and London: McFarland & Company Inc., 2010), p. 59.
[50] Sheller, p. 146.
[51] Bishop, *American Zombie Gothic*, p. 13.

Zombie Horror: Origins and Incarnations

The popular incarnation of the zombie inaugurated by Seabrook's *The Magic Island* is that of 'a soulless human corpse, still dead, but taken from the grave and endowed by sorcery with a mechanical semblance of life'.[52] Anxieties surrounding Vodou's transgenerational and communal power in Haiti and the wider Americas were consolidated in this single motif, which, borne out of familiar folklore narratives on the one hand, and the impenetrable mysteries and ideological limits of Vodou on the other, straddled an uncanny trajectory. This motif would become a mainstay of cinematic horror from the 1930s onwards. The origins of zombi/zombie lore are nevertheless uncertain. The word itself is thought to originate from West African lexicon: from the Kikongo *nzambi*, meaning 'god', or *zumbi*, meaning 'fetish'.[53] However, as Dendle notes, 'the original [West African] *zombi* was not a single concept: the term covered a wide range of spirits and demi-god like beings, both good and evil.'[54] Given its fluidity and multiplicity in African culture it is possible to envisage how the word might have taken on different creolistic meanings as it travelled across the diaspora. Garraway, for example, draws attention to a possible 'French derivation, *les ombres*'.[55] Although, as she notes, this 'has largely been eclipsed by a range of terms from African languages'.[56] The collision of cultures effected by colonization doubtless led to seepages and transferences in vocabularies and meaning. Much like Vodou more broadly, zombie lore must be perceived as a *routed* rather than a 'rooted' phenomenon; whatever the zombie's point of origin, its attendant vocabulary became the germ for the varying incarnations that it took in literary accounts up until the twentieth century.

The word 'zombi' can be traced in a number of texts associated with the French Caribbean from the colonial period onwards, where it is accorded varying degrees of mystical significance. Moreau's *Déscription*, for example, consigns it to a mere footnote, where it is described vaguely as a 'revenant'.[57] It nevertheless serves a prominent function in the earlier

---

[52] W. B. Seabrook, *The Magic Island* (London, Bombay, and Sydney: George G. Harrap & Company Ltd., 1929), p. 94.
[53] 'zombie, n.1', in *OED Online* <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/232982?redirectedFrom=zombie#eid> [accessed 24 March 2015].
[54] Peter Dendle, 'The Zombie as Barometer of Cultural Anxiety', in *Monsters and the Monstrous: Myths and Metaphors of Enduring Evil*, ed. by Niall Scott (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2007), pp. 45-60 (p. 46).
[55] Garraway, *The Libertine Colony*, p. 181.
[56] Ibid.
[57] He notes that the word 'zombi' is a '[m]ot créol qui signifie *esprit, revenant*'. Translation: creole word that means spirit, revenant. See Moreau, *Déscription*, vol. 1, p. 52.

work of the French *engagé*, libertine, and serial convict, Pierre-Corneille Blessebois, whose 1697 romance *Le Zombi du Grand-Pérou* is thought to 'contain the earliest appearance of the word *zombi* in any European language.'[58] In this proto-gothic burlesque set in colonial Guadeloupe, Blessebois narrates the story of the promiscuous comtesse de Cocagne who solicits the narrator of the tale to turn her into a 'zombi' so that she might haunt and torment the object of her desire, the Marquis du Grand-Pérou. As Garraway notes, '[t]he meaning of the term in Blessebois's text is never clearly explained but is suggested in the description of the comtesse's plan to attack the marquis in a spectral form.'[59] For Blessebois, she suggests, the zombie trope represents an intersection of Creole belief systems in the colonial Caribbean, where supernatural forces from African and European worlds converge to evoke a mystical uncertainty.[60] In the Afro-Creole languages of the French Caribbean, it appears to channel a deep yet mysterious connection with a diasporic (and creolized) spirit world.

The Afro-Caribbean routes of zombi folklore began to seep into the American imaginary almost two hundred years later, with the publication of Lafcadio Hearn's ethnographic travelogue *Two Years in the French West Indies*. In this text, Hearn introduces the zombi as a phantasmagorical being that haunts the collective imagination of the Martinican Creole community,[61] and probes its signification by calling upon the local knowledge of Adou, the daughter of his mountain-cottage hostess. As he demonstrates, however, an explanation is not easily formulated, and his efforts are confounded when he attempts to confront her directly on the subject:

> "Adou," I ask, "what is a zombi?"
>
> The smile that showed Adou's beautiful white teeth has instantly disappeared; and she answers, very seriously, that she has never seen a zombi and does not want to see one.
>
> "*Moin pa te janmain ouè zombi, pa'lè ouè ço main*."
>
> "But, Adou, child, I never asked you whether you ever saw It; — I asked you only to tell me what it is like?" …
>
> Adou hesitates a little, and answers:

[58] Garraway, *The Libertine Colony*, p. 178.
[59] Ibid., p. 179.
[60] Ibid., pp. 179-182.
[61] He introduces the concept by asserting that '[a]mong the people of colour there are many who believe that even at noon — when the boulevards of the city are most deserted — the zombis will show themselves to solitary loiterers.' See Hearn, *Two Years*, p. 143.

> "*Zombi? Mai ça fai désòde lanuitt, zombi!*"
>
> "Ah, it is something which "makes disorder at night." Still, that is not a satisfactory explanation.[62]

While Adou confirms that 'the *moun-mò* [dead folk] are not zombis',[63] she is unable to articulate quite what a zombi *is*. It is presented, ambiguously, as the intangible locus of nocturnal fear—as something akin to a 'bogeyman' which may take a variety of imaginative forms depending on one's individual beliefs. Adou's mother Théréza confirms this notion, but proceeds to demonstrate through a series of anecdotes that 'the word "zombi" also has special strange meanings.'[64] Imagined variously in these anecdotes as a master of 'evil fires', a 'horse with only three legs', and a child that grows at monstrous speed,[65] a singular incarnation continuously eludes the reader, and their sense of mystification is only heightened by Hearn's sublime rendering of the mountainous environs that form the backdrop to Théréza's home. The local landscape lends itself to these impenetrable mysteries; it is a haunting place where 'strange shadows gather with the changing of light—dead indigoes, fuliginous purples, rubifications as of scoriae, [and] ancient volcanic colors momentarily resurrected by the illusive haze of evening.'[66] In these descriptions, colours are symbolically fused with the mysterious and the earthly unknown, and any sense of familiarity that the reader might derive is unsettled. While Hearn provides unparalleled access to the Afro-Creole folklore narratives in which the 'zombi' plays a leading role, he is unable to fully clarify its supernatural function and compounds this uncertainty with evocative descriptions of the sublime and uncanny landscape.

This elusive supernaturalism pervades his journey through the Afro-Creole world of Martinique and Guadaloupe. Although the zombi is shown to have no specific meaning, it is anchored in the more general supernatural context of the Caribbean, and the French Antilles in particular, suggesting that the word, at least, had some etymological connection to French Creole. Hearn solidifies the idea of this Antillean supernaturalism when he discusses the symbolic resonance of the phrase 'Le pays de revenants', or, as Hearn would have it 'The Country of Comers-back'. This, he purports, is a term that was first used by Père (Jean-Baptiste)

---

[62] Ibid., p. 144.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid., p. 145.
[65] Ibid., pp. 145-146.
[66] Ibid., p. 152.

Labat, to describe the sublime magnetism of Martinique, 'where Nature's unspeakable spell bewitches wandering souls like the caress of a Circe'.[67] In this way, he anchors the mystical allure of the island in the era of colonial contact. He also demonstrates the potential slippage of this phrase, which, as he notes, might alternatively be translated as 'the Land of Ghosts'.[68] This is compounded by the fact that Labat himself is imagined as a 'revenant' in Martinican folklore, where he morphs into a 'spectre and a bogeyman, brandished to scare bad children and bring them home after dark.'[69] Although Hearn makes no connection between the concept of physical or metaphysical return—both of which are embedded in the word *revenant*—and the zombie lore of Haiti, these ideas are juxtaposed in such a way as to reinforce the uncanny thrall of the French Caribbean, whose inhabitants become psychically 'enslaved' by the mystical and unknowable force of Caribbean landscapes and Afro-Creole spirit worlds.

This phrase makes a reappearance in Craige's *Black Bagdad*. Within this context, however, it is Haiti, and not Martinique that is described as one of the '*Pays des Revenants*', and its allure is compounded in his belief that it is both '[a]n amazing place' and 'fascinating', replete with exotic mysteries.[70] However, this is set in contrast to descriptions of 'woolly-headed cannibals' which invariably undermine his contention that Haiti is a 'country to which you are bound to come back'.[71] Impressing upon the reader the dark irony of Labat's infamous description, Craige's vision of Haitian 'cannibalism' implies that those who return—the *revenants*—may not do so voluntarily. In other words, this 'magnetic archipelago' not only stimulates the curiosity and arouses the senses, but also *consumes* the body and mind as it draws in its unsuspecting prey. The symbolic association between the Caribbean and ideas of consumption was of course by no means new, and in fact recalls the anxieties of colonial-era natural historians—especially environmental monogenists like the comte de Buffon—who posited that the Americas effected a consuming 'drain' on robust European masculinity.

Certainly, in *Two Years in the French West Indies*, the supernatural spirit world and the mystical landscape of the Caribbean are seen as symbiotic and their combined effects have an uncanny 'thrall' over Euro-Americans like Hearn. He endeavours to conceptualize the

---

[67] Ibid., p. 115.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Marina Warner, *Fantastic Metamorphoses, Other Worlds: Ways of Telling the Self* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 155.
[70] Craige, p. 2.
[71] Ibid.

geographical and ideological context within which zombis are situated, and encrypts within this the uncanny idea of metaphysical 'return', bringing the reader closer than either Moreau or Blessebois to an understanding of zombie lore and its diasporic and spiritual intersections. He nevertheless takes pains to emphasize the divergent and particularistic nature of Afro-Creole folklores throughout the Caribbean, and within the islands themselves. Indeed, as he continues to probe the possibilities of Labat's 'poetical name', he concedes that Martinique is in part a 'Land of Ghosts', but affirms that

> Almost every plantation has its familiar spirits — its phantoms: some may be unknown beyond the particular district in which fancy first gave them being […]. Almost every promontory and peak, every village and valley along the coast, has its special folk-lore, its particular tradition.[72]

It is Hearn's contention, then, that despite the ancestral connections that Afro-Creole communities may share, their attendant customs and folklores remain particularistic. His depiction of a metamorphic and elusive 'spirit-zombi' likewise suggests that a singular conceptual definition is not really possible when signification and lore shifts from one community to the next, engaging the reader to think beyond the parameters of originary 'roots'. In this regard, zombi/zombie lore is by its very nature revolutionary, shifting and transforming across Afro-Creole routes and reconstituting itself in the oral folklores of divergent Caribbean communities. Like Bois Caïman, the idea of the zombie contains within it routed revolutionary possibilities, the full force of which were ultimately borne out in Haiti.

Slavery, Occupation, and Phantoms of Zombie Revolt: William Seabrook's *The Magic Island*

While published accounts of Caribbean folklore prior to the twentieth century lacked a stable and coherent zombie trope, the existence and circulation of such early 'zombi' narratives attest to the likelihood that, as Gary Rhodes suggests, 'readers in the U.S. […] would have encountered either the term or […] the concept of zombiism' before the advent of 1930s zombie-horror.[73]

---

[72] Hearn, *Two Years*, p. 115.
[73] Gary D. Rhodes, *White Zombie: Anatomy of a Horror Film* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2001), p. 76.

Furthermore, while it had not until this point achieved its full gothic apotheosis as a monster with a specifically Haitian heritage, it was invariably bound up with 'unruly' Afro-Creole spiritualities that would need to be consolidated by western outsiders in order to be purged and 'consumed'. Certainly, the transformation of an elusive spirit-figure of the Afro-Creole Caribbean into a tangible and identifiable myth-object in the American imaginary rendered its purgation increasingly manageable. Indeed, as Rhodes notes, Seabrook's *The Magic Island* ultimately united both the 'concept [of the zombie] and the term for mass audiences'.[74] In this way, the object of fear could be delineated, and, in this case, anchored in Haitian folklore. For Seabrook, the 'zombie' (which became standardized in the -ie form in American popular culture following the publication of *The Magic Island*) was an 'exclusively local' phenomenon,[75] rooted firmly in the exoticized locale of Haiti and linked to a pernicious variety of Vodou-magic.[76] Inverting the metamorphic capabilities of Afro-Creole folklores sounded out by Hearn, Seabrook constructed a definitive paradigm of a listless, 'undead' zombie-slave.

Published in 1929 when tensions occasioned by the Marine occupation were running high, *The Magic Island* takes the form of a travel narrative not unlike Hearn's *Two Years*. Unlike Hearn, however, who, as Raphaël Confiant notes, 'had an instinctive relationship with the various lands he visited', recognizing 'the subtle links that unite the tropical environment of Martinique and its Creole people',[77] Seabrook saw himself as an unequivocal outsider, and the Haitian people as 'an inferior race.'[78] Furthermore, while the linguistic imagery of Hearn's writing sometimes veers towards the exotic, Seabrook's sensational style is supplemented with illustrations by Alexander King, whose 'grotesque and racist caricatures of Haitians'[79] reflected the contemporary 'vogue of primitivism and its shallow notions of blackness.'[80] In part, then, a product of high modernism, and generated within the context of the Marine occupation, it thus stands to reason that his characterization of the zombie would have 'played a central role in

---

[74] Ibid.
[75] Seabrook, p. 94.
[76] Ibid. While Seabrook makes no direct reference to the personages involved in the practice of zombification—i.e. to the *bocors* who, according to Hurston, belong to the darker and forbidden Vodou sects—he notes that only '[p]eople who have the power' are able to conjure zombies.
[77] Raphaël Confiant, 'Foreword', in Hearn, *Two Years*, p. x.
[78] Seabrook, p. 125.
[79] Rhodes, p. 71.
[80] Lindsay Twa, 'The Black Magic Island: The Artistic Journeys of Alexander King and Aaron Douglas from and to Haiti', in *Haiti and the Americas*, ed. by Carla Calarge, Raphael Dalleo, and Luis Duno-Gottberg (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2013), pp. 133-160 (p. 142).

creating imperial discourses of the Caribbean',[81] serving the mutual needs of curiosity and popular consumption.

Indeed, as Lindsay Twa notes, travelogues such as Seabrook's 'were key in propagating images of Haiti to a wide audience', and *The Magic Island* 'led the way, becoming the era's most popular and best-selling example.'[82] Seabrook travelled to Haiti in 1927, and his narrative is a purported compendium of his 'observations' of the peasant classes of rural Haiti and their community customs. The reader is led on a narrative quest that Seabrook (in the guise of participant observer/narrator) leads, and throughout the journey they gain insights into the peculiarities of 'Congo' dances, Vodou rites, local festivals, and the Creole (*Kreyòl*) language. Such phenomena are nevertheless refracted through an Africanist, or rather *Haitianist* lens. That is to say that the diasporic and creolistic routes that link these customs are subverted and their uncanny exoticism brought to the fore.[83] The folklore of the zombie is thus inaugurated as part of a wider horror narrative of Haiti and its 'native' people.

Like Hearn, Seabrook attempts to satisfy his curiosity about the creature by drawing on local knowledge. He recounts a conversation that he has during a sojourn in a peasant *lakou* on the island of la Gonâve with a local landowning farmer named Constant Polynice, whom he calls upon to tell him 'something of this *zombie* superstition'.[84] Polynice challenges Seabrook's 'Enlightened' scepticism and subtly draws the reader's attention to the authorial distance Seabrook creates between himself and his 'subjects' in his portentous revelation that 'these things—and other evil practices connected with the dead—exist.'[85] Polynice (voiced through Seabrook) proceeds to narrate a story about a peculiar incidence of zombification in the rural outskirts of the Haitian capital of Port-au-Prince. The story centres around Hasco, which, the reader learns, is the acronym for the Haitian-American Sugar Company—described by Seabrook as 'an immense factory plant, dominated by a huge chimney, with clanging machinery, steam

---

[81] Vials, p. 42
[82] Twa, p. 142.
[83] This Africanist/Haitianist perspective is evident in his comment on the 'Congo dances', which he notes are 'African in origin, but without a parallel in the United States'. Compounding the sense of disconnect, he further notes that they are 'no way connected with Voodoo'. See Seabrook, p. 211.
[84] Ibid, p. 94. The *lakou* system, Dubois notes, often comprised 'a group of houses—sometimes including a dozen or more structures, and usually owned by an extended family—gathered around a common yard.' He further notes that, in a symbolic sense, 'the *lakou* also came to represent specific social conventions meant to guarantee each person access to dignity and individual freedom.' See Dubois, *Aftershocks*, p. 107.
[85] Seabrook, p. 94.

whistles, [and] freight cars.'[86] It is the apogee of industrial modernity and, as Seabrook is keen to point out, is 'the last name anybody would think of connecting with either sorcery or superstition'.[87] It is nevertheless here, the reader learns, that two local gang leaders by the names of Ti Joseph and Croyance were rumoured to have operated a covert zombie labour-gang. Polynice recalls how these gang leaders used Vodou-magic to conjure corpses from the grave to satisfy the demands of the local labour market. These corpses had no memory of their past lives, having neither 'souls [n]or minds',[88] and thus represented ideal 'vessels' of exploitation. It is this premise that apparently sustained Ti Joseph and Croyance's exploitative labour scheme, under the yoke of which their zombie-slaves laboured, leased out to Hasco. Yet, as Polynice proceeds to demonstrate, while Ti Joseph and Croyance were able to profit from the labour of their zombie workforce, they eventually became complacent about the threat of external influences that might cause their zombies to 'awaken'. Polynice's allusion to the inherent fallibility of the zombification process thus portends the demise of Ti Joseph and Croyance's zombie labour-gang, which is ultimately brought to effect when Croyance, taking pity on the workers, buys them some salted pralines from a street vendor. The zombies, tasting the salt, are subsequently roused to consciousness, and, horrified at their state of wretchedness, disperse, releasing themselves from the thrall of Ti Joseph, Croyance, and Hasco.[89]

The story does not itself confirm the 'origins' of a specific zombie narrative, and does not in fact discredit the notion that the zombi/zombie was simply a manifestation of individual anxieties in Afro-Creole culture. For landowning farmers such as Polynice, the folklore undoubtedly had a particular resonance, speaking to anxieties about the envelopment of land by American corporations and the subsequent destruction of the financial autonomy afforded by landownership and the community power generated within the *lakou*. The 'zombies' of Polynice's narrative invariably channel these anxieties. However, despite its resonance with the history of the occupation, this folk narrative also spoke to deeper anxieties routed in the history of colonialism and the instability of Haitian sovereignty—anxieties that were repeatedly reignited at different times throughout Haitian history. This contention is validated by Zora Neale Hurston's 1938 ethnographic study *Tell My Horse*, which traces accounts of this kind of

[86] Ibid., p. 95.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Ibid., p. 98.
[89] Ibid.

Vodou-zombification back to 1898 in Haiti',[90] harking back to anxieties that predated occupation, and especially to 'a residual communal memory of slavery'.[91] Despite its specific critique of Hasco and its exploitation of peasant labour gangs from rural Haiti, Polynice's story likewise demonstrates compelling connections to ancient Vodou custom and community folklore. In this way, the zombie can be seen as a product of community resistance against the mass-exploitation of the lower classes, redeployed at different cultural moments. Indeed, the clear link established between Vodouism and zombification in Polynice's narrative encrypts the revolutionary endurance of community, custom, and folk narrativity, especially in relation to the land and the peasantry that define it.

This narrative, in which corpses—and, specifically, Haitian corpses—are resurrected and forced to labour upon the same earth that is supposed to represent their eternal haven, resonates symbolically with the history of hegemonic labour laws enforced against the Haitian peasantry by ruling elites and especially with the contemporary practices of American business conglomerates who, during the occupation, attempted to absorb local community farmlands for the development of large-scale industrial agri-business. This corporate absorption, along with the exploitative wage-labour practices of such corporations, dealt a heavy blow to Haiti's rural communities who, in the century following independence, developed a strong counter-plantation economy that reached its apotheosis in the *lakou* system, founded on values of dignity, autonomy, self-sufficiency, and mutual respect.[92] While some repudiated this corporate colonization by emigrating from Haiti, Dubois notes that 'the migrants who left the countryside often ended up in precisely the kind of place they and their ancestors had been trying to escape: the plantation.'[93] In this way, Polynice's zombie narrative is a metaphor for the corporate exploitation of the rural poor by big business (and hegemonic government) and the subjugation of the rural economy and lower class custom to the rapidly globalizing and capitalist ambitions of the United States, which, like many of Haiti's leaders from the reign of Toussaint Louverture

[90] Zora Neale Hurston, *Tell My Horse: Voodoo and Life in Haiti and Jamaica* (New York: Harper & Row, 1938; repr. 1990), pp. 192-194.
[91] Dendle, p. 46.
[92] Landownership in Haiti rose significantly throughout the course of the nineteenth century, becoming increasingly oriented around the principles of the *lakou* system, which, as Dubois notes, was intended 'to guarantee every rural resident a measure of autonomy.' See Dubois, *Aftershocks*, p. 107.
[93] Ibid., p. 274.

onwards, was bent on transforming Haiti's rural economy into an export economy.[94] The acronym 'Hasco' (described by Seabrook himself as 'American-commercial-synthetic') encrypts the absorption (and effective dissolution) of Haitian land, language (including the right to an autonomous 'voice' that the *lakou* affords its members), and sovereignty, replicating the violence of colonization and colonial slavery. That the story is generated within the context of Polynice's *lakou* lends force to this idea. In this respect, the figure of the zombie encrypts the revolutionary power of a folk narrativity at the core of Haitian peasant protest.

Of course, while Hasco is seen to preside over this colonial hegemony, Seabrook conspicuously fails to give voice to this fact, and, as Vials notes, displaces 'the cruelty of colonial labor […] onto the Haitians themselves,'[95] and onto Ti Joseph and Croyance in particular, who embody the hubris and self-interest of Haiti's *gwo nègs*. The spirit of popular discontent is absorbed by the looming threat of zombification, which eclipses the abject zombi/zombie figure as the object of mythological fear.[96] However, by privileging the power of the zombie-maker, or *bocor*, over that of the zombie-slave, Seabrook inadvertently unleashes a phantom of routed resistance. Probing the cryptic depths of this story reveals a discourse of political consciousness and popular revolt that is inextricably linked with a Vodouistic *ti nèg* counter-culture that is both current and *re*current. This discourse was affirmed in practice during the occupation era by the defiant protest culture of rural Haitians, some of whom fought as Caco rebels against the occupying forces,[97] and many of whom resisted in more subtly subversive ways, taking on 'the arriving corporations in a war of attrition […] refusing dangerous, low-paying work, insistently demanding better conditions, and resisting expropriation of land.'[98] Indeed, although the occupation eroded the infrastructure of Haitian sovereignty, it was also, as Dendle notes, marked by increasingly vocal and sometimes violent resistance'.[99] By preserving this spirit of rebellion through ancestral folklores and spiritualities, rural Haitian communities

---

[94] Ibid., pp. 280-281. Dubois talks about the establishment of the 'Service Technique de l'Agriculture et de l'Enseignement Professionnel' and the drive towards agricultural and technical education, with an emphasis on schools for farming, during the occupation.
[95] Vials, p. 45.
[96] Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert, 'Colonial and postcolonial Gothic: the Caribbean', in *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, ed. by Jerrold E. Hogle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 229-258 (p. 239).
[97] The Cacos were a group of rural rebels that were galvanized during the occupation by the ex-army officer Charlemagne Péralte. As Dubois notes, 'as the U.S. occupation became more firmly entrenched, the tradition of the Cacos—rebels in the countryside rising up against the central government in Port-au-Prince—became adapted, quite smoothly, into guerilla resistance against the American forces.' See *Aftershocks*, p. 225.
[98] Ibid., p. 270.
[99] Dendle, p. 46.

were also able to maintain a spiritual connection with the land and the rural way of life, affirming their cultural resilience. Vodou, which had long been associated with a tradition of resistance in Haiti, became a site of convergence at this time, reinforcing the community orientation of the *lakou* system, and fuelling the Caco rebellion (and American fears thereof).[100] While government sanctions against the practice of Vodou were sternly enforced by the occupation forces,[101] and inhibited conspicuous displays of worship, rural Haitians continued to operate within the parameters of Vodou's communal language, and to propagate narratives of its historically-routed power. As Renda notes:

> The Haitians who greeted marines in 1915 and after were thus engaged in remembering and retelling their history as a people who had freed themselves from slavery and who had forged a nation and a way of life on their own ancestral terms.[102]

Polynice's story of Vodou-zombification is indeed testament to this fact. The centrality of Vodou within the popular revolutionary imaginary was also reiterated during this period by Jean Price-Mars, whose visionary ethnographic study *Ainsi Parla L'Oncle* (So Spoke the Uncle) was published only one year before Seabrook's *The Magic Island*. Price-Mars, whose revolutionary commitment was inscribed in his genealogy as a descendant of the revolutionary and National Convention delegate Jean-Baptiste Mars Belley, upheld the value of 'the religious sentiment of the rural masses'. Located within this sentiment, he claimed, was 'a candor and spontaneity which is beyond the crushing odious legends created by the adventurous imagination of short-sighted journalists and by the unintelligent defense of timid bourgeoisie.'[103] As Dubois notes, 'the lesson' of Price-Mars's study was 'clear: if it wanted to secure independence, Haiti needed to look to its own culture as the necessary foundation of true sovereignty',[104] and, thus, to Vodou.

For Seabrook and his contemporaries, the resilience of Afro-Creole culture and the recurrent, polymorphic, and routed expressions of revolutionary behaviour embodied by the

---

[100] Dubois notes that '[m]any of the Cacos wore red scarves as an homage to Ogou, the god of war in Haitian Vodou.' The American Marine Homer Overley also recounted that he had orders to 'shoot all Cacos and Voodoes', suggesting that there was at least a conflation between Caco resistance and Vodou in the American imaginary. See Dubois, *Aftershocks*, p. 255 and Renda, *Taking Haiti*, p. 41.
[101] Dubois, *Aftershocks*, p. 234.
[102] Renda, *Taking Haiti*, p. 46.
[103] Price-Mars, pp. 106-107.

popular masses haunted the imperial imaginary, supporting the notion that, even as it amassed land, wealth, and political power, the occupation was losing ideological ground. Replicating the same culture of filtration and secretion characteristic of information-transmission in the earliest days of the slave insurgency, American Marine reports constructed rebel Cacos as 'bandits' and 'brigands', emphasizing anomalous acts of violence over collective popular agency, and secreting the fact of resurgent rebellion.[105] Like the hegemonic leaders and colonial aggressors that had gone before, the occupation became a target for popular, lower-frequency critique in Haiti, threatened with destruction by the very forces it had attempted to subdue, and fear of this unwieldy routed rebellion was inscribed in the American imaginary. This is underwritten in Polynice's zombie narrative. Although Seabrook is keen to emphasize the fact that the zombies of Haitian folklore are nothing more than 'brutes [and] automatons', divested of power and autonomy, he is unable to completely disavow the possibility that they might reclaim their agency. Indeed, as Polynice demonstrates, zombies may be 'awakened' from the curse of their half-life if they are fed either salt or meat (generally essential ingredients for sustaining the energy of a workforce). After consuming the salted pralines given to them by Croyance, the thrall of the Vodou-magic that enslaves the zombie labour-gang is rendered powerless; the zombies are subsequently rejuvenated, and flee from their zombie masters in pursuit of their graves. Remarkably, the resonance of this 'awakening' has been repeatedly ignored in zombie scholarship, reflecting the power of a western mythology that has reconfigured the zombie as powerless and subservient, subject to the whims of evil Vodou sorcerers.[106] The undercurrent of rural revolt is nevertheless undeniable; the zombies rebel against their indenture, and attempt to reclaim their stake in the land (through the earth in which their bodies are laid to rest), echoing patterns of rural Haitian protest during the occupation and the symbolic resonance of the *lakou*. Despite the efforts of Seabrook and his contemporaries to reduce the Haitian zombie to a metaphorical slave borne of Haitian 'evil', the phantom of slave rebellion and the resilience of

---

[104] Dubois, *Aftershocks*, p. 292.
[105] Laënnec Hurbon, 'American Fantasy and Haitian Vodou', in *Sacred Arts of Haitian Vodou*, ed. by Donald J. Consentino (Los Angeles: UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History, 1995), pp. 181-197 (p. 185).
[106] While Dendle posits the idea that the zombification allows Madeline to transgress social boundaries in the Halperin brothers' 1932 film *White Zombie*, and Bishop notes that the zombies in George A. Romero's 1968 film *Night of the Living Dead* act of their own 'revolutionary' volition, neither of these studies probe the possibility that popular revolution is encrypted in Seabrook's narrative. See Dendle, p. 49 and Bishop, *American Zombie Gothic*, p. 114.

the rural peasantry who rejected a neo-colonial plantation economy seep through imperial anxieties.

Ultimately, as such secreted fables of resistance demonstrate, the American occupation relied on the false consciousness of the rural poor. Without a subservient peasantry, America had no workforce to fulfil its imperial capitalist mission. It is therefore unsurprising that the threat of zombie-revolt gives way to a discourse of zombie-slavery in Seabrook's text. The fallibility of imperial arrogance nevertheless begins to break through in the closing chapter, where he contends that

> The presence of the Americans has put an end to many things. It has put an end to revolution, mob violence, and many other deplorable conditions which the entire reasonable world agrees should be put an end to. It has also put an end, or if not an end, a period, to more than a century of national freedom of a peculiar sort, which has existed nowhere else on earth save in Liberia—the freedom of a negro people to govern or misgovern themselves, to stand forth as human beings like any others without cringing or asking leave of any white man.[107]

While he extols the 'civilizing' virtues of the occupation, he also acknowledges the enduring resonance of Haiti's independence, and intimates the possibility of a revolutionary resurgence by the popular masses. Seabrook undoubtedly lacked the intimate knowledge of writers such as Wirkus and Craige—indeed, he relied heavily upon their Marine accounts in order to construct his own. However, he knew the threat of proletarian revolution in Haiti to be real. This fact made itself repeatedly felt, not least during the period in which Seabrook was writing and, as a result of which, America's occupation ambitions were never fully realized. In short, the 'zombie revolution' succeeded. Of course, the damage wrought by corporate industrialization in Haiti was far reaching, and, as Matthew Smith notes, 'U.S. control, once it began, was seen as permanent, marking the end of independence.'[108] Moreover, as Hurston demonstrates in *Tell My Horse*, the 'dread' of zombification persisted in the Haitian imaginary even after the end of the occupation.[109] However, as Dubois has contested, this 'dread' is counteracted through its active repudiation within rural communities. In the present day, he notes, independent farmers often use

---

[107] Seabrook, p. 269.
[108] Matthew J. Smith, 'The Haytian Situation: Caribbean Reflections on Haiti's Long Nineteenth Century', *After Revolution*, Cf.

the term '*zonbi*' as an insult against wage labourers, suggesting that 'to sell your labour is to sell your freedom.'[110] Reinforcing a discourse of degradation, the zombie/zombi/zonbi trope encrypts an ideological rejection of the corporate subservience that it serves. In this way, the narrative of abjection that forms its popular underpinning is turned on its head.

The zombi/zombie of popular American mythology thus encrypts a Vodouistic *ti-nèg* counterculture which is at the core of Haiti's revolutionary identity. On the superficial surface, Vodou is represented as an 'evil' and tyrannical force that generates *bocors*, zombies, and exploitation. Seabrook reduces Polynice's revolutionary narrative, along with the discourses of Vodou, and the zombie, to objects of horror. The subjugation of the Haitian peasantry is thus rendered more acutely, which undermines the revolutionary counter-discourse within. However, there emerges a conscious disconnect between the popular zombie mythology, and the revolutionary routedness of the rural zombie narrative and its function as popular folk narrative and discursive critique. By probing the revolutionary depths of Seabrook's zombie narrative, its superficial understanding of the process and praxis of Vodou, and its links with zombification, is brought to light. Indeed, it is notable that specific references to the mysterious process of Vodou-zombification that brings the zombies into (semi-)being are in fact conspicuously lacking in Seabrook's account. Although Haitian folktales are exploited to serve popular demands, the secrets embedded therein are guarded from penetration. Vodou thus represents a communal disguise that Seabrook, like Hearn before him, cannot quite decipher—a syncretic hiding place that provides a discursive channel for rebellious countercultures that rejected the occupation and the attendant industrialization, exploitation, and expropriation of lands that it promulgated. Within this discursive frame, the zombie offers a route to the resistance culture embedded in Haitian folklife and its evolving, metamorphic, and perpetual transformations.

White Zombies; Black Phantoms

Speaking of monstrosity, and, in particular, of the monstrosity that American culture has attributed to zombies, Kevin Boon notes:

---

[109] Hurston visited Haiti after the occupation had ended.
[110] Dubois, *Aftershocks*, p. 298.

> That which is defined as "monstrous" (and the definition of "monstrous" is an exclusively human enterprise) was not *supposed* to happen; that is, it is "unnatural" and as such a malformation of some universal design. Furthermore, that which is defined as "monstrous" threatens whomever or whatever is presumably responsible for that universal design.[111]

Monstrosity is thus understood as a threat to the 'natural' order; it is, in essence, nature's adversary. However, it also perversely undergirds that order, creating a dichotomy that enables a delineation between the 'natural' on the one hand and the 'monstrous' on the other; in other words, by locating the threat, and naming it as other, the threat can be contained, or, as Boon puts it, 'in the dialectic of self and other, both are defined, and in the dialectic of self and monstrous, the human self is glorified.'[112] Seabrook's phantomogenic narrative of the industrial zombie-slave encrypts a transgenerational fear of politicized, creolized, class-conscious communities, and the multitudinous 'routes' of Afro-Creole folk resistance in Haiti, throughout the Americas, and beyond. The zombie-phantom that emerged in American popular culture in the interwar period thus reflected the deepest anxieties of the American imperial project, subverting the moral authority and ideological supremacy of the occupation.[113] Of course, the occupation was the culmination of an era of gunboat diplomacy which saw Haiti subjected to successive acts of territorial aggression by the United States.[114] The acquisition, consumption, and containment of Haiti during this period was thus essential in establishing America's imperial and global preeminence in the early twentieth century. This was effected ideologically through the mass-consumption of Vodou and zombies in popular culture. The 'monstrous' transformation to which Vodou was subjected in Haitian travel narratives thus speaks to a culture of ideological imperialism that sought to 'consume' quiescent 'native' bodies, and disconnect Haiti from its enduring spiritual and political routes.

---

[111] Kevin Alexander Boon, 'Ontological Anxiety Made Flesh: The Zombie in Literature, Film and Culture', in *Monsters and the Monstrous*, Cf., pp. 33-44 (p. 34).
[112] Ibid.
[113] This ideology was supported to an extent by Hurston who, reflecting on the legacies of the occupation, noted that 'Haiti is left with a stable currency, the beginnings of a system of transportation, a modern capitol, the nucleus of a modern army. See *Tell My Horse*, p. 74.
[114] In the 1850s the U.S. government laid claim to Navassa Island off of Haiti's southwestern coast in order to acquire phosphoric guano. This was later transformed into a military base and then an ecological site. Later, towards the end of the century, Frederick Douglass, as emissary to Haiti, was commissioned with the task of acquiring the commune of Môle St. Nicolas on Haiti's northwestern coast as a U.S. naval base. See Karen Salt, 'Navassa Island: Eco-governmentality and the Threat to Black Sovereignty', *After Revolution*, Cf. and Dubois, *Aftershocks*, pp. 187-196.

The narrative of monstrosity that was so central to the success and popularity of Seabrook's zombie horror story was revived in Victor and Edward Halperin's 1932 film, *White Zombie*. Most scholars agree that the film drew its influence from Seabrook, whose grotesque and hyperbolic renderings of Haitian folklife provided ample material for ready purgation in an era of cinematic horror.[115] As in *The Magic Island*, *Zombie* suppresses America's complicity in the industrial exploitation of Haitian bodies, and the horror of zombification is prefigured as peculiarly 'local', albeit that the 'zombie master' played by the Hungarian actor Bela Lugosi (and ominously named in Garnett Weston's screenplay as 'Murder Legendre') is white, and not black. Where *Zombie* deviates more radically is in the characterization of the narrative's principal zombified host, who is most assuredly white, as the title implies. This unique plot twist inverts the imperial hierarchy that is at least traceable in Seabrook's narrative of Haitian zombie-labourers. This twist no doubt titillated contemporary (white) cinemagoers to whom the fantasy of Vodou-possession posed no threat in reality. White zombies and white *bocors* nevertheless encrypt deep anxieties about the routed connections between black bodies, black diasporic communities, and diasporic folklores. Zombie-slaves loom on the periphery, but they are denied either revolutionary agency or a purgative return to the grave. In fact, the fear of routed black bodies is so acute that the only 'black' zombies are represented by white men in blackface.[116] Both Vodou and zombies are presented as products of Haiti's inherent barbarism, but this barbarism is displaced from any sense of historical understanding; Haiti is constructed as a 'virgin' land in need of cultivation, replete with black 'natives' divorced from their connection to an African, enslaved, Creole, or revolutionary heritage.[117] The aggressive decontextualization of Vodou in *White Zombie*, which, as Fenton notes, is not even 'used to describe the beliefs within the film',[118] thus quells the threat of routed resistance, and the connective force of diasporic spirituality and performance. Like 'Africanist' texts, which reflect the 'denotative and

[115] Rhodes draws several parallels, noting, for example, that the sugar mill owned by the zombie-master Murder Legendre in *White Zombie* is a proto-industrial echo of the Hasco sugar factory, that *Zombie*'s Dr. Bruner is modelled on *The Magic Island*'s Dr. Antoine Villiers, and that the vignettes that were created by Alexander King for *The Magic Island* are unsettlingly brought to life in the imaging and characterization of *Zombie*, particularly in the costume design for Murder Legendre. See Rhodes, pp. 30-34. Fenton suggests that the film drew on the more recent example of Kenneth Webb's play *Zombie*, which, she notes, 'in turn was influenced by Seabrook's book', but also points out that Halperin never made any direct reference to *The Magic Island* when questioned about the film. See Fenton, pp. 204-205.

[116] The character of Pierre, who is described in the film as a 'witch doctor', rather than a *houngan*, is played by Dan Crimmins, who notoriously sported blackface for the role.

[117] Neil's frequent invocation of the term 'natives' in the film reinforces its mysterious, Africanized otherness.

[118] Fenton, p. 206.

connotative blackness' of 'Eurocentric' American writings,[119] *White Zombie* inculcates a 'Haitianism', which reifies white American identity through its rejection of Haitian 'others'.

This decontextualized, Haitianist narrative is established from the opening scene, which commences with a burial at a crossroads. The burial scene is accompanied by the sound of a non-verbal chant which anchors the viewer's sense of cultural otherness. While the scene shares visual parallels with narrative details from *The Magic Island*,[120] the music is without contextual referent. The song, simply entitled 'Chant', was written by Guy Bevier Williams, who, according to Rhodes, was a specialist in ethnic music.[121] However, the composition is distinctly uncharacteristic of Haitian folk music, and sounds nothing like the type of ceremonial music performed during Vodou ceremonies. The recordings of Alan Lomax, the ethnomusicologist who was commissioned by the Library of Congress to travel to Haiti in the 1930s to undertake a comprehensive study of Haitian music, affirm this view. Indeed, Lomax's comprehensive recordings, which encompass a wide selection of material related to carnival and Vodou, demonstrate the rhythmic complexity and polyphony of Haitian folk sounds. While most of his recordings invariably validate Williams's emphasis on vocal and percussive sound, the rhythmic patterns of authentic Haitian music are unpredictable and multi-layered. Vocals combine articulated melodies with articulated harmonies,[122] and are grounded, above all, in the linguistic tradition of *Kreyòl*. Although each song is rooted in tradition, each performance is unique and cannot be truly 'replicated', owing to syncopated rhythmic accentuations.[123] Of course, these individualistic, syncopated rhythms were replicated in Afro-Creole sounds across the diaspora, and popularized through jazz.[124] In this sense, they were not altogether anathema to the cultural mainstream. By distinction, Williams's 'Chant' negates the encroaching visibility of these routed connections; the percussive rhythm is simplistic and monotonous, and the vocals are laboured; there are no discernible words, but only guttural vowel-sounds that evoke the idea of a

---

[119] Morrison, pp. 6-7.
[120] Rhodes draws attention to the fact that, in *The Magic Island*, Polynice asserts that the Haitian peasantry bury their dead in the road to safeguard against their corpses becoming zombified. See Rhodes, p. 31.
[121] Ibid., p. 110.
[122] Yvonne Daniel, *Dancing Wisdom: Embodied Knowledge in Haitian Vodou, Cuban Yoruba, and Bahian Candomblé* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2005), p. 223.
[123] Lomax's recordings (including some video footage) have been remastered and transferred onto a 10-CD box set entitled Various Artists, *Alan Lomax in Haiti: Recordings for the Library of Congress, 1936-1937* (Harte Recordings, 2009). While a vast number of songs in the entire collection pay homage to Vodou divinities, a whole disk (CD 8) is dedicated to communal Vodou ceremonial songs.
[124] Christopher Washburne, 'The Clave of Jazz: A Caribbean Contribution to the Rhythmic Foundation of an Early African-American Music', *Black Music Research Journal*, 17.1 (1997), 59-80 (p. 65).

'primitive' and incomprehensible language. The substitution of the Kreyòl language with non-verbal sounds is, moreover, an act of silencing and co-optation, analogous to the silencing of African voices that Chinua Achebe traces in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*.[125] Williams's 'Chant' is thus situated firmly within an imperialist context, where it reinforces a manufactured, decontextualized fiction of Haitian otherness. Within this fictional frame, Haiti is understood as archetypically 'foreign' and 'primitive'; as a result, the routed connections of Vodou ritual and its interrelationship with a culture of rhythmic performance are subverted.

The aberrance of this funereal chant is also reinforced by the apparent disjuncture between rhythm and movement. Certainly, the source of the music is ambiguous, and it is difficult for the viewer to discern whether the sounds are diegetic, emanating from the bodies of the mourners, or whether they are non-diegetic, coming from outside of the 'story space' of the scene in question to amplify the symbolic otherness of the purportedly 'Haitian' landscape.[126] Technological developments in the early 1930s made the reality of layering non-diegetic over diegetic sounds more possible; however, even when music was added in post-production there was often a need, as Kathryn Kalinak observes, to 'redefine such music as diegetic'.[127] The funeral scene clearly reflects this tension, and a situational association is made between sound and action. Furthermore, the 'Chant' continues to sound as the principle characters—the American interlopers Madeline and Neil—ride through the procession. The music piques their curiosity, which diffuses any uncertainty concerning its diegetic function. This interruption inevitably mediates the tension evoked by the unfamiliar, 'native' sounds, and works to contain the routed agency of Vodou performance. Light relief is also offered by Neil, who dismisses the ominous connotations of the scene by teasing Madeline about the 'cheerful' spectacle of roadside burial. This strategic interruption also anticipates a later scene at the Beaumont house when Beaumont's maids prepare Madeline's bridal trousseau. When one of the maids opens the window, the sound of monotonous drumming returns. Unable to countenance the sound, Madeline recoils in horror, and urges her maid to 'Close it! Close it!', once again shutting down multivalent Vodou energies and reducing the encrypted Haitian peasantry to abject

---

[125] Chinua Achebe, 'An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*', in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, ed. Peter Simon (London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001), pp. 1783-1794 (p. 1787).
[126] The 'Haitian' landscape was in fact not Haitian at all. As Fenton notes, the film 'was made entirely on the Universal Studio film set.' See Fenton, p. 204.
[127] Kathryn Kalinak, *Setting the Score: Music and the Classical Hollywood Film* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), p. 69.

peripheralization. Although in this instance, the music is clearly authenticated as diegetic, the 'performance' occurs off set. During the funeral scene, however, the musical performance is acutely visible to the viewer and the characters that enter the scene. The intrusion of the coach separates and immobilizes the congregation (Figure 22), yet even before the interruption, the congregation appear visibly listless, weakening the diegetic connection of the music, which remains constant throughout. Notwithstanding the divisive obstructions of white characters, the visible disconnect between the bodies of the mourners and the oral performance therefore plays a crucial role in suppressing the routed connections between music and dance in the Vodou tradition, and the revolutionary power of the *ti nèg* in countering the ominous shadow of the zombie.

Figure 22: Funeral procession (screenshot). Victor Halperin, Dir., *White Zombie*, Prod. Edward Halperin (United Artists, 1932), 1:39 / 1:06:46.

Knowledge of Vodou ritual praxis, and of communal celebrations across a diversity of Afro-Creole cultures wherein dance, in particular, forms a central current of worship (even, and especially, during funeral celebrations) reinforces the incongruity of this scene. Indeed, as Yvonne Daniel notes, 'worshipping Africans in the Diaspora have made philosophy indelible

and cosmology visible by means of the intricate and elaborate interrelationship between sound and gesture, movement and dance.'[128] This interrelationship is examined in detail in a larger critical work by Lomax on folk song styles from around the world. He notes that, in African and Afro-Creole communities,

> Music is communally produced, the group dividing responsibility for a number of melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic parts; these parts are exchanged with great facility. Dancing and singing in chorus. […] The body is always in motion; the music is danced. Facial expression is lively and animated. Headed by talented improvisors and rhythmic artists, the African community becomes a singing, drumming, dancing throng. Their rhythmically-oriented music plays a part in every life activity-work, religion, dance, story-telling.

In other words, he suggests, dance is an expression of the external, physical, and transcendent nature of spiritual practice. Lomax's assertion that 'music is danced' underscores the symbiotic relationship between the two; they are not only affiliated but *interdependent*. Although there is little early footage of Vodou funerals, the dancer and anthropologist Katherine Dunham, who, like Lomax and Hurston, travelled to Haiti in the 1930s to observe and document aspects of Haitian folk culture, stressed the centrality of dance to all forms of ritual praxis, including funerals. In her 1938 monograph on Haitian dance, she notes that 'it is just as natural and essential to dance at periods of extreme grief' in Haitian culture as it is 'to dance at moments of excessive joy.' Indeed, she saw dance as serving an important function in the process of mourning, further noting that

> The funeral dance serves to release the feeling of personal injury that friends and relatives are apt to feel at the loss of a loved one, and to furnish the mourners with a common means of expression; a common release mechanism. […] Regular rhythmic activity serves the function of an immediate emotional release, especially when accompanied by music and song […][129]

---

[128] Daniel, p. 223.
[129] Katherine Dunham, 'Excerpts from the Dances of Haiti: Function', *Journal of Black Studies*, 15 (1985), 357-379 (p. 371).

Dunham's account, like Lomax's, stresses the deep, mutualistic relationship between rhythm and the body in Haitian Vodou and locates dance at the very core of Haitian folk life, channeling human emotion and connecting the body with the soul and the myriad of *lwa* who are called upon during ceremonial ritual.[130] This is ultimately affirmed in the act of spirit-possession, which forms the culmination of ritual dance.[131]

Dunham's observations were also vindicated by Price-Mars, who 'aspired to reconstruct […] the moving past' of the Haitian people through the celebration and study of Vodou.[132] In *Ainsi Parla l'Oncle*, he wrote that

> Music and Dance […] color all the modalities of Negro life, whether in a mourner or a grave-digger chanting in rhythm the lamentations in funeral processions in order to avert a spell, or be it in the crowds where joyful exaltation brings forth gay songs and the explosion of superabundant emotions in spinning rhythmic steps.[133]

In these accounts, music and dance are thus normalized as a characteristic response to a spectrum of community rituals in Haiti and across the diaspora. That their interrelationship is not made manifest in this scene sits incongruously with their special mutualistic signification within a wider Afro-Creole and diasporic culture.

The 'authentic' treatment of Vodou and the Haitian population more generally in *White Zombie* was evidently somewhat of a dilemma, not least because of the disjuncture between Vodou performance and western ideas of spiritual praxis and conventions of mourning. This dichotomy between western thought and Haitian ritual was borne out by contemporary ethnographic accounts by white observers such as Seabrook, whose 'observations' of Vodou dances in *The Magic Island* showed Vodou to be orgiastic and violent.[134] The rhythmic

---

[130] Strongman emphasizes that 'unlike the Western [Cartesian] idea of the fixed internal unitary soul […] the Afro-Diasporic self is removable, external, and multiple.' See Roberto Strongman, 'The Afro-Diasporic Body in Haitian Vodou and the Transcending of Gendered Cartesian Corporeality', *Kunapipi*, 30.2 (2008), 11-29 (p. 14).

[131] This, as Michael Largey notes, is a characteristic that is shared with Santería, Shango, and Kumina. See Michael Largey, *Vodou Nation: Haitian Art, Music, and Cultural Nationalism* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2006) p. 13.

[132] Price-Mars, p. 101.

[133] Ibid., p. 115.

[134] Seabrook described Vodou worship in wholly sensational terms that were picked up by his illustrator, Alexander King. King created a grotesque and exoticised image of black dancing bodies with the caption (excerpted from the text) '… blood-maddened, sex-maddened, god-maddened … danced their dark saturnalia'. See Seabrook, p. 48. These depictions are highly questionable, not least because they echo almost exactly the 'observations' of Moreau de Saint-Méry, who noted of the Vodou dance in *A Civilization that Perished* that '[f]aintings and raptures take over

idiosyncrasies of Vodou performance were also lost on the avowed 'white king of La Gonâve', Faustin Wirkus, who acknowledged in his travelogue of the same name that he had no 'notion of the difference in the rhythm of the drumming' when he first observed Vodou performances, but conceded that he later began to realize their significance, asserting, 'I know now when the throb of the *rada* drum has once been heard it is never forgotten. It has a hypnotic, feverish quality unlike any other drumbeat known.'[135] Inevitably, such nuance rarely transferred itself to the popular imaginary, and the sensational depictions of Vodou performances exacerbated racist stereotypes, sustaining claims of Haitian barbarism. These claims were invariably without contextual or routed revolutionary referent; according to this racist formulation, the passionate nature of the Vodou dance was anchored in base corporeal pleasure, and any connection to a higher transcendent and revolutionary spirituality was occluded.

Dunham's initiation into the Vodou faith nevertheless presented her contemporaries with an uncanny reminder of the fact that, despite its ideological displacement, the exotic world of Vodou was one in which outside observers were all too easily implicated. In her notes on 'Dancing' in her essay 'Characteristics of Negro Expression', Zora Neale Hurston reaffirms this view:

> the spectator himself adds the picture of ferocious assault, hears the drums and finds himself keeping time with the music and tensing himself for the struggle. It is compelling insinuation. That is the very reason the spectator is held so rapt. He is participating in the performance himself—carrying out the suggestions of the performer.[136]

Like Lomax's work on African and Afro-Creole folk songs, Hurston's essay was based on the observations of a myriad of Afro-Creole cultures across the diaspora, and so her comments are not in this instance directly relevant to the Haitian experience. Significantly, however, they

---

some of them and a sort of fury some of the others, but for all there is a nervous trembling that they cannot master. They spin around ceaselessly. And there are some in this species of bacchanal who tear their clothing and even bite their flesh. Others who are only deprived of their senses and have fallen in their tracks are taken, even while, dancing into the darkness of a neighbouring room, where a disgusting prostitution exercises a most hideous empire.' See Médéric Louis-Élie Moreau de Saint-Méry, 'A Civilization that Perished: The Last Years of Colonial Rule, (1985)', in *Libète: A Haitian Anthology*, ed. by Charles Arthur and J. Michael Dash (London: Latin America Bureau, 1999), p. 321.

[135] Faustin Wirkus and Taney Dudley, *The White King of La Gonave* (New York: Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc., 1931), p. 103.

[136] Zora Neale Hurston, 'Characteristics of Negro Expression' in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, Cf., pp. 1146-1158 (p. 1150).

chime with the early observations of Moreau de Saint-Méry, who demonstrated the 'magnetism' of the Vodou dance and its rapturous force over colonial whites.[137] Such observations attest to the real and pervasive fear that the authentic sights and sounds of Afro-Creole culture would enrapture outsiders and thereby diminish white imperial hegemony. This fear was uncannily borne out in the mass popularity of jazz music and the reach of black intellectual and cultural modernism across the diaspora. By thus suppressing the routed connections traceable through sights and sounds, the funeral scene encrypts the rapturous force of the Vodou performance over white audiences, and the possible suggestion of a cultural revolutionary resurgence that is routed through diasporic modernism.

The aesthetics of rhythm and motion thus connected the Haiti of the Halperins' *Zombie* to an indelibly routed past, but also to a future of routed *possibility*—the possibility of lower-frequency insurgency that transcended borders. This rhythmic narrative was initiated at Bois Caïman by the sound of the conch,[138] sustained on the revolutionary battlefield,[139] and repeatedly relived in the post-independence traditions of *Kanaval* and *Rara*. It also migrated to New Orleans and Congo Square, where it 'would mutate and creolize with other traditions into early jazz'.[140] These migrations and mutations reflect the 'durable, constant, and quite tangible bond between different groups of people who have been separated by history and who occupied different times and places.'[141] This sense of communality and connectivity forged through rhythmic spirituality was at the heart of American imperialist fears during the occupation era—a fact that was made apparent by the Marine raids on Vodou temples and the confiscation of ceremonial drums. In this way, Haitian people were literally divested of the rhythmic routes to revolutionary expression. The funeral celebrants in the opening scene of *Zombie* are likewise denied the tools of spiritual and rhythmic resistance and, as a result, *they* become the unwitting zombies of the narrative, bound by the strictures of hegemonic rhythm.

This scene therefore encrypts the violent, unpredictable, and communal energies of *ti nèg* culture in Haiti. Although this is one of the few scenes featuring 'real' black bodies, these bodies

---

[137] Price-Mars, p. 134.
[138] Renda, p. 43.
[139] Munro discusses how drums were used to powerful effect by the revolutionary troops, noting that '[t]he insurgent slaves' music in these cases seems to have been used deliberately to heighten the mental torture of the white prisoners, who had long feared the hidden messages and meanings of slave music and its capacity to retain and incite a sense of black subjectivity and resistance that could not be completely nullified by the processes of slavery.' See Munro, *Different Drummers*, p. 30.
[140] Ibid., p. 42.

are disconnected from the authentic 'rhythms' of Haitian life. They frame the viewer's introduction to a world of Haitian Vodou-magic and body-snatching, but remain conspicuously removed from it. This sense of disconnect is compounded by the obfuscation of 'racial' identities and the deployment of white actors in the service of 'black' terror. Of course, as many commentators have argued, the 'racial' identity of Legendre remains one of the biggest unanswered questions throughout the film.[142] His connection to Vodou-sorcery links him to Haitian folk culture; as a factory owner, however, he encrypts an imperial (white) agenda that connects him in a network of global exchange to the banker Neil and the landowner Beaumont. In this way, his 'evil' machinations are displaced from any sense of cultural context.

As Gyllian Phillips suggests, the threat of miscegenation looms large over Madeline,[143] whose body, coveted by both Beaumont and Legendre, Neil seeks to preserve uncorrupted from 'the hands of natives'. However, no penetration by 'real' black bodies is ever realized over Madeline's body. The viewer's only encounter with black actors is confined to the opening scenes, which feature the all-black funeral procession (who are nevertheless removed from their routed context) and a brief performance by Clarence Muse, who plays the coach driver who escorts Madeline and Neil to the Beaumont plantation. Certainly, as Rhodes points out, Muse was a political figure who lobbied on behalf of African American artists,[144] but his peripheralization in the narrative follows the pattern of disconnection that courses throughout the film. In contrast, the 'black' characters that have more of a decisive impact on the narrative, such as Legendre's troupe of 'black' zombies and the 'witch doctor', or *houngan*, Pierre, are played by white actors in blackface. The spectre of blackness is omnipresent; however, it is figured as elusive and disconnected, and rendered increasingly vague through the obscure and uncertain racial identities of Legendre and Beaumont. This pervasive racial *dis*connection is set ironically at odds with the repeated cutaway shots to Legendre's 'connective' hand gesture that binds him and his zombies through an elusive mesmerism (Figure 23).

---

[141] Ibid., p. 45.
[142] Bishop suggests that Legendre is configured as 'implicitly black'. See Bishop, *American Zombie Gothic*, p. 78.
[143] Gyllian Phillips, '*White Zombie* and the Creole: William Seabrook's *The Magic Island* and American Imperialism in Haiti', in *Generation Zombie*, Cf., pp. 27-40 (p. 28).
[144] Rhodes, pp. 101-102.

Figure 23: Murder Legendre's (Bela Lugosi's) hands (screenshot). *White Zombie*, 1:00:59 / 1:06:46.

Even before the viewer encounters any blackface zombies, the sense of disconnect between bodies, routes, and rhythms is already firmly established. Dead or alive, the Haitian people are constructed as abject and powerless, and the 'Haiti' that they inhabit as a 'native', yet benign wilderness, devoid of revolutionary history. Neither the collective agency of the masses, nor the performative language of Vodou pose any real threat to the 'redemptive' white Americans, Madeline and Neil, who inexplicably break free from the zombie 'curse' after Legendre and his troupe of zombie-slaves tumble from his mountaintop fortress to their death. Although exotic tropes, as Vials has emphasized, play a crucial role in creating this sense of disconnect, the appropriation and containment of black revolutionary culture and the obfuscation of black revolutionary identities demonstrate explicit American fears of Haitian revolutionary resurgence through communal, diasporic countercultures.

That the only 'rebellious' zombie in the narrative is Madeline (a white woman) is also significant, further depoliticizing a Haitian narrative of routed resistance that was repeatedly reimagined in different times and places across the Atlantic world through the communal and multilayered expressions of Vodou. In rising up against Legendre, she affirms her impenetrability, and circumvents the voices of routed resistance embedded in the revolutionary

zombie narrative. In the closing scenes, Beaumont and Legendre engage each other in combat and, in the process, fall off the precipice of Legendre's fortress to their presumed death, followed by Legendre's legion of zombie-slaves. Unlike in *The Magic Island*, however, this disruption is effected not by a zombie revolt, and a reclamation of routes, but by white resistance to the Vodou-magic that has been appropriated to serve the evil machinations of (presumably) white landowners. In this way, the ending reflects the paternalist vision of the occupation, consigning Haitianness to a dark, evil, decontextualized space and championing white Americanness as a liberating and *civilizing* ideological force; as Phillips suggests, the ending leaves the viewer 'with a "pure" society: virginal white woman, American banker, and Christian-rationalist missionary [in the form of Dr Bruner].'[145] The redemptive vision of America's Haitian occupation is thus affirmed. Viewed in this context, Bruner's repeated request for a 'match' to light his pipe not only serves the purpose of comic relief but insistently reinforces his configuration as an 'Enlightened' and 'enlightening' force as a white American missionary in Haiti. This triumphant finale, superintended by an all-white cast, lends weight to Bishop's contention that '[a]lthough Americans had failed to colonize Haiti directly, they ended up doing it after the fact by producing texts like *White Zombie*.'[146]

Nevertheless, although the symbolic disconnection of bodies, rhythms, and routes replicates a colonialist agenda that is propagated by the tripartite coalition of white American victors (in a symbolic reflection of the Christian holy trinity), it is only through an acute understanding and co-optation of the 'real' Haiti and its folkloric routes that their triumph over Legendre, as zombie-master, is realized. Indeed, although Legendre, Beaumont, and the troupe of blackface zombies are vanquished, the Haitian people form a secreted backdrop to this action. Despite their peripheralization and decontextualization, they are always there in the background, a fact that is acknowledged in the drumming sounds that penetrate Madeline's reverie as she dresses for her wedding. Like the 'hidden slaves' in Brown's *Wieland*, their survival and resounding revolutionary energy is encrypted in this triumph. In other words, although the collective energies of Madeline, Neil, and Bruner have eradicated the immediate zombie threat, the radical and polyphonous folk cultures that brought zombies into being are still prevalent beneath the surface. This fact is manifested in the scene in Dr Bruner's office when Bruner and

[145] Phillips, '*White Zombie* and the Creole', p. 36.
[146] Kyle Bishop, 'The Sub-Subaltern Monster: Imperialist Hegemony and the Cinematic Voodoo Zombie', *The Journal of American Culture*, 31.2 (2008), 141-152 (p. 151).

Neil begin to confront the possibility of Madeline's 'zombification', refracted through Bruner's account of Haitian 'superstitions', which he traces back to 'ancient Egypt, and, beyond that yet in the countries that were old when Egypt was young.' His office contains a copy of the Haitian penal code and, presumably, a host of other valuable documents that offer unacknowledged insights into Haiti's routed past. Despite Bruner's attempt to fulfil his Christianizing mission, this is impeded by the ineradicable knowledge of Haiti's spiritual, folkloric, and diasporic routes. This encrypts the pervasive threat of Haitian intellectuals such as Price-Mars, who sought a return to 'Africa, its races and civilization' in order to 'understand the mechanism' of Vodou.[147]

Legendre's fortress (part of a set piece left over from *Dracula*)[148] pays tribute to the final triumph of white Americans over a vague and disconnected Haitian villainy. However, as Renda points out, this fortress is also an uncanny echo of Christophe's citadel,[149] and thus encrypts a multitude of black bodies that laboured (and died) in the process of its construction. Given that Christophe's citadel was the central focus of an earlier public relations marketing campaign in the United States,[150] the symbolism of the mountaintop fortress undoubtedly would have resonated with contemporary American audiences. Viewed in this light, the wider implications of Legendre's demise and the subsequent white 'triumph' become acutely resonant. Indeed, like Christophe, Legendre meets an untimely end and his elite hegemony over labouring 'Haitian' bodies is thereby overturned. However, the facility with which his fortress is penetrated reinforces the uncertain fate of his deponents. Although Madeline, Neil, and Dr Bruner claim victory over Legendre and his Vodou 'sorcery', the *real* triumphal power is located *beyond* and not *within* these walls—in the perpetually resurgent energies of *ti nèg* culture: in Vodou, in the community ties of the Haitian masses, and in their routed connections to revolutionary pasts and revolutionary futures.

Return to the Grave/Crypt: Zombified Routes to Resistance

Zombie folklore became the phantomogenic focus of imperial anxiety in interwar America. Disseminated and thereby anchored in the cultural imaginary by Seabrook, the zombie-phantom

[147] Price-Mars, p. 54.
[148] Rhodes, p. 103.
[149] Renda, p. 226.
[150] Ibid., pp. 217-223.

propagated a mythos of Vodou horror; however, this zombie-phantom ultimately reflected the encrypted fear of a routed revolutionary history to which Vodou was (and remains) inextricably bound. The shadows of black peasant revolt pervade the cryptic spaces of popular ethnographic travel narratives such as *The Magic Island* and early Hollywood horror films such as *White Zombie*, but their ultimate failure to bridge the underwritten connections located therein demonstrates the force of routed connections between the past and the contemporary moment. This was a time, after all, when people of African descent across the Americas were attempting to reclaim the customs that linked their routed identities. In order for the American public to exploit the value of these 'other' black cultures, these cultures would need to be disconnected from their routes. Much like the tradition of Mardi Gras in New Orleans, which began as an expression of routed power for people of African descent in the slaveholding Americas and became appropriated by white power structures,[151] the zombie was consumed by white audiences. In this way, its political and spiritual resonance was inverted.

Nevertheless, at its cryptic root, the zombie represented the resurgent force of Haiti's lower classes, the spiritual energies that connected them, and the lower frequency politics of this spirituality, which would continue to redefine and recreate itself through the transference of knowledge and traditions across time and place. This revolutionary spectre was perhaps the most terrifying, because at its core was the fear of a cultural preservation that outlived slavery, colonialism, and the newer configurations thereof. The spiritual routes that connected Haiti's past to its present and to various other cultures across the Atlantic (and indeed the world) signified to America that spirituality could succeed where imperialism had failed—in preserving diasporic cultures. Although slavery and imperialism claimed subordinate bodies, they would never claim the soul (with its many layers and multiple rhythms) or the routed communal memories of resistance.

---

[151] Johnson notes that Anglo-Americans who migrated to Louisiana in the nineteenth century 'quelled and bridled the abandon with which the city had celebrated Mardi Gras since its founding, not by ordinance or police action, but by taking over the celebration, organizing it in the formal carnival "krewes" familiar today, and reshaping it along lines acceptable to Anglo-American values.' See Jerah Johnson, 'New Orleans's Congo Square: An Urban Setting for Early Afro-American Culture Formation', *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association*, 32.2 (1991), 117-157 (pp. 150-151).

Conclusion;

> [L]iberation from oppression is imagined through a complete break with the inherited past. Of course, burning down buildings also marks rupture, but unlike material structures, words cannot be destroyed and then rebuilt. Meaning cannot in fact be destroyed or changed by fiat. New meaning and old meaning will coexist for a long time; signifiers have a long memory […] It is a form of violent rupture that is not consummated in the singular act of destruction. Instead, in the repetition of speech, the memory of a struggle remains alive, as well as a hope for a different future.
>
> — Sybille Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed* (2004)

> the work of the phantom […] gives rise to endless repetition and, more often than not, eludes rationalization.
>
> — Nicolas Abraham, 'Notes on the Phantom' (1975)

As Sybille Fischer demonstrates in the above epigraph, history is often obliterated and rewritten, but words contain a memory of that secreted past. Those words become the store for ancestral secrets, which are passed on to each successive generation. While this thesis has attempted to purge the Haitian revolutionary 'phantoms' that dwell in American gothic romance and thereby expose the encrypted anxieties that pervade the American imaginary, it has also sought to demonstrate the disjuncture between history and memory. Indeed, as many scholars, and Haitianists in particular, have argued, history often contracts, creating crypts for the things it wishes to shut away, forget, or actively destroy. Memory, by contrast, contains the trace of what is lost. It may only offer a shadow of what was once there, but it facilitates creative opportunities for recovery, and therefore expands the imagination. The phantom is a shadow of buried, transgenerational anxieties. It is a word, or collection of words, that are psychically (and, in this case, socially and culturally) destructive. However, that destructive seed provides a route to memory, and to an understanding of that memory's transferrable value in the present.

By exploring the various phantomogenic faces of the Haitian Revolution, this thesis acknowledges the complex, shifting, and multidimensional nature of Haitian history, and, by extension, of American history. It pushes us to think about the possibilities that are so often constrained by conceptual boundaries—such as what we might mean when we say 'Haiti' or 'America'. After all, Haiti encrypts the memory of a violent revolutionary struggle against

colonial whites, and thus presents a vision of 'monstrous' blackness, but it also contains the memories of social, cultural, and political struggles between a number of divergent groups. The revolution was fought across the length and breadth of Hispaniola (not just in French Saint-Domingue), and it was also fought in ideological spaces, fusing with revolutionary discourses elsewhere; it was fought from within the site of oppression via re-appropriation and metamorphosis; and it was fought through culture, language, and performance. In a sense, it was also not fought at all, but was rather borne of the collisions, confrontations, and exchanges of the colonial environment; it was, as it were, an *evolution*, as opposed to a *revolution*. It was not one revolution but many, and the resultant 'shockwave' would occur multiple times throughout history. These shockwaves were (and indeed still are) forcefully felt in 'America' (which constantly imagines itself as a white, Protestant, bordered entity). The American gothic contains the traces of the memories that underly these shocks, which solicit creative readers to explode the reductive lens of 'American' history. Grand narratives of 'nation', 'republicanism', 'democracy', 'liberty', 'equality', and many others are in this way confronted and held up to scrutiny.

By expanding the polymorphic possibilities of the Haitian Revolution, I have demonstrated its multiple permeations within the American imaginary, and the *limits* that this imaginary goes to obstruct, bury, and repress these permeations. However, I have also sought to show how we can *use* these limits to form the basis of an 'analytic construction'. American fiction is rife with synecdochic signs, allusion, and linguistic cryptonyms that speak to certain specific cultural anxieties. In this way, it forms an archive of creative possibilities that encourages readers to assemble a range of sources that are found both within and *beyond* the text. The 'phantoms' found in American gothic fiction thus promote revolutionary ways of reading that unlock cultural crypts. In this way, the reading of fiction and other expressive art forms creates a mechanism for 'analytic construction' that the historical archive does not permit. That is not to say that history is not relevant, or that we should disband with history because it silences (or, as Daut would have it, because it perpetuates or privileges certain narratives at the expense of others); after all, if we are to deconstruct the violence of history, we need to be able to understand the context in which this violence is generated. However, fiction, and gothic fiction in particular, facilitates a creative agency that the historical archive does not. Reading both together expands the imaginative possibilities of encrypted secrets and fears.

As the texts subject to analysis in this study have shown, the insistence of phantomogenic spectres in American gothic romance promotes crucial cultural confrontations with the inherited past. Each of the writers that authored these texts understood Haiti and its revolutions to have affected America in far-reaching ways; they saw these revolutions as a projection of certain cultural anxieties about race, class, sex, gender, diaspora, and creolization—anxieties that were generated within a particular cultural moment but also spoke to their own contemporary realities. In this way, 'analytic construction' does not just show us how America writes Haiti out of its own modern narrative, or how we, as readers, negotiate the task of reading Haiti *in*, but also how Haiti writes itself and is *under*written in cryptic, imaginary spaces. Although Haiti is 'secreted' it is important to remember that, as an active spectre that 'haunts' the American cultural imaginary, it has a historic and transgenerational agency and thereby 'secretes' itself through and beyond these crypts, tombs, and archives, rising up against the inherited infrastructures of white privilege, and repeating.

This thesis has shown that these 'phantoms' pervade American culture because of the special, fraternal link that it shares with Haiti. The Haitian Revolution inevitably presented the United States with a radical reflection of its own modern historical birth. It represented, in gothic terms, the monstrous limits of the revolutionary age. Yet its many revolutionary faces also spoke and continues to speak to America's embattled relationship over questions of race, slavery, and democratic Enlightenment. The spectre of Haiti thus continues to haunt because it continues to resonate, and it continues to resonate because it represents a reality (or at least the possibility of reali*ties*) that the grand narrative of Americanness refuses to acknowledge and confront. When Clytemnestra burns down the big house at Sutpen's Hundred with her and Henry inside, she 'resists', as Braziel notes, 'the final, totalizing redefinition of the Sutpen family as "white."'[1] More importantly, her 'flames burn African' (or, rather, Haitian) 'traces indelibly into the Mississippi landscape',[2] forcing a violent confrontation with the encrypted past and its transgenerational reaches into the present. This is also why the story of Bras-Coupé (which is already indelibly etched in the Creole imaginary) is repeatedly *re*told by a succession of narrators for the sake of Joseph Frowenfeld, why Babo's merciless retribution is explored so fully and

[1] Jana Evans Braziel, 'Antillean Detours through the American South: Édouard Glissant's and Jamaica Kincaid's Textual Returns to William Faulkner', in *Just Below South: Intercultural Performance in the Caribbean and the U.S. South*, ed. by Jessica Adams, Michael P. Bibler, and Cécile Accilien (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2007), pp. 239-264, p. 251.

graphically in the 'deposition' which follows Delano's story, why Mervyn's enclosed country idyll gives way to the intersections and crossings of the metropolis, and why Dr Bruner looks to a history 'beyond Egypt' for answers to Haiti's 'native' mysteries. In each instance, the reader crosses the phantomogenic divide, which is bridged by an uncanny realization that 'American' history is as complex, multivalent, and shifting as Haiti's; the reason why revolutionary Haiti haunts is because it embraces the polymorphic, modern, and creolistic history that America rejects.

This phantom haunts white America in multiple forms because modernity and revolution (as phenomena that 'repeat') are constantly renegotiated and reconstituted. As Fischer notes, 'modernity was not an ethos or worldview that permeated society evenly, but rather a heterogeneous assemblage of strategies, effects, and forces that were brought into being by the operations of colonial power and enslavement.'[3] This is why slavery and racism coexisted with 'democratic' Enlightenment. Therefore, despite Abraham's contention that the 'phantom will vanish […] when its radically heterogeneous nature with respect to the subject is recognized',[4] it is doubtful that the American imaginary can ever really be purged of its Haitian 'phantoms', because the legacies of these colonial operations are still being felt. Moreover, its own proud revolutionary heritage reacts against shift and renegotiation through a display of conservative constraint. This idea is embodied by the contentious figure of Thomas Jefferson, who demonstrated that the republican vision for a 'universal' America often looked in on itself and to its 'own' homestead, in order to preserve itself for futurity. This homestead could of course grow, expanding its parameters outwards, but only while looking inwards, looking forward to redemptive futures, and refusing, in a defiant abnegation of Lot's wife, to look backwards and confront its own relationship to the intersected Creole histories of Haiti and America. In an effort to circumscribe history and affirm identity, America co-opted the narrative of revolutionary modernity, constructing an 'exceptional' idea of itself through the language of race. By looking to itself as 'white', America could effectively paper over the problems presented by history, and the anxieties generated by history's continuing relevance to the problems of the present. However, these anxieties only rooted themselves elsewhere—in a fictional crypt that allows its

---

[2] Ibid., p. 251.
[3] Fischer, p. 12.
[4] Abraham, 'Notes on the Phantom', p. 174.

critical readers the chance to rebuild and thereby rehabilitate lost voices that have been systematically purged from the white American archive.

The texts under study in this thesis present contextual insights into the damage done by totalizing, occlusive (white) metanarratives of 'America'. By analytically constructing the phantoms that 'haunt' these texts, the reader is able to better understand the multidimensional and evolving contours of revolutionary modernity, especially as it relates to America, and penetrate to the depths of the revolutions that it forcefully and repeatedly endeavours to constrain. In this way, the revolution continues, and each new reader brings forth ideas that challenge the silence and violence of history.

Epilogue: Crossings, Collaborations, and Creative (Re)memory

this is sweet Papa Toussan talking

— Ralph Ellison, 'Mister Toussan' (1941)

In her chapter on the 'Politics and Personalities of Haiti' in her 1938 book on Vodou and Obeah, *Tell My Horse*, Zora Neale Hurston demonstrates the multifaceted complexity of the Haitian revolutionary phantom. Recounting the story of the popular uprising against President Jean Vilbrun Guillaume Sam in 1915 which precipitated the subsequent invasion of the *USS Washington* and the twenty-year Marine occupation that followed, the chapter articulates the barbarism, blood-lust, and excess of the revolutionary moment. Describing how the 'outraged voice of Haiti had changed from a sob to a howl',[1] Hurston characterizes the revolutionary masses in animalistic terms that echo the reports of insurgent violence in the early years of the revolution. This animalism is compounded by the cannibalistic vision of the mob that tears Guillaume Sam's body to pieces, his dismembered torso presenting a gothic inversion of classical ruin. This is set against the 'redemptive' vision of the modernizing imperial presence of 'America', characterized by the billowing smoke of the *Washington*.[2] In the wake of a crumbling (Haitian) empire, a new (American) empire is built. The visceral specularity of this narrative is, as Michael Dash has highlighted, discomfiting,[3] and Hurston's unrelenting support for the Marine occupation is disappointingly apologetic. This, however, is oddly incongruous with her sensitive, empathic, and respectful reflections on Haitian folk culture, and on Vodou in particular. Indeed, as Trefzer suggests, the various critical perspectives that are mediated by Hurston in *Tell My Horse* reflect the simultaneous operation of public and hidden transcripts.[4]

Through Hurston's detailed account of Vodou praxis, the reader learns that the 'horse' is a metaphorical 'vessel' for spirit possession through which the numerous *lwa* make themselves heard. In a similar way, Hurston, or rather 'Zora' operates as a metaphorical vessel within her own narrative for the multiple revolutionary voices that have been encrypted in the American

---

[1] Hurston, *Tell My Horse*, p. 72.
[2] Ibid.
[3] J. Michael Dash, *Haiti and the United States: National Stereotypes and the Literary Imagination* (Hampshire and London: Macmillan Press, 1998), pp. 58-60.
[4] Annette Trefzer, 'Possessing the Self: Caribbean Identities in Zora Neale Hurston's Tell My Horse', *African American Review*, 34 (2000), 299-312 (p. 301).

cultural imaginary. What Trefzer thus describes as the 'unresolved dialectic' which emerges from the 'tension between an imperial nationalism articulated explicitly within the political context of American occupation and the cultural, anthropological discourse of Hurston's observations on voodoo',[5] is in fact a multidirectional dialectic that creates a bridge between the family crypt and the dominant (white American) narrative. Though Hurston's narrative replicates the phantomogenic structures of some of her forbears, she also incorporates a critical discourse that reads *against* the encrypted narrative. This is effected both through subtle sleights and through a series of strong counternarrative tropes that force the text's own critical deconstruction. While it is thus to some extent true that 'Hurston's own narrative strategy in *Tell My Horse* matches the fugitive political expressions of […] the Haitian peasant population, who had to resort to disguising their ideological insubordination',[6] these 'fugitive political expressions' should, like the encrypted revolutionary voices of Haiti's polymorphous revolution, be accorded a more primary agency.

Of course, the disjuncture between Zora's rational scepticism and the authentic revolutionary voices of the Haitian peasantry, which form the core of Hurston's ethnographic Vodou narrative, is mediated through her *kreyòl* alter-ego, which is manifested in the refrain 'Ah bo bo'. As Ladd elucidates, this is 'an expression used at the end of Rada rituals to designate a ceremony well performed' and is 'more generally used in Haiti as an expression of self satisfaction.'[7] Embedded with a multitude of divergent meanings in Hurston's text, the phrase nevertheless takes on a different signification, which is most discernible at the end of Chapter 13, which deals with the 'darker' manifestations of Vodou and the zombie cult and concludes with an allegory on the ephemerality of 'give man'; within this context, the refrain is heard as a lament, or perhaps rather as a reproach or warning. Using this linguistic masque, Hurston thus displaces her own critical position. Yet this 'mediation' is contrasted by the candid challenge to Zora's rational scepticism that is effected through the ironical voice of Doctor Reser, who pushes Zora to expand the parameters of her rational thinking and confront the encrypted spectre of her own diasporic narrative, turning Zora's 'Africanist' perspective firmly on its head. While the refrain is used as a device of 'encryption', Dr Reser is used as a device of 'analytical

[5] Ibid., p. 299
[6] Ibid., p. 305.
[7] Barbara Ladd, *Resisting History: Gender, Modernity, and Authorship in William Faulkner, Zora Neale Hurston, and Eudora Welty* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2007), p. 125.

construction'. This is satirically borne out during a scene in which Zora asks Doctor Reser which part of America he is from. The scene unfolds thus:

> 'Where are you from, Dr. Reser?'
> 'I am from Lapland, Zora.'
> 'Why, Dr. Reser, I thought you were an American.'
> 'I am, but I am from Lapland just the same.'
> I fell to wondering if Lapland had become an American colony while my back was turned. He saw my bewilderment and chuckled.
> 'Yes, I am from Lapland – where Missouri laps over on Arkansas.'[8]

This anecdote speaks to the metafictionality of the text, and to the construction of a textual persona in the form of 'Zora'. Using the voice of another 'authority figure' with scientific training, Hurston has a laugh at her own expense. Although 'Zora' swiftly reclaims her own narrative voice following this brief anecdotal interlude, this voice is diffracted through a series of others. As Ladd suggests, 'Hurston's practice is the construction of a discursive field, where significations proliferate like Johnson grass.'[9] The reader is made conspicuously aware of Zora's faults and is forced to entertain the notion that 'Hurston's narrator is [perhaps] not the locus of authority [...] in the text'.[10] As Hurston's text looks beyond Zora's critical insights, and beyond the voice that inheres her imperialist superiority, the reader engages with the multiple critical layers that operate within the text. Forced to look in on herself from the perspective of an outsider, Zora learns to do the same. As a result, a bold voice emerges that unlocks multiple encrypted secrets, and the 'phantom' of Haiti is purged through a confrontation of radical possibilities. It is the acknowledgement of such possibilities that leads Hurston to conclude defiantly, 'I know there are Zombies in Haiti. People have been called back from the dead.'[11]

Hurston was by no means the only artist attempting to rehabilitate the memory of Haiti and its revolutionary legacy using this kind of reflexive framework. A number of artists that, like Hurston, rose to prominence during the Harlem Renaissance, used similar discursive techniques to bear out the encrypted narrative of the Haitian Revolution. Indeed, as J M Dash notes, for the

---

[8] Hurston, *Tell My Horse*, p. 253.
[9] Ladd, *Resisting History*, p. 129.
[10] Kevin Meehan, *People Get Ready: African American and Caribbean Cultural Exchange* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2009), p. 85.
[11] Hurston, *Tell My Horse*, p. 182.

black intellectuals in Harlem, Haiti 'was the most pervasive illustration of a racial *geist*'.[12] That is to say that, during an era of intense black (inter)nationalism, Haiti became a symbolic force for galvanizing activist sentiment across 'Global Africa'.[13] Throughout the 1920s and '30s, black Americans imaginatively reclaimed Haiti as a bastion of agency and independence, its symbolic force all the more resonant in the wake of the Marine occupation, which dramatized the reach of a white American imperialism that linked American and Haitian blacks in their oppression and silence. Artists and intellectuals used Haiti to challenge American attitudes toward race, and to challenge transgenerational cultures of silence embedded therein, thereby affirming Haiti's resonance with black communities across the diaspora, but also with post- and paracolonial cultures more broadly.

In 1938 at the age of twenty-one, Jacob Lawrence, a native resident of Harlem, produced a series of forty-one paintings cataloguing the epic saga of the Haitian Revolution. Lawrence became interested in the history of Haiti from a young age, and this interest was stimulated by the black artistic networks within which he circulated.[14] His Haitian saga, entitled *The Life of Toussaint L'Ouverture*, was thus a culmination of this experience, and spoke directly to the interests of his community. As Jackson notes:

> Lawrence clearly saw the Haitian Revolution as a mechanism of change for black Americans. By depicting Toussaint's struggle, Lawrence immediately brought to the attention of the American public the success of revolution and the fight for independence of the Haitian people. The series attempted to connect Haitians and black Americans, and it was the first of many that Lawrence would paint about important figures in African American history.[15]

Of course, *The Life of Toussaint L'Ouverture* was about more than 'Toussaint's struggle', charting the epic moments and personalities crucial to the revolutionary struggle more generally. Beginning in colonial Hispaniola/Ayiti, Lawrence's paintings explore the progression of

---

[12] Dash, *Haiti and the United States*, p. 55.
[13] Michael O. West and William G. Martin, 'Haiti, I'm Sorry: The Haitian Revolution and the Forging of the Black International', in *From Toussaint to Tupac*, Cf., pp. 72-106 (p. 73).
[14] Ellen Harkins Wheat and Patricia Hills, *Jacob Lawrence: American Painter* (Seattle: Seattle Art Museum, 1986), p. 16.
[15] Maurice Jackson, 'No Man Could Hinder Him: Remembering Toussaint Louverture and the Haitian Revolution in the History and Culture of African American People', in *African Americans and the Haitian Revolution*, Cf., pp. 141-164 (p. 152).

colonization and the events that led to Saint-Domingue's downfall and Ayiti's/Haiti's remaking. In this way, *The Life of Toussaint L'Ouverture* encrypts, and simultaneously bears out, the multiple phantoms of a wider revolutionary narrative that extends *beyond* Toussaint Louverture and his 'life'. Penetrating beneath the iconography of the much mythologized Toussaint, Lawrence's paintings explore the 'deeper history' of the revolution, which owed its successes to the sacrifices of the numerous and the nameless.

Like Hurston, Lawrence imbued his *Toussaint L'Ouverture* series with the tools for its own deconstruction in the form of narrative captions. Each of his paintings is captioned with a piece of text describing the scene and the moment to which it relates, inhering the politics of revolution and dispelling ambiguities. As Celeste-Marie Bernier notes, by '[s]elf-reflexively interweaving text and image, he recycles and revisits dominant iconography in conjunction with literary and historical motifs',[16] thereby exploding the encrypted agency of Haiti and its multiple revolutions. This enacts an 'analytical construction' in which 'his viewers and readers engage in an imaginative and emotive critique of reductive historical records.'[17] It is perhaps for this reason that Carolyn Williams envisages Jacob Lawrence as a 'North American Griot'.[18] In the African idiom, the griot is a poet or storyteller who wields significant weight in the community.[19] What is distinctive about the griot tradition, however, is the interplay which takes place in the storytelling process between the narrator, or griot, and the listener, who frequently interjects, speaking back to the narrator and destabilizing his established authority. The oral narrative that emerges is a process of reflexive dialogue. In Haiti, the prevalence of the griot tradition is manifested in the ritual customs of oral storytelling, which is initiated by the narrator's cry of 'cric' and the listener's response of 'crac', echoing the 'call and response' structures of oraliture across the diaspora.[20] By thus replicating and re-assembling the reflexive narrative structures that inform the diasporic identities of African peoples, Lawrence 'illuminate[s] the universal struggle against

---

[16] Celeste-Marie Bernier, *Characters of Blood: Black Heroism in the Transatlantic Imagination* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2012), p. 67.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Carolyn Williams, 'The Haitian Revolution and a North American Griot: *The Life of Toussaint L'Ouverture* by Jacob Lawrence', in *Echoes of the Haitian Revolution*, Cf., pp.61-85 (p. 72).
[19] David Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier: Race, Colour and National Independence in Haiti* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 167-172.
[20] Kaiama L. Glover, *Haiti Unbound: A Spiralist Challenge to the Postcolonial Canon* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), p. 211. The resonance of this syntagm is demonstrated in the Haitian writer Edwidge Danticat's collection of short stories entitled *Krik? Krak!*, which emphasizes the role of storytelling in promoting cultural renewal. See Edwidge Danticat, *Krik? Krak!* (London: Abacus, 1996).

oppression and for recognition of human dignity.'[21] In so doing, he signifies the communal need for revision and reassessment.

Lawrence's commitment to a reflexive dialogue in which the phantoms of Haiti would be subjected to constant deconstruction through *re*construction was compounded by his revision of the original *Toussaint L'Ouverture* series in the 1980s. From the original series of forty-one paintings, Lawrence recast a selection of his Haitian portraits, but retained the original captions.[22] These paintings were much larger than the originals and produced on silkscreen, as if to suggest the ever-growing and organic nature of black agency and the continuing resonance of the Haitian revolutionary narrative to contemporary experience. The force of Haiti's symbolic endurance in the cultural imaginary was also foregrounded in Ralph Ellison's 1941 short story 'Mister Toussan'. Like Lawrence's *The Life of Toussaint L'Ouverture*, 'Mister Toussan' recreates the history of Toussaint by penetrating into the American crypt. Rather than rehabilitating the history of a 'larger' encrypted revolutionary struggle, however, the story's narrators, two young black boys by the names of Buster and Riley, turn to fantasy to 'reconstruct' a new narrative of Toussaint that inverts the tragedy of his demise. In this construction, 'Toussan' is remembered as 'one of the African guys' who 'whipped Napoleon'.[23] Challenging the dominant white narrative of African people as 'black and lazy' which he gleans from 'the geography book' he studies in school,[24] Buster recounts the story of Haitian victory, which is refracted through details of Toussan's military prowess. Conjuring an image of black pride, this story of 'Toussan' is set in contradistinction to the histories found in 'books' which tell 'none of them stories'.[25] In this way, 'Mister Toussan' 'argues for the necessity of a creative engagement with Louverture's mythic legacies as the only way in which to contest the dominant stereotypes generated by discriminatory educational systems that collude in white racist constructions of national memory.'[26] Riley and Buster speak back to this racism, filling the gaps in the archive. Symbolically, this fantasy is played out under the watchful eyes of 'ole Rogan', an elderly white man who sits out on his porch to make sure the young boys don't come and

[21] Williams, 'The Haitian Revolution and a North American Griot', p. 72.
[22] Ibid., p. 80.
[23] Ralph Ellison, 'Mister Toussan', in *African Americans and the Haitian Revolution*, Cf., pp. 223-229 (p. 226).
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid., p. 229.
[26] Bernier, p. 28.

harvest the cherries from his cherry tree.[27] Their subsequent escape into the fantasy world of 'sweet Papa Toussan' counteracts the proscriptive gaze of the old man and demonstrates the liberating possibilities of stories which 'go on and on …'[28] The reader vicariously shares this fantasy and rejoices at Toussan's triumph over white hegemony, which is echoed in Buster and Riley's secret triumph over the narrow vision of 'ole Riley'.

In each of these 'texts', the author deploys a 'multimedia' strategy which eradicates the possibility for silence, by actively reading *against* silence. The revolutionary possibilities that are encrypted in the archive of white mainstream culture are consciously and repeatedly exhumed from their crypt. By harnessing the tropes of cultural modernism, African Americans in the inter-war period laid the creative foundations for an 'analytic construction' of Haiti's multifarious phantoms, thereby promulgating a diasporic cultural cathexis. Speaking directly to Nicolas Abraham's assertion that 'the "phantom," whatever its form, is nothing but an invention of the living',[29] these artists demonstrated the necessity for perpetual discursive exorcism. In this way, transgenerational anxieties are transformed into a transgenerational source of power.

[27] Ellison, p. 224.
[28] Ibid., p. 227.
[29] Abraham, 'Notes on the Phantom', p. 171.

Bibliography

Manuscript Sources

Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library, NY

Redpath, James Correspondence, Sc MG 166

Manuscripts Collection, The British Library, London

'REVOLUTION de St. Domingue, par M[onsieur ?] Peries, Tresorier on 1799, 1800, 1801'. 18??. MS 38074

Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, LA

Cable, George Washington Miscellany, MSS 1162

Pecquet du Bellet de Verton-Kariouk Family Papers, MSS 4702

Prevost Family Papers, MSS 1560

Louisiana Research Collection, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA

Cable, George Washington Papers, MSS 2

Freemason Records, MSS 895

Lambert Family Papers, MSS 244

Tabary, Louis Letter, MSS 909

Tulane, Paul Papers, MSS 49

The Historic New Orleans Collection, New Orleans, LA

George Washington Cable Collection, MSS 62

Ste-Gême Family Papers, MSS 100

Newspapers

America's Early Newspapers, Newsbank, inc.

Picayune

Poulson's American Daily Advertiser

Early American Newspapers, The British Library, London

Alexandria Advertiser Times and the District of Columbia Daily Advertiser, 1797-1802. M.misc. 673

City Gazette, South Carolina, 1787-1794 & 1796-1810 & 1815-1816, M.misc. 531

State Gazette, South Carolina, 1791 & 1793, M.misc. 997

New Orleans Public Library, New Orleans, LA

L'Abeille de la Nouvelle-Orléans (Bee)

Louisiana Courier

Louisiana Gazette

Moniteur de la Louisianne

Primary Sources

Adams, John, 'Proclamation of June 26, 1799 Regarding Commerce with St. Domingo', *The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy* (Yale Law School, 2008) <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/japroc02.asp>

Anonymous, *An Account of the Rise, Progress, and Termination of the Malignant Fever Lately Present in Philadelphia Briefly Stated from Accompanying Documents* (Philadelphia: Benjamin Johnson, 1793)

Bigelow, John, *The Wit and Wisdom of the Haytians* (New York: Scribner & Armstrong, 1877)

Blumenbach, Johann Friedrich, *On the Natural Varieties of Mankind/De Generis Humani Varietate Nativa: The Anthropological Treatises of Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, with Memoirs of him by Marx and Flourens, an account of the Anthropological Museum of Goettingen, by R. Wagner and a dissertation of John Hunter*, ed. and trans. by Thomas Bendyshe (New York: Bergman Publishers, 1969)

Brown, Charles Brockden, *Arthur Mervyn; or, Memoirs of the Year 1793*, 2 vols (Philadelphia: David McKay, Publisher, 1889)

Cable, George W., 'The Dance in Place Congo', in *Century*, 31 (1886), 517-532

—— *The Grandissimes: A Story of Creole Life* (1957; repr. New York: Hill and Wang, 1967)

—— *Old Creole Days* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1897)

Chopin, Kate, *The Awakening and Selected Stories* (Minneapolis: Filiquarian Publishing, LLC.□, 2007)

'Chronological Digest of the Acts and Deliberations of the Cabildo—1781', *City Archives* (New Orleans Public Library, 2002) <http://nutrias.org/~nopl/inv/digest/digest1781.htm>

'Constitution of the United States: Amendments 11-27', *The Charters of Freedom* <http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/constitution_amendments_11-27.html>

Craige, John Houston, *Black Bagdad* (New York: Milton, Balch & Company, 1933)

'Declaration of the Rights of Man', *The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History, and Diplomacy* (Yale Law School, 2008) <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/rightsof.asp>

Delano, Amasa, *Narrative of the Voyages and Travels in the Northern and Southern Hemispheres: Comprising Three Voyages Round the World; Together with a Voyage of Survey and Discovery, in the Pacific Ocean and Oriental Islands* (Boston: E. G. House, 1817)

Dewey, L. D., *Correspondence Relative to the Emigration to Hayti, of the Free People of Colour in the United States. Together with the Instructions to the Agent Sent out by President Boyer* (New York: Mahlon Day, 1824)

Dunham, Katherine, 'Excerpts from the Dances of Haiti: Function', *Journal of Black Studies*, 15 (1985), 357-379

Elliott, C. W., *St. Domingo: Its Revolutions and its Hero, Toussaint Louverture, an Historical Discourse Condensed for the New York Library Association, Feb. 26, 1855* (New York: J. A. Dix, 1855)

Faulkner, William, *Absalom, Absalom!* (London: Vintage, 2005)

Flournoy, J. Jacobus, *An Essay on the Origin, Habits, &c. of the African Race: Incidental to the Propriety of Having Nothing to Do with Negroes* (New York: [n. pub.], 1835)

Halperin, Victor, Dir., *White Zombie*, prod. by Edward Halperin (United Artists, 1932)

Hassal, Mary, *Secret History; or, The Horrors of St. Domingo, in a series of letters, written by a lady at Cape Francois, to Colonel Burr, late vice-president of the United States, principally during the command of General Rochambeau* (Philadelphia: Bradford & Inskeep, 1808)

Hearn, Lafcadio, *Gombo Zhèbes: Little Dictionary of Creole Proverbs* (New York: Will H. Coleman, 1885)

—— *Two Years in the French West Indies* (New York: Interlink Books, 2001)

Hurston, Zora Neale, *Tell My Horse: Voodoo and Life in Haiti and Jamaica* (New York: Harper & Row, 1938; repr. 1990)

Jefferson, Thomas, 'Farm Book', *Thomas Jefferson Papers: An Electronic Archive* <http://www.masshist.org/thomasjeffersonpapers/farm/>

—— *Notes on the State of Virginia* (Richmond: J. W. Randolph, 1853)

Kennedy, Lionel H. and Thomas Parker, *An Official Report of the Trials of Sundry Negroes, Charged with an Attempt to Raise an Insurrection in the State of South-Carolina: Preceded by an Introduction and Narrative; and an Appendix, A Report of the Trials of Four White Persons, on Indictments for Attempting to Excite the Slaves to Insurrection* (Charleston: James R. Schnenck, 1822)

Lanusse, Armand ed., *Les Cenelles: choix de poésies indigènes* (New Orleans: H. Lauve, 1845)

Latrobe, Benjamin Henry, *Impressions Respecting New Orleans: Diary & Sketches, 1818-1820* (New Orleans: Columbia University Press, 1951)

Le Code Noir, ou Edit du Roy (Paris: [n. pub.], 1685)

Linné, Carl Von, *A general system of nature through the three grand kingdoms of animals, vegetables, and minerals, systematically divided into their several classes, orders, genera, species and varieties, with their habitations, manners, economy, structure, and peculiarities, Translated from Gmelin's last edition, ... amended and enlarged by the improvements and discoveries of later naturalists, ... with a life of Linné, ... copperplates, and a dictionary explanatory of the terms which occur in the several departments of natural history*, trans. by William Thurton, 7 vols (London: Lackington, Allen, and Co., 1806)

Maréchal, Sylvain, *Le Jugement Dernier Des Rois: Prophétie en Un Acte* (Paris: [n. pub.], 1793)

Melville, Herman, *The Piazza Tales* (New York: Dix and Edwards, 1856)

Miscegenation: The Theory of the Blending of the Races Applied to the American White Man and Negro (New York: H. Dexter, Hamilton & Co., 1864)

Moreau de Saint-Méry, Médéric Louis Élie, *Description Topographique, Physique et Politique de la Partie Francaise de l'Isle Saint-Domingue*, 2 vols (Philadelphia: [n. pub.], 1798)

—— *Loix et Constitutions des Colonies Françoises de l'Amérique sous le vent de 1550 à 1785*, 6 vols (Paris: Moutard, Labotiere, et Barois l'aîné, 1786)

Paine, Thomas, *Common Sense* (Philadelphia: R. Bell, 1776)

Rush, Benjamin, *An Account of the Bilious remitting Yellow Fever, as it Appeared in the City of Philadelphia, in the Year 1793* (Philadelphia: Thomas Dobson, 1794)

Saint-Sauveur, J. Grasset de, *Encyclopédie des Voyages* (Paris: [n. pub.], 1796)

Smellie, William, ed., *Encyclopædia Britannica; or, a Dictionary of Arts and Sciences compiled upon a new plan in which the Sciences and Arts are digested into distinct Treatises or Systems; and the various Technical Terms, etc., are explained as they occur in the order of the Alphabet*, 3 vols (Edinburgh: A Bell and Macfarquhar, 1771)

Seabrook, W. B., *The Magic Island* (London, Bombay, and Sydney: George G. Harrap & Company Ltd., 1929)

St. John de Crèvecoeur, J. Hector, *Letters from an American Farmer* (New York: Fox, Duffield & Company, 1904)

'Testimony in the Trial of Gabriel, 6 October 1800', *Library of Virginia* <http://www.lva.virginia.gov/exhibits/DeathLiberty/gabriel/gabtrial17.htm>

‘The Declaration of Independence: A Transcription’, *The Charters of Freedom* <http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/declaration_transcript.html>

Various Artists, *Alan Lomax in Haiti: Recordings for the Library of Congress, 1936-1937* (Harte Recordings, 2009)

Walker, David, *Walker's Appeal, in Four Articles; Together with a Preamble, to the Coloured Citizens of the World, but in Particular, and Very Expressly, to Those of the United States of America, Written in Boston, State of Massachusetts, September 28, 1829* (Boston: [n. pub.], 1829)

Wimpffen, Francis Alexander Stanislaus, Baron de, *A Voyage to Saint Domingo, in the Years 1788, 1789, and 1790*, trans. by J. Wright (London: [n. pub.], 1817)

Wirkus, Faustin and Taney Dudley, The White King of La Gonave (New York: Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc., 1931)

Secondary Sources

1804 and its Afterlives (Nottingham: Nottingham Contemporary, 7-8 December 2012)

‘23 August: International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and of its Abolition’, *UNESCO Online* <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/dialogue/the-slave-route/right-box/related-information/23-august-international-day-for-the-remembrance-of-the-slave-trade-and-of-its-abolition/>

Abraham, Nicolas and Maria Torok, *The Shell and the Kernel: Renewals of Psychoanalysis*, ed. and trans. by Nicholas T. Rand (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994)

—— 'The Wolf Man's Magic Word: A Cryptonymy', trans. by Nicholas Rand, *Theory and History of Literature*, 37 (1986), 1-133

'A Colonial Lady's Clothing: A Glossary of Terms', *Colonial Williamsburg* (The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 2014) <http://www.history.org/history/clothing/women/wglossary.cfm>

Adams-Campbell, Melissa M., *New World Courtships: Transatlantic Alternatives to Companionate Marriage* (Lebanon: Dartmouth College Press, 2015)

Adams, Jessica, Michael P. Bibler, and Cécile Accilien eds, *Just Below South: Intercultural Performance in the Caribbean and the U.S. South* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2007)

After Revolution: Versions and Revisions of Haiti (Preston: Institute of Black Atlantic Research, University of Central Lancashire, 9-10 July 2015)

Allen, Carolyn, 'Creole Then and Now: The Problem of Definition', *Caribbean Quarterly*, 1-2 (1998), 33-49

Amory, Hugh and David D. Hall eds, *A History of the Book in America*, 5 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000)

Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 1991)

Apter, Andrew, 'On African Origins: Creolization and Connaissaince in Haitian Vodou', *American Ethnologist*, 29 (2002), 233–260

Aptheker, Herbert, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, 5th edn (New York: International Publishers, 1983)

Arnheim, Rudolf, *The Power of the Center: A Study of Composition in the Visual Arts*, rev. edn (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982)

Arthur, Charles and J. Michael Dash eds, *Libète: A Haitian Anthology* (London: Latin America Bureau, 1999)

Aslakson, Kenneth, 'The Quadroon-Plaçage Myth of Antebellum New Orleans: Anglo-American (Mis)interpretations of a French-Caribbean Phenomenon, *Journal of Social History*, 45 (2012), 709-734

'Background Note: Cercles des Philadelphes du Cap François Collection', *American Philosophical Society* <http://www.amphilsoc.org/mole/view?docId=ead/Mss.506.7294.C33.1-ead.xml;query=;brand=default#bibliography>

Barthélemy, Gérard and Christian Girault eds, *La République haïtienne: État des lieux et perspectives* (Paris: Karthala, 1993)

Bates, Christopher G. ed., *The Early Republic and Antebellum America: An Encyclopedia of Social, Political, Cultural, and Economic History*, 4 vols (London and New York: Routledge, 2010)

Baumgarten, Linda, *What Clothes Reveal: The Language of Clothing in Colonial and Federal America* (Williamsburg: The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 2002)

Beecher, Jonathan, 'Echoes of Toussaint Louverture and the Haitian Revolution in Melville's "Benito Cereno"', *Leviathan*, 9.2 (2007), 43-58

Bell, Caryn Cossé, *Revolution, Romanticism and the Afro-Creole Protest Tradition in Louisiana 1718-1868* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1997)

Benítez-Rojo, Antonio, *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective*, trans. by James E. Maraniss (Durham and London: Duke University Press), 1992

Bennett, Bridget, 'Invisible Slaves and the American Revolutionary Picturesque' (paper presented for the British Association of Nineteenth-Century Americanists' seminar series *Transatlantic Conversations*, at Senate House, London, UK: 16 May 2014)

Bernier, Celeste-Marie, *Characters of Blood: Black Heroism in the Transatlantic Imagination* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2012)

Bilinsky, Stephanie, 'Creating New Orleans: Race, Religion, Rhetoric, and the Louisiana Purchase' (unpublished master's thesis, Arizona: Arizona State University, 2011)

Bishop, Kyle William, *American Zombie Gothic: The Rise and Fall (and Rise)of the Walking Dead in Popular Culture* (Jefferson and London: McFarland & Company Inc., 2010)

—— 'The Sub-Subaltern Monster: Imperialist Hegemony and the Cinematic Voodoo Zombie', *The Journal of American Culture*, 31.2 (2008), 141-152

Blackburn, Robin, 'Haiti, Slavery, and the Age of the Democratic Revolution', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, 63.4 (2006), 643-674

Blackburn, Robin, *The American Crucible: Slavery, Emancipation and Human Rights* (London: Verso, 2011)

—— 'The Second Slavery and its Fate: The US South, Brazil, and Cuba 1808-1888' (paper presented for Institute of North American Studies Seminar Series at King's College London, London, UK: February 2, 2014)

Blassingame, John ed., *The Frederick Douglass Papers, Series One: Speeches, Debates, and Interviews*, 5 vols (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982)

Bolster, W. Jeffrey, *Black Jacks: African American Seamen in the Age of Sail* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1997)

Boluk, Stephanie and Wylie Lenz eds, *Generation Zombie: Essays on the Living Dead in Modern Culture* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company Inc., 2011)

Bongie, Chris, *Islands and Exiles: The Creole Identities of Post/Colonial Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998)

Booth, Douglas, 'Sites of Truth or Metaphors of Power? Refiguring the Archive', *Sport in History*, 26 (2006), 91-109

Bradley, Jared William ed., *Interim Appointment: W. C. C. Claiborne Letter Book 1804-1805* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002)

Brathwaite, Edward, *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica 1770-1820* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971)

Brooks, Roy L., 'Toward a Post-Attonement America: The Supreme Court's Atonement for Slavery and Jim Crow', *Kansas Law Review*, 57 (2008), 739-754

Brown, Gordon S., *Toussaint's Clause: The Founding Fathers and the Haitian Revolution* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2005)

Buck-Morss, Susan, *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009)

Burkholder, Robert E. ed., *Critical Essays on Herman Melville's 'Benito Cereno'* (New York and Toronto: G. K. Hall & Co., 1992)

Burnett, Katharine A., 'Moving Toward a "No South": George Washington Cable's Global Vision in *The Grandissimes*', *The Southern Literary Journal*, 45 (2012), 21-38

Cage, Claire E., 'The Sartorial Self: Neoclassical Fashion and Gender Identity in France, 1797-1804', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 42 (2009), 193-215

Calarge, Carla, Raphael Dalleo, and Luis Duno-Gottberg eds, *Haiti and the Americas* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2013)

Campanella, Richard, 'An Ethnic Geography of New Orleans', *The Journal of American History*, 94 (2007), 704-715

'CARICOM Reparations Commission Press Statement', *Caribbean Community Secretariat* (December 2013) <http://caricom.org/jsp/pressreleases/press_releases_2013/pres285_13.jsp>

Catterall, Douglas and Jodi Campbell eds, *Women in Port: Gendering Communities, Economics, and Social Networks in Atlantic Port Cities, 1500-1800* (Leiden : Brill, 2012)

Clark, Emily, *The Strange History of the American Quadroon: Free Women of Color in the Revolutionary Atlantic World* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013)

Clavin, Matthew J., *Toussaint Louverture and the American Civil War: The Promise and Peril of a Second Haitian Revolution* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010)

Cleves, Rachel Hope, *The Reign of Terror in America: Visions of Violence from Anti-Jacobinism to Antislavery* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009)

Clinton, Catherine and Michele Gillespie eds, *The Devil's Lane: Sex and Race in the Early South* (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1997)

Clough, Edward, 'Building Yoknapatawpha: Reading Space and the Plantation in William Faulkner' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of East Anglia, 2014)

Collier, Gordon and Ulrich Fleischmann ed., *A Pepper-Pot of Cultures: Aspects of Creolization in the Caribbean* (New York: Rodopi, 2003)

Consentino, Donald J. ed., *Sacred Arts of Haitian Vodou* (Los Angeles: UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History, 1995)

Corbould, Clare, *Becoming African Americans: Black Public Life in Harlem, 1919-1939* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2009)

Crawford, Patricia, *Blood, Bodies and Families in Early Modern England* (Harlow: Pearson, 2004)

Crow, Charles L., *American Gothic*, *History of the Gothic* (Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 2009)

Cumming, Valerie, C.W. Cunnington, and P. E. Cunnington, *The Dictionary of Fashion History* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2010)

Dain, Bruce, 'Haiti and Egypt in Early Black Racial Discourse', *Slavery and Abolition*, 14.3. (1993), 139-161

Dalziel, Pamela, '*Absalom, Absalom!*: The Extension of Dialogic Form,' *Mississippi Quarterly*, 45 (1992), 277-294

Daniel, Yvonne, *Dancing Wisdom: Embodied Knowledge in Haitian Vodou, Cuban Yoruba, and Bahian Candomblé* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2005)

Dann, Otto and John Dinwiddy eds, *Nationalism in the Age of the French Revolution* (London and Ronceverte: The Hambledon Press, 1988)

Danticat, Edwidge, *Krik? Krak!* (London: Abacus, 1996)

Dash, J. Michael, *Haiti and the United States: National Stereotypes and the Literary Imagination* (Hampshire and London: Macmillan Press, 1998)

Daut, Marlene L., *Tropics of Haiti: Race and the Literary History of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World, 1789-1865* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015)

Davis, Thadious M., *Southscapes: Geographies of Race, Region, and Literature* (Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 2011)

Dayan, Colin (Joan), *Haiti, History, and the Gods* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995)

Derrida, Jacques, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. by Eric Prenowitz (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1995)

—— '*Fors*: The Anglish Words of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok', trans. by Barbara Johnson, *Theory and History of Literature*, 37 (1986), xi-xlviii

Dessens, Nathalie, *From Saint-Domingue to New Orleans: Migration and Influences* (Gainsville: University of Florida Press, 2007)

Dillon, Elizabeth Maddock, 'The Secret History of the Early American Novel: Leonora Sansay and Revolution in Saint-Domingue', *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*, 40 (2006-2007), 77-103

Domínguez, Virginia R., *White By Definition: Social Classification in Creole Louisiana* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1986)

Dubois, Laurent and John D. Garrigus eds, *Slave Revolution in the Caribbean 1789-1804: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston and New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2006)

Dubois, Laurent, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004)

—— *Haiti: The Aftershocks of History* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2012)

Earle, Rebecca, 'Casta Paintings and the Colonial Body: Embodying Race in Colonial Spanish America' (paper presented at Institute of Historical Research, London: 16 October 2012)

Edwards, Jay D., 'Creole Architecture: A Comparative Analysis of Upper and Lower Louisiana and Saint-Domingue, *International Journal of Historical Archeology*, 10 (2006), 241-271

—— 'Shotgun: The Most Contested House in America', *Buildings & Landscapes: Journal of the Vernacular Architecture Forum*, 16.1 (2009), 62-96

—— 'The Origins of Creole Architecture', *Winterthur Portfolio*, 29.2-3 (1994), 155-189

Egerton, Douglas R., *He Shall Go Out Free: The Lives of Denmark Vesey* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2004)

Engerman, Stanley L. and Robert E. Gallman eds, *The Cambridge Economic History of the United States*, 3 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000)

Eze, Emmanuel Chukwudi ed., *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997)

Fabella, Yvonne Eileen, 'Inventing the Creole Citizen: Race, Sexuality and the Colonial Order in Pre-Revolutionary Saint-Domingue' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Stony Brook University, 2008)

Fanning, Sara, *Caribbean Crossing: African Americans and the Haitian Emigration Movement* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2015)

Fanon, Frantz, *Black Skin White Masks*, trans. by Charles Lam Markmann (London and Sydney: Pluto Press, 1967)

Farmer, Paul, *AIDS and the Geography of Blame* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 2006)

Feeney, Nolan, 'Sarah Palin Wants Immigrants to "Speak American"', *Time* (Time Inc., 7 September 2015) <http://time.com/4024396/sarah-palin-speak-american-energy-department/>

Fenton, Louise, *Representations of Voodoo: The history and influence of Haitian Vodou within the cultural productions of Britain and America since 1850* (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Warwick, 2009)

Fertel, Rien, *Imagining the Creole City: The Rise of Literary Culture in Nineteenth-Century New Orleans* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2014)

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

Fiedler, Leslie, *Love and Death in the American Novel*, rev. edn (Illinois: Dalkey Archive Press, 1997)

Fischer, Sybille, *Modernity Disavowed: Haiti and the Cultures of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004)

Foner, Laura, 'The Free People of Colour in Louisiana and St. Domingue: A Comparative Portrait of Two Three-Caste Slave Societies', *The Journal of Social History*, 3 (1970), 406-430

Foote, Stephanie, *Regional Fictions in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2001)

French, B. F. ed., *Historical Collections of Louisiana, Embracing Translations of Many Rare and Valuable Documents Relating to the Natural, Civil and Political History of that State*, 5 vols (D. Appleton & Co., 1851)

Freud, Sigmund, *A Phylogenetic Fantasy: Overview of the Transference Neuroses*, ed. by Ilse Grubrich-Simitis, trans. by Axel Hoffer and Peter T. Hoffer (Cambridge and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987)

—— *The Uncanny*, trans. by David McLintock (London: Penguin Books, 2003)

Gallagher, Mary ed., *Ici-Là: Place and Displacement in Caribbean Writing in French* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2003)

Garraway, Doris L. ed., *Tree of Liberty: Cultural Legacies of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World* (Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 2008)

—— *The Libertine Colony: Creolization in the Early French Caribbean* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005)

Garrigus, John D., *Before Haiti: Race and Citizenship in French Saint-Domingue* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006)

—— 'Colour, Class and Identity on the Eve of the Haitian Revolution: Saint-Domingue's Free-Coloured Elite as Colons américains', *Slavery and Abolition: A Journal of Slave and Post-Slave Studies*, 17.1 (1996), 20-43

Gates, Henry Louis, Jr. ed., *The Classic Slave Naratives* (New York: Mentor, 1987)

Geggus, David Patrick, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002)

Geggus, David Patrick and Norman Fiering eds, *The World of the Haitian Revolution* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2009)

Genovese, Eugene D., *From Rebellion to Revolution: Afro-American Slave Revolts in the Making of the Modern World* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1979)

Gilroy, Paul, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London and New York: Verso, 1993)

Glissant, Édouard, *Faulkner, Mississippi*, trans. by Barbara Lewis and Thomas C. Spear (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1996)

—— *Poetics of Relation*, trans. by Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1997)

Glover, Kaiama L., *Haiti Unbound: A Spiralist Challenge to the Postcolonial Canon* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010)

Godden, Richard, '*Absalom, Absalom!* and Faulkner's Erroneous Dating of the Haitian Revolution', *Mississippi Quarterly: The Journal of Southern Culture*, 47 (1994), 489-496

Goldstein-Sepinwall, Alyssa ed., *Haitian History: New Perspectives* (New York and London: Routledge, 2013)

Gordon-Reed, Annette, *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings: An American Controversy* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1997)

Goudie, Sean X. *Creole America: The West Indies and the Formation of Literature and Culture in the New Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006)

Gould, Virginia Meacham ed., *Chained to the Rock of Adversity: To be Free, Black, & Female in the Old South* (Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 1998)

Graff, Harvey ed., *Literacy and Historical Development: A Reader* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2007)

Greenfeld, Liah, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993)

Greenstone, Gerry, 'The History of Bloodletting', *BC Medical Journal*, 52.1 (2010), 12-14

Habermas, Jürgen, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Enquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. by Thomas Burger (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1991)

Haegert, John, 'Voicing Slavery through Silence: Narrative Mutiny in Melville's *Benito Cereno*', *Mosaic*, 26.2 (1993), 21-38

Hall, Gwendolyn Midlo, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana: The Development of Afro-Creole Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992)

Hamilton, John C. ed., *The Works of Alexander Hamilton*, 12 vols, (New York: J. F. Trow, printer, 1850-51)

Handley, George B., *Postslavery Literatures in the Americas: Family Portraits in Black and White* (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 2000)

Hebert, Catherine A., 'The French Element in Pennsylvania in the 1790s: the Francophone Immigrants' Impact', *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 108 (1984), 451-469

Hirsch, Arnold R. and Joseph Logson eds, *Creole New Orleans: Race and Americanization* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1992)

Hogle, Jerrold E. ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002)

Hunt, Alfred N., *Haiti's Influence on Antebellum America: Slumbering Volcano in the Caribbean* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1988)

Ingersoll, Thomas N., *Mamon and Manon in Early New Orleans: The First Slave Society in the Deep South, 1718-1819* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1999)

'International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition', *Records of the General Conference: Resolutions*, vol. 1, 29th session (Paris: UNESCO, 1998), 66-67

Israel, Jonathan, *A Revolution of the Mind: Radical Enlightenment and the Origins of Modern Democracy* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009)

Jackson, Maurice and Jacqueline Bacon eds, *African Americans and the Haitian Revolution: Selected Essays and Historical Documents* (New York and London: Routledge, 2010)

Jaffary, Nora E. ed., *Gender, Race and Religion in the Colonization of the Americas* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2007)

James, C. L. R., *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (London: Penguin Books, 1938; repr. 2001)

Jenson, Deborah, *Beyond the Slave Narrative: Politics, Sex, and Manuscripts in the Haitian Revolution* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011)

—— 'Dessalines's American Proclamations of the Haitian Independence', *The Journal of Haitian Studies*, 15 (2009), 72-102

Johnson, Jerah, *Congo Square in New Orleans* (New Orleans: Louisiana Landmarks Society, 1995)

—— 'New Orleans's Congo Square: An Urban Setting for Early Afro-American Culture Formation', in *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association*, 32.2 (1991), 117-157

Johnson, Ronald Angelo, *Diplomacy in Black and White: John Adams, Toussaint Louverture, and Their Atlantic World Alliance* (Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 2014)

Johnson, Sarah E., *The Fear of French Negroes: Transcolonial Collaboration in the Revolutionary Americas* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2012)

Jones, Gavin, 'Signifying Songs: The Double Meaning of Black Dialect in the Work of George Washington Cable', *American Literary History*, 9 (1997), 244-267

Kafer, Peter, *Charles Brockden Brown's Revolution and the Birth of American Gothic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004)

Kaisary, Philip, *The Haitian Revolution in the Literary Imagination: Radical Horizons, Conservative Constraints* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2014)

Kalinak, Kathryn, *Setting the Score: Music and the Classical Hollywood Film* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992)

Karcher, Carolyn L., *Shadow Over the Promised Land: Slavery, Race and Violence in Melville's America* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1980)

Kein, Sybil ed., *Creole: The History and Legacy of Louisiana's Free People of Color* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000)

Kiple, Kenneth F., *The Caribbean Slave: A Biological History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984)

Kutzinski, Vera M., 'Borders and Bodies: The United States, America, and the Caribbean', *The New Centennial Review*, 1.2 (2001), 55-88

Lachance, Paul, 'Were Saint-Domingue Refugees A Distinctive Cultural Group in Antebellum New Orleans? Evidence from Patterns and Strategies of Property Holding', *Revista/Review Interamericana*, 29 (1999), 171-192

Ladd, Barbara, *Nationalism and the Color Line in George W. Cable, Mark Twain, and William Faulkner* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1996)

—— *Resisting History: Gender, Modernity, and Authorship in William Faulkner, Zora Neale Hurston, and Eudora Welty* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2007)

—— '"The Direction of the Howling": Nationalism and the Color Line in *Absalom, Absalom!*', *American Literature*, 66 (1994), 525-551

Lane, Christopher, 'The Testament of the Other: Abraham and Torok's Failed Expiation of Ghosts', *Diacritics*, 27.4 (1997), 3-29

Largey, Michael, *Vodou Nation: Haitian Art, Music, and Cultural Nationalism* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2006)

Lawrence, Thomas, 'Arthur Mervyn and the Apocalyptic Politics of Contamination' (paper presented at the Modern Language Association Convention 2004 Special Session, *Philadelphia Infections: Charles Brockden Brown, Disease, and the Distempered Imagination,* December 2004)
<https://www.academia.edu/221697Arthur_Mervyn_and_the_Apocalyptic_Politics_of_Contamination>

Levander, C. F. and R. S. Levine eds, *A Companion to American Literary Studies* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2011)

Levine, Robert S. and Samuel eds, Otter *Frederick Douglass & Herman Melville: Essays in Relation* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008)

Levine, Robert S., *Dislocating Race and Nation: Episodes in Nineteenth-Century American Literary Nationalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008)

Lewis, Richard Anthony, 'Luigi Marie Sotta', *KnowLA Encyclopedia of Louisiana*, ed. by David Johnson, Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities (2012)
<http://www.knowla.org/entry/1159/&view=summary>

Loren, Diana DiPaolo, *The Archaeology of Clothing and Bodily Adornment in Colonial America* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2010)

Madsen, Deborah, *American Exceptionalism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998)

Matthews, John T., 'Recalling the West Indies: From Yoknapatawpha to Haiti and Back', *American Literary History*, 16 (2004), 238-262

McAlister, Elizabeth, 'From Slave Revolt to a Blood Pact with Satan: The Evangelical Rewriting of Haitian History', *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses*, 41.2 (2012), 1–29

—— *Rara! Vodou, Power, and Performance in Haiti and Its Diaspora* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 2002)

McClellan, James E. III, *Colonialism and Science: Saint Domingue in the Old Regime* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992)

Métraux, Alfred, *Voodoo in Haiti*, trans. by Hugo Charteris (London: Andre Deutsch, 1959)

'Milestones: 1801-1829', *U.S. Department of State: Office of the Historian* <http://history.state.gov/milestones/1801-1829/louisiana-purchase>

Miller, Mary Ashburn, 'Mountain, Become a Volcano: The Image of the Volcano in the Rhetoric of the French Revolution', *French Historical Studies*, 32 (2009), 555-585

Mitchell, Reid, *All on a Mardi Gras Day: Episodes in the History of New Orleans Carnival* (1995; repr. Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1999)

Moreland, Richard C. ed., *A Companion to William Faulkner* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007)

Morrison, Toni, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1992)

Mullin, Michael, *Africa in America: Slave Acculturation and Resistance in the American South and the British Caribbean* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992)

Munro, Martin and Celia Britton eds, *American Creoles: The Francophone Caribbean and the American South* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012)

Munro, Martin and Elizabeth Walcott-Hackshaw eds, *Echoes of the Haitian Revolution 1804-2004* (Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2008)

Musto, Sylvia, 'Portraiture, Revolutionary Identity and Subjugation: Anne-Louis Girodet's Citizen Belley', *Canadian Art Review*, 20 (1993), 60-71

Nelson, Dana D., *Nationalist Manhood: Capitalist Citizenship and the Imagined Fraternity of White Men* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998)

Nicholls, David, *From Dessalines to Duvalier: Race, Colour and National Independence in Haiti* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979)

Nussbaum, Felicity ed., *The Global Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003)

Oberg, Barbara B. ed., *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson* (1950-), vol. 37 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010)

OED Online, Oxford University Press <http://www.oed.com/>

'Origin of the term "Creole"', *The Times Picayune* (22 December 1884) <http://www.newspapers.com/newspage/28272852/>

Ott, Thomas O., *The Haitian Revolution, 1789-1804* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1973)

Pamphile, Leon D., *Haitians and African Americans: A Heritage of Tragedy and Hope* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2008)

Perovic, Sanja, *The Calendar in Revolutionary France: Perceptions of Time in Literature, Culture, Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012)

Peterson, Christopher, 'The Haunted House of Kinship: Miscegenation: Homosexuality, and Faulkner's "Absalom, Absalom!"'', *The New Centennial Review*, 4 (2004), 227-265

Peterson, Merrill D. ed., *Thomas Jefferson: Writings*, (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, Inc., 1984)

Phillips, Adam ed., *The Penguin Freud Reader*, (London: Penguin Books, 2006)

Popkin, Jeremy D. ed., *Facing Racial Revolution: Eyewitness Accounts of the Haitian Insurrection* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2007)

Porter, Roy, *Blood and Guts: A Short History of Medicine* (London: Allen Lane, 2002)

Potofsky, Allan, 'The "Non-Aligned Status" of French Emigrés and Refugees in Philadelphia, 1793-1798', *Transatlantica*, 2 (2006) <http://transatlantica.revues.org/1147> [accessed 1 July 2014]

Price-Mars, Jean, *So Spoke the Uncle (Ainsi Parla l'Oncle)*, trans. by Magdaline W. Shannon (Washington, D.C.: Three Continents Press, 1983)

Rashkin, Esther, 'Psychoanalytic Literary Criticism: The Work of Abraham and Torok', *Diacritics*, 18.4 (1988), 31-52

Rank, Otto, *The Double: A Psychoanalytic Study*, ed. and trans. by Harry Tucker, Jr. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1971)

Ransom, Roger L. and Richard Such, *One Kind of Freedom: The Economic Consequences of Emancipation*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001)

Renda, Mary A., *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001)

Reynolds, Amy and Brooke Barnett eds, *Communication and the Law: Multidisciplinary Approaches to Research* (Mahwah and London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2006)

Rhodes, Gary D., *White Zombie: Anatomy of a Horror Film* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2001)

Rodriguez, Junius P. ed., *The Historical Encyclopedia of World Slavery*, 2 vols (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 1997)

Ross, Dorothy, 'Historical Consciousness in Nineteenth-Century America', *The American Historical Review*, 89 (1984), 909-928

Said, Edward, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994)

Scarborough, William Kauffman, *Masters of the Big House: Elite Slaveholders of the Mid-Nineteenth-Century South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003)

Schnapp, Alain, *The Discovery of the Past: The Origins of Archaeology* (London: British Museum Press, 1996)

Schwab, Gabriele, *Haunting Legacies: Violent Histories and Transgenerational Trauma* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010)

Scott, Georgia, *Headwraps: A Global Journey* (Cambridge: Public Affairs, 2003)

Scott, James C., *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990)

Scott, Niall, *Monsters and the Monstrous: Myths and Metaphors of Enduring Evil* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2007)

Shankman, Andrew ed., *The World of the Revolutionary American Republic, Land, Labor, and the Conflict for a Continent* (New York and London: Routledge, 2014)

Sheller, Mimi, *Consuming the Caribbean: From Arawaks to Zombies* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003)

Sidbury, James, *Ploughshares into Swords: Race, Rebellion, and Identity in Gabriel's Virginia, 1730-1810* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1997)

Sigerist, Henry ed., *Supplements to the Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, No. 9 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1947)

Simon, Peter ed., *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism* (London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001)

Skeehan, Danielle C., 'Caribbean Women, Creole Fashioning, and the Fabric of Black Atlantic Writing', *The Eighteenth Century*, 56.1 (2015), 105-123

Smith, Hilda L. and Berenice A. Carroll eds, *Women's Political and Social Thought: An Anthology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000)

Sollors, Werner, *Neither Black nor White yet Both: Thematic Explorations of Interracial Literature* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997)

Solnit, Rebecca and Rebecca Snedeker eds, *Unfathomable City: A New Orleans Atlas*, (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 2013)

Stanchich, Maritza, 'The Hidden Caribbean "Other" in William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*: An Ideological Ancestry of U.S. Imperialism', *Mississippi Quarterly: The Journal of Southern Culture*, 49 (1996), 603-618

Strongman, Roberto, 'The Afro-Diasporic Body in Haitian Vodou and the Transcending of Gendered Cartesian Corporeality', *Kunapipi*, 30.2 (2008), 11-29

Sundquist, Eric J., *Faulkner: The House Divided* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1983)

Taylor, P. Sean, '"We Live in the Midst of Death": Yellow Fever, Moral Economy, and Public Health in Philadelphia, 1793-1805' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Northern Illinois University, 2001)

'The New Virginia Law to Preserve Racial Integrity', *Library of Virginia* <https://lva.omeka.net/items/show/62>

Thompson, Shirley Elizabeth, *Exiles at Home: The Struggle to Become American in Creole New Orleans* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2009)

Timothy, Helen Pyne, '(Re)Membering African Religion and Spirituality in the African Diaspora', *Journal of Haitian Studies*, 8.1 (2002), 134-149

Toledano, Roulhac, *A Pattern Book of New Orleans Architecture* (Gretna: Pelican Publishing, 2010)

Trefzer, Annette, 'Possessing the Self: Caribbean Identities in Zora Neale Hurston's Tell My Horse', *African American Review*, 34 (2000), 299-312

Trouillot, Michel-Rolph, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995)

Tyrrell, Ian, 'American Exceptionalism in an Age of International History', *The American Historical Review*, 96 (1991), 1031-1055

Vidal, Cécile ed., *Louisiana: Crossroads of the Atlantic World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014)

Wagner-Martin, Linda and Cathy N. Davidson eds, *The Oxford Book of Women's Writing in the United States* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1995)

Warner, Marina, *Fantastic Metamorphoses, Other Worlds: Ways of Telling the Self* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002)

Washburne, Christopher, 'The Clave of Jazz: A Caribbean Contribution to the Rhythmic Foundation of an Early African-American Music', *Black Music Research Journal*, 17.1 (1997), 59-80

Weber, Max, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. by Talcott Parsons (London and New York: Routledge, 1992)

Weinstock, Jeffrey Andrew ed., *Spectral America: Phantoms and the National Imagination*, (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2004)

West, Michael O., William G. Martin, and Fanon Che Wilkins eds, *From Toussaint to Tupac: The Black International Since the Age of Revolution* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009)

Wheat, Ellen Harkins and Patricia Hills, *Jacob Lawrence: American Painter* (Seattle: Seattle Art Museum, 1986)

White, Ashli, *Encountering Revolution: Haiti and the Making of the Early Republic* (Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010)

Williams, Patrick and Laura Chrisman eds, *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994)

Willson, Nicole, 'A New "Kanavalesque": Re-imagining Haiti's Revolution(s) through the Work of Leah Gordon', *Harts and Minds*, 1.1 (2013) <http://www.harts-minds.co.uk/#/11-spring-2013/4571887394>

Wilson, Samuel Jr., 'The Building Contract for Evergreen Plantation, 1832', *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association*, 31 (1990), 399-406

Winterer, Caroline, *The Culture of Classicism: Ancient Greece and Rome in American Intellectual Life 1780-1910* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002)

Wood, Marcus, *Blind Memory: Visual Representations of Slavery in England and America 1780-1865* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2000)

Wu, Duncan ed., *Romanticism: An Anthology* (Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell, 1994; repr. 1996)