

Toussaint Louverture and Haiti's History as Muse:
Legacies of Colonial and Postcolonial Resistance in Francophone
African and Caribbean Corpus

by

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of
Romance Studies in the Graduate School
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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

This dissertation explores the themes of race and resistance in nineteenth-century Haitian writings and highlights their impact on French-speaking nineteenth- and twentieth-century African and Caribbean literature. This exploration spans across literary genres and centuries, and juxtaposes disciplines that are rarely put into dialogue with each other. Central to my approach is an interdisciplinary perspective that sheds light on the key interactions between colonial history, legal decrees, anthropology and engaged literature in nineteenth-century French and Francophone studies. And in charting the impact of these writings on the twentieth-century Francophone landscape, this project also addresses current debates in Caribbean, French and Haitian studies and contributes to the growing literature in black Atlantic and postcolonial studies. This research project begins by analyzing rhetorical representations of race and resistance in rare texts from Toussaint Louverture, Pompée-Valentin de Vastey and Juste Chanlatte, in particular with respect to their representations of the Haitian revolution (1791-1804), the only successful slave revolt in history to have resulted in the creation of a new state. By focusing on how Louverture, Vastey and Chanlatte responded to slavery, pseudo-scientific theories of racial difference, and the pernicious effects of the colonial system, it explores both the significance of the revolution's literary representation and the extent of its impact on postcolonial imaginations in Haiti, and the rest of the Caribbean, Africa and France. In particular, I analyze the impact these texts had on subsequent African and Caribbean literature by Emeric Bergeaud, Joseph-Anténor Firmin, Marie Vieux-Chauvet, Aimé Césaire, Edouard Glissant, and Bernard Dadié.

Dedication

For my grandparents, Maria & Roger Niemann, along with my parents,
Elisabeth Niemann & Jacques Dieudé, as well as my brother, Michel Dieudé, and last
but not least for Amir Aazami

Contents

| | |
|-----------------------|-----|
| Abstract | iv |
| Dedication | v |
| Contents | vi |
| Acknowledgements..... | vii |
| Introduction | 1 |
| Chapter One | 7 |
| Chapter Two | 58 |
| Chapter Three..... | 108 |
| Afterword..... | 144 |
| Bibliography | 152 |
| Biography..... | 160 |

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Introduction

To the real question, How does it feel to be a problem? I answer seldom a word (...) I remember well when the shadow swept across me (...) In a wee wooden schoolhouse, something put it into the boys' and girls' heads to buy gorgeous visiting-cards -ten cents a package- and exchange. The exchange was merry, till one girl, a tall newcomer, refused my card, -refused it peremptorily, with a glance. Then it dawned upon me with a certain suddenness that I was different from the others; or like, mayhap, in heart and life and longing, *but shut out from their world by a vast veil.* (W.E.B. Du Bois, 9) ¹

This quotation struck me immediately the very first time I came across it, during the preparation of a research paper on Claire de Duras' novel *Ourika* (1823). In a few lines, W.E.B. Du Bois captures the essence of racial, colonial and postcolonial problems and raises awareness on questions that Toussaint Louverture, Joseph-Ant enor Firmin, and Aim  C saire, among others, also addressed in their writings. Different authors, distinct times, same questions, similar problems, and solutions that resonate with each other: writing to resist, resist in writing, writing for resisting. In this passage, W.E.B Du Bois manages to succinctly grab our attention, challenge our assumption, and change our way of looking at race, resistance, and the barrier and metaphor of the veil.

In his selection of short stories titled *Flying Home and other Stories* (1941), Ralph Ellison (1914-1994) dedicates one of his writings to Toussaint Louverture. ² In "Mister Toussan," two young black boys, Riley and Buster, are seating outside watching an old white man rocking back and forth on his chair. During this time Riley's mother is singing and "sewing for the white folks" (23). As the two boys speak to each other, Buster shares with Riley a story one of his teachers has told him:

¹ Gates Jr., Henry Louis, and Terri Hime Olivier, eds. Du Bois, W. E. Burghardt. *The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches* (1903). New York: Norton, 1999. 9. Print. Italics mine

² Callahan, F John, ed. Ellison, Ralph. "Mister Toussan" (1941) in *Flying Home and Other Stories*. New York: Random House, 1998. 23. Print

“(…) She tole us ‘bout one of the African guys named Toussan what she said whipped Napolen! (…) Really, man. She said he come from a place named Hayti (…) Really, man, she said that Toussan and his men got up on one of them African mountains and shot down them peckerwood soldiers fass as they’d try to come up (…) and they throwed ‘em off the mountain…” (26-7)

They are both getting very excited about this story, and as Buster shares his name one more time with Riley, his friend thinks that his name is the American equivalent to “Tarzan”: “And where did ole what you call ‘im run them guys?…”/ His name was Toussan.”/ “Toozan! Just like Tarzan…”/ “Not Taar-zan, dummy, Toou-zan!” (27)

Clearly very excited by this conversation, Toussaint Louverture is becoming the paragon of a black leader, whose accomplishments and legacy inspire them in their present lives. In this sense, Louverture becomes an argument and provides an excellent tool by which to deconstruct racial prejudices, colonial and slave trade systems. In looking more closely, Louverture becomes the metaphor for the metamorphosis from the colonized Saint-Domingue to the newly independent Haiti, and represents the hope of a better future for previously colonialized, segregated and subordinated population.

This idealized version of Toussaint Louverture and Haiti’s history, however, is strongly challenged in C.L.R. James’s play *Toussaint Louverture: The Story of the Only Successful Slave Revolt in History* (1934).³ In this piece, Louverture’s ambiguity is exposed in detail, and particularly his naïve loyalty to France and the French language, which reveals the extent to which, even though he was fighting against colonialism, he was not himself fully decolonized. In the second act, as General Maitland, an officer of the British army, offers Louverture the chance of freeing Saint-Domingue and of

³ Hogsberg, Christian, ed. *Toussaint Louverture: The Story of the Only Successful Slave Revolt in History*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2013. Print.

becoming King of Santo Domingo, he politely but firmly refuses, creating a vivid exchange between Louverture, Henri Christophe (who became Henry I, King of Haiti), and Jean-Jacques Dessalines (who declared Haiti independent after Louverture's arrest by the French government). This key scene unveils the ambivalence and ambiguity of Louverture's mindset, thereby providing a complex and nuanced portrait of Saint-Domingue and Haiti's history:

Dessalines: You know and yet you talk of loyalty to France. The people know too. They are restless, confused. All we want is freedom. Finish with all this loyalty, Toussaint. They will fight for freedom to the last man.

Toussaint: Freedom –yes- but freedom is not everything. Dessalines, look at the state of the people. We who live here shall never see Africa again – some of us born here have never seen it. Language we have none –French is now our language. We have no education - the little that some of us know we have learnt from France. Those few of us who are Christians follow the French religion. We must stay with France as long as she does not seek to restore slavery. (93-4)

What does Louverture's consciousness and ambiguity toward his own country reveal? To what extent does his ambivalence reflect the importance of his legacy as a source of inspiration for subsequent generations? The purpose of this dissertation, "Toussaint Louverture and Haiti's History as Muse: Legacies of Colonial and Postcolonial Resistance in Francophone African and Caribbean Corpus," is to answer these questions as well as to map out the writings from and about Louverture written in the French language, so as to appreciate his impact and influence. In putting into dialogue Louverture's life and ambiguity along with Haiti's history, one can get a sense of the extent to which he became a source of inspiration across languages, eras, and continents.

The first chapter of this dissertation begins with an exploration of the specific rhetorical techniques used in a selection of provocative texts by political figures from 1794 to 1824. In “The Politics of Rhetoric in the Haitian Revolution: Unveiling Toussaint Louverture, Pompée-Valentin de Vastey, and Juste Chanlatte,” I show that these authors return frequently to tropes of the veil -- of oblivion, prejudice, error or hypocrisy -- in their representations of the Haitian revolution. These letters, memoirs, and essays reveal a re-appropriation of Haitian history that goes hand-in-hand with a rewriting of the authors’ own stories in an effort to legitimize their historical roles in the eyes of their Haitian and French audiences. Although metaphors of the veil were a common rhetorical device in the French revolutionary context as well, here they are employed to justify the resilience and resistance of the Haitian population. Contradictions and omissions in the notion of hypocritical or deceitful veiling also allow us to grasp the complex process of fictionalizing the writers’ own identities. This process of revealing key elements of their identities and historical contexts while at the same time hiding others, exemplifies the rewriting of knowledge and subjectivity through literature. These authors’ deployment of techniques of omission and opacity contributed to the creation of a tradition of a politics of resistance in the black Francophone world.

Chapter two, “Haitian Metamorphoses: Pioneer Allegories in the Work of Emeric Bergeaud, Joseph-Anténor Firmin, and Marie Vieux-Chauvet” analyzes both prose and novels distributed over the broad time period from 1859 to 1957, that nevertheless share a figuration of postcolonial resistance and internal revolution through the metamorphosis of intellectually pioneering figures. In Haiti’s first novel, *Stella*, Bergaud

uses the story of the diversely racialized siblings Romulus and Rémus, children of the maternal “Marianne” figure Marie l’Africaine, to represent the emergence out of colonized Saint-Domingue of the independent country named Haiti. In *De l’Egalité des Races Humaines (Anthropologie positive)*, Firmin shares his own transformative experience as a Haitian intellectual who is accepted to the Paris Anthropological Society at a time when he is supposed to belong to an inferior race. From this paradoxical situation Firmin draws the inspiration for his 662-page deconstruction of racist theories developed in Joseph Arthur de Gobineau’s (1816-1882) *Essai sur l’Inégalité des Races Humaines*. Vieux-Chauvet offers an in-depth analysis of the metamorphosis of the first person of color in Saint-Domingue allowed to sing and perform at the Comédie in Port-au-Prince -- the “mulatta” actress Minette -- as a metaphor for Saint Domingue’s transformation. Through these fictions of inaugural metamorphoses, Bergaud, Firmin and Vieux-Chauvet allegorize the importance of individual and collective resistance, solidarity and transformation as a springboard for an ongoing Haitian national revolution.

This dissertation’s third chapter explores the legacy of Toussaint Louverture in a selection of plays and essays from 1961 to 1973. In “Toussaint Louverture as the Personification of Haiti’s legacies in Aimé Césaire, Edouard Glissant and Bernard Dadié,” I analyze the allegorical adaptation of the Haitian revolution to visions and revisions of African and Afro-diasporic statehood in the twentieth century. The three Francophone African and Caribbean authors in question frame Toussaint Louverture’s roles and limitations during the transition from Saint-Domingue to Haiti as an exemplary case for their own evolving geopolitical identities. In *Toussaint Louverture: La*

Révolution Française et le Problème Colonial, Aimé Césaire discusses Saint-Domingue's exceptionalism and Toussaint Louverture's pioneering role in harnessing the tensions between the different socio-economic and racial groups for the purposes of radical social change. Edouard Glissant offers in *Monsieur Toussaint* a portrait of Louverture as both a "charismatic hero and a tragic figure," playing the role of the prophet with a vision of the significance of the unfolding transformation in the *Perles des Antilles*. In his play *Iles de Tempête*, Bernard Dadié unveils Louverture's mimetic attitude vis-à-vis France and Napoléon Bonaparte using authentic archival letters and drawing a key parallel between Saint-Domingue and newly independent African countries. Ultimately, Césaire, Glissant, and Dadié offer a complex and human portrait of Louverture, putting into perspective the legacy of his accomplishments, errors and visions for subsequent generations of independence movements.

Chapter One

The Politics of Rhetoric in the Haitian Revolution:

Unveiling Toussaint Louverture, Pompée-Valentin de Vastey, & Juste Chanlatte

Abstract

This dissertation begins with an exploration of the specific rhetorical techniques used in a selection of literarily provocative texts by political figures from 1794 to 1824. In “The Politics of Rhetoric in the Haitian Revolution: Unveiling Toussaint Louverture, Pompée-Valentin de Vastey, and Juste Chanlatte,” I show that these authors return frequently to tropes of the veil —of oblivion, prejudice, error or hypocrisy— in their representations of the Haitian revolution. These letters, memoirs, and essays reveal a re-appropriation of Haitian history that goes hand-in-hand with a rewriting of the authors’ own stories in an effort to legitimate their historical roles in the eyes of their Haitian and French audiences. Although metaphors of the veil were a common rhetorical device in the French revolutionary context as well, here they are employed to justify the resilience and resistance of the Haitian population. Contradictions and omissions in the notion of hypocritical or deceitful veiling also allows us to grasp the complex process of fictionalizing the writers’ own identities. This process of revealing key elements of their identities and historical contexts, while at the same time hiding others, exemplifies the rewriting of knowledge and subjectivity through literature. These authors’ deployment of techniques of omission and opacity contributed to the creation of a tradition of a politics of resistance in the black Francophone world.

1.1. *The Politics of Rhetoric in Toussaint Louverture's Writings (1795-1801)*

Introduction

The writings of Toussaint Louverture (1743-1803), Pompée-Valentin de Vastey (1781-1820), and Juste Chanlatte (1766-1828) have rarely been analyzed as a corpus. Yet they represent the earliest wave of narrative historical “ownership” of the Haitian revolution by Haitian writers. Although Toussaint Louverture has only recently been recognized as a writer as well as a thinker, his correspondence and memoir, Vastey’s *The Colonial System Unveiled* (1814), and Chanlatte’s *History of the Catastrophe of Saint-Domingue* (1824), represent a subjective rescripting of the meaning and empirical events of the revolution. This first chapter assesses the “unveiling” of personal, even autobiographical, narratives in the critical discourse unveiling Haitian history and the biographical stories of Louverture, Vastey, and Chanlatte. Prose narratives ostensibly dedicated to exposing or “unveiling” colonial wrongs, I argue, also unveil the author’s first person experiences, creating a kind of submerged autobiographical element. How does narration of the history of Saint Domingue and Haiti permit the reshaping and rewriting the author’s own story?

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, a trope is defined in rhetoric as figure of speech, “which consists in the use of a word or phrase in a sense other than that which is proper to it (...)”¹ This definition echoes the one that Ephraim Chambers offers in *Cyclopaedia* from 1741, where a trope is defined as “a word or expression used in a different sense from what it properly signifies. Or, a word changed from its proper and

¹ Oxford English Dictionary. “Trope”. Web. 10 February, 2013.
<<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/206679?rskey=2nj2UE&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>>

natural signification to another, with some advantage (...)” (Aravamudan 1).² During the era of the French and Haitian revolutions, the use of the specific trope of veiling and unveiling can be developed in relation to Edouard Glissant’s concept of *opacité*, Michael Dash’s notions of tropes and tropicality, and Srinivas Aravamudan’s paradigm of a tropicalized Enlightenment in Saint-Domingue.³ Even though the images of veiling and unveiling slavery, colonialism and racial prejudices belong to this longer tradition of tropes in Caribbean literature and theory, including for instance “the trope of wildness and that of the noble savage” (Dash 26), they nevertheless belong to a unique set of tropes.⁴ The metaphors of veiling and unveiling in *Louverture*, *Vastey*, and *Chanlatte* provide a performative, motoric revelation of racial distinctions and the ambiguous social arena of Saint-Domingue. They reveal the author’s political agenda and use of rhetorical devices to convince large French-speaking audiences, already literate in the rhetoric of veiling and unveiling from writings about the French revolution. The veil of imposture, mystery and blood had been made visceral in representations of the French revolution such as Antoine-François de Bertrand de Moleville’s *Annals of the French Revolution*.⁵ However, as Aimé Césaire stated in

² Aravamudan, Srinivas. “Introduction: Colonialism and Eighteenth-Century Studies” in *Tropicopolitans: Colonialism and Agency, 1688-1804*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1999. Print. 1

³ *Ibid.* and see Dash, Michael. J. *The Other America: Caribbean Literature in a New World Context*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998. Print and see Crowley, Patrick. “Édouard Glissant: Resistance and *Opacité*.” *Romance Studies*, Volume 24, Number 2, July 2006. Print. 105-115

⁴ Dash, Michael. J. *The Other America: Caribbean Literature in a New World Context*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998. Print. 26

Boisrond Tonnerre, Louis Félix Mathurin. *Mémoires pour Servir à l’Histoire d’Haiti*. Port-au-Prince: Editions des Antilles, 1991. Print. 41: “Je passerai rapidement sur les événements qui ont precede de quelques mois l’arrivée des Français à Saint-Domingue, pour rassembler, s’il m’est possible, tous les faits qui achèveront de dévoiler leurs perfidies aux yeux des nations courbées sous leur joug de fer.”

⁵ See Bertrand de Moleville, Antoine-François. “Appendix” in *Annals of the French Revolution or, a chronological account of its principal events with a variety of anecdotes and characters*. Volume 4. London: Sampson Low, 1800. Print. 166 “Déjà même toutes ces vérités sont devenues sensibles; déjà le voile de

Toussaint Louverture: La Révolution française et le problème colonial, the revolution taking place in the French colonies was not another French revolution, but rather a unique revolution taking place with its own specific rules and objectives (Césaire 24): “Il faut bien qu’on le comprenne; il n’y a pas de “Révolution française” dans les colonies françaises. Il y a dans chaque colonie française une révolution spécifique, née à l’occasion de la Révolution française branchée sur elle mais se déroulant selon ses lois propres et avec ses objectifs particuliers.”⁶

In the case of Toussaint Louverture, the tropes of the veil of oblivion, prejudice, error and hypocrisy reveal a re-appropriation of Haitian history that goes hand-in-hand with a rewriting of the author’s own story in an effort to convince his audience. The metaphor of the veil justifies the resilience and resistance of the Haitian population. Toussaint’s rhetoric is consistent with the November 29, 1803 independent document the document signed by Jean-Jacques Dessalines, Henri Christophe and Philippe Clerveaux symbolizing the freedom of Saint-Domingue from its colonial ties to France with image of the veil:

The independence of St. Domingo is proclaimed. Restored to our primitive dignity, we have secured our rights; we swear never to cede them to any power in the world. *The frightful veil of prejudice* is torn in pieces; let it remain so forever [.] Woe to him who may wish to collect the bloodstained tatters. We have sworn to show no mercy to those who may dare to speak to us of slavery.⁷

l’imposture se déchire de toutes parts, et les murmures contre l’Assemblée qui a usurpé tous les pouvoirs et anéanti tous les droits, s’étendent d’une extrémité du Royaume à l’autre.”

⁶ Césaire, Aimé. *Toussaint Louverture: La Révolution Française et le Problème Colonial*. Paris: Présence Africaine, 1981. Print. 24

⁷ Dessalines by William Wells Brown accessed on January 16, 2012. Italics mine <http://www.cwo.com/~lucumi/dessalines.html>

This specific metaphor highlights as well the importance of the key issues at stake in this entangled historical context in trying to get rid of the colonial, gender, and racial barriers that the population of Saint-Domingue faced.

Saint-Domingue's and Haiti's history are part of the larger Black history of resistance that contextualized Louverture's revolutionary actions and inspired numerous writers. For Sibylle Fischer, Haiti symbolized for instance the struggles and aspirations of the black diaspora. Many diasporic writers, from C. L. R. James to Derek Walcott and Edouard Glissant, have written important works that were inspired by the Haitian Revolution. Any analysis of the silences in the Western record therefore needs to be balanced against the central position of Haiti in the representation the cultures of the Black Atlantic,⁸ in which Toussaint Louverture played an exemplary role.

As this passage from the Rev. John R. Beard, Louverture was an intriguing, mysterious, and veiled figure:

His mind appeared in his countenance and his manner, *yet only as if under a veil*. His looks were noble and dignified, rather than refined; ...his eyes, darting fire, told of the burning elements of his soul. Though little aided by what is called education, he, in the potency of his mind, bent and moulded language to his thoughts, and ruled the minds of others by an eloquence which was no less concise than simple, fused ideas into proverbs, and put into circulation sayings that reported to be still current in his native land. (Tyson 129-30)⁹

What does Louverture's own use of the veiling and unveiling of truth, omission, and oblivion reveal about his own veiled identity?

⁸ Gina Ulysse. "Sibylle Fischer" in "Bomb". New York: Issue 90, Winter 2005. Interview available online on January 25, 2012: <http://bombsite.com/issues/90/articles/2712>

⁹ George F. Tyson, Jr Ed. "Toussaint in History. The Abolitionists: Rev. John R. Beard" in *Toussaint Louverture*. New Jersey, Prentice-Hall, 1973. 129-130. Italics mine

Toussaint Louverture's Biography

The uncommon trajectory of Toussaint Louverture encapsulated the unique history of Saint-Domingue and Haiti, which is complex, multi-layered and full of contradictions. François Dominique Toussaint Louverture was a slave of African ancestry who was born around May 20, 1743 on the large Bréda plantation near Cap Français in the northern part of Saint-Domingue (today Cap-Haïtien).¹⁰ According to one of Toussaint Louverture sons, Isaac Louverture, Toussaint's father was "an African prince, the second son of an Arada king, who had been captured and sent to Saint-Domingue as a slave."¹¹ The case of Toussaint Louverture is particularly exceptional in the sense that he grew up building a unique relationship with the manager of the Bréda estate, Bayou de Libertas (or "Bayon de Libertad"), and apparently received informal education from his godfather Pierre Baptiste Simon.¹² His godfather, a free black "who had been educated by missionaries" and lived in Le Cap, is said to have taught him geometry along with French and some Latin.¹³ As a black educated slave, Toussaint Louverture, according to James, had some understanding of politics and the military art thanks to his readings of Caesar's *Commentaries* and of the economics engaged in

¹⁰ Paul Finkelman Ed. Roy E. Finkenbin. "Toussaint Louverture" in *Encyclopedia in African American History 1619-1895: From the Colonial Period to the Age of Frederick Douglass*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006. 242

¹¹ Laurent Dubois. *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004. 171

¹² George F. Tyson, Jr Ed. "Introduction" in *Toussaint Louverture*. New Jersey, Prentice-Hall, 1973. 12

¹³ C.L.R James. *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint Louverture and the San Domingo Revolution*. New York: Vintage, 1989. 19-20 and 91

Laurent Dubois. *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004. 172

colonial expansion and trade thanks to the Abbé Raynal's writings.¹⁴ After being a coachman and a driver, Toussaint was freed at the age of thirty-three, and then married Suzanne Simone Baptiste. He became a slave-owner from 1776 onwards, and joined the army after 1791.¹⁵ Toussaint Louverture became "Governor General for Life" on April 1, 1797. Even though Saint-Domingue remained a French colony, Louverture appreciated a large amount of authority and success. To reign in this power, Napoléon Bonaparte decided to send twenty-two thousand French troops along with his brother-in-law, Charles Leclerc.¹⁶ After resisting, Toussaint Louverture was controversially captured in May 1802 and deported to the jail of Fort-de-Joux in the Doubs in France, where he passed away on April 7, 1803.

Since the end of the eighteenth century, Toussaint Louverture's life achievements and downfalls have been a major source of inspiration in the imagination of the Haitian revolution for the population of Haiti, along with writers, politicians and other prominent black diasporic figures from the international scene. He received significant attention from the nineteenth- to the twenty-first century from English, French, German, Kreyol and Spanish-speaking authors. Toussaint Louverture was the point of focus in different disciplines such as anthropology with Joseph-Anténor Firmin, history with C. L. R. James, and literature with Alphonse de Lamartine. Poets such as William Wordsworth and John Greenleaf Wittier, but also Aimé Césaire, Derek

¹⁴ C.L.R James. *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint Louverture and the San Domingo Revolution*. New York: Vintage, 1989. 91

¹⁵ Nick Nesbitt. *Toussaint Louverture: The Haitian Revolution*. London: Verso, 2008. 40

¹⁶ Paul Finkelman Ed. Roy E. Finkenbin. "Toussaint Louverture" in *Encyclopedia in African American History 1619-1895: From the Colonial Period to the Age of Frederick Douglass*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006. 243

Walcott, Jacques Roumain and René Depestre, took up positions regarding Toussaint Louverture's accomplishments and contradictions.¹⁷ Some others contributed to publish his memoirs and wrote about Louverture's life in order to share the story of his legacy, which was intimately intertwined with the history of Saint Domingue.

The Haitian lawyer Joseph Saint-Rémy des Cayes (1818-1856) was the first to publish Toussaint Louverture's *mémoires* in 1850 thanks to the Parisian editor Moquet.¹⁸ In his *Mémoire du général Toussaint Louverture écrits par lui-même pouvant servir à l'histoire de sa vie précédés d'une étude historique et critique suivis de notes et renseignements avec un appendice contenant les opinions de l'empereur Napoléon Ier sur les événements de Saint Domingue*, Saint-Rémy des Cayes included the original version of Louverture's memoirs that are still kept at the National Archives in Paris.¹⁹ Victor Schoelcher wrote also a book on Toussaint Louverture's life, *Vie de Toussaint Louverture*, published in 1889 in Paris with the editor Paul Ollendorf. Defending the equality of human races and the law of human solidarity, Schoelcher believed that the slaves remaining to be freed were white people, who were still psychologically enslaved by the color line prejudice: "Ah! Il y a encore des esclaves à affranchir, ce sont les blancs, esclaves du préjugé de couleur

¹⁷ Joseph-Anténor Firmin. *De l'égalité des races humaines (anthropologie positive)*. Paris: Librairie Cotillon, 1885

C.L.R. James. *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint Louverture and the San Domingo Revolution*. New York: Vintage, 1989

Alphonse de Lamartine. *Toussaint Louverture*. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1998

George F. Tyson Jr. Ed. "Romantics React to Toussaint" in *Toussaint Louverture*. New Jersey, Prentice-Hall, 1973. 114-120

Aimé Césaire. *Toussaint Louverture: La Révolution française et le problème colonial*. Paris: Présence Africaine, 1981

Jacques Roumain. *Oeuvres complètes*. (édition établie par Léon-François Hoffmann). Madrid: ALLCA XX (Collection Archivos), 2003

René Depestre. *Le Métier à métisser*, Paris: Stock, 1998

¹⁸ Jacques de Cauna Ed. *Mémoires du général Toussaint Louverture*. Guitalens-L'albarede: Editions la Girandole, 2009

¹⁹ See Archives Pictures

(...)”²⁰ (“Ah! There is still slaves to set free, they are white people, who are enslaved by the prejudice of color”). Taking as a key example the impact and legacy of the revolution in Saint-Domingue, Victor Schoelcher defends the principle of equality, justice, solidarity and talent among human beings:

Quiconque voudra réfléchir, jugera qu’il y a une grande puissance cérébrale dans la race des Africains, qui s’emparèrent du pays où ils avaient été amenés esclaves, en chassèrent leurs maîtres et s’y constituèrent en peuple policé (...) *Il n’y a plus à le nier: les exemples que nous venons d’en citer sont probants, les nègres de la révolution de Saint-Domingue sont la démonstration vivante de l’égalité de leur race avec la race blanche, dès qu’il y a égalité de circonstances favorables au développement complet de l’être humain (...)* (412-3)²¹

(Anyone who will think seriously about it, will judge that there is a great mental strength in the Africans’ race, who seized the power in a country, where they were brought as slaves, before chasing out their masters and creating an organized body of people (...) *One can not deny it any longer: the examples that we have been giving are compelling, the negroes of the Saint-Domingue revolution are the living proof of the equality of their race with the white one, provided that there is an equality of favorable circumstances to the full development of the human being (...)*)

Toussaint Louverture provides an excellent illustration of this argument claiming racial equality. He demonstrated his ingenuity and leadership skills throughout his life. In other words, as C.L.R. James puts it, if slavery may dull the intellect and degrade the character of slaves there was nothing of that degradation or dullness in Toussaint Louverture.²²

However, Toussaint Louverture has also been the target of many critics such as Louis Dubroca (1757-183?), who describes at length in *La Vie de Toussaint-Louverture, Chef des Noirs Insurgés de Saint-Domingue* the veil of hypocrisy surrounding Louverture’s calculated actions and perfidy in his betrayal against France:

²⁰ Victor Schoelcher. *Vie de Toussaint Louverture* (1889). Paris: Editions Karthala, 1982. 412

²¹ *Ibid.* 412-3. Italics mine.

²² C.L.R. James. *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint Louverture and the San Domingo Revolution*. New York: Vintage, 1989. 91

(...) Toutes ces actions sont couvertes d'un voile d'hypocrisie si profond, que quoique sa vie entière soit une suite continuelle de trahisons et de perfidies, il a encore l'art de tromper tous ceux qui l'approchent, sur la plupart de ses sentimens (...) (50)²³

(All these actions are covered by a veil of hypocrisy so deep, that even though his entire life was nothing but a continuous series of betrayals and treacheries, he still got the art of fooling all those around him on most of his feelings (...)).

This image of the veil appears very frequently as a rhetorical device in the writings of both colonists, such as Dubroca, and anti-colonists including Toussaint Louverture, Pompée-Valentin de Vastey, Juste Chanlatte and Jean-Jacques Dessalines.²⁴ Using a specific image in a text may seem innocent at first, or at least not an engaged and significant act per se. The specific choice, context and significance of this trope should not be underestimated. I argue that its inclusion is far from naïve and constitutes a form of resistance, political engagement and new forms of literary creations. The choice of this image in this language corpus is not only a meaningful act per se, but reveals an artful and skillful form of *prise de position* and resistance from nineteenth-century Haitian authors writing in French to French, French-speaking and Haitian audiences, where politics and poetics become intimately intertwined.

Toussaint Louverture's Correspondence

Toussaint Louverture and his secretaries' uses of the metaphor of the veil and of the French language became both a strategic device to convince its audience of its truthfulness and a way to enable one's voice to have a strong national and international impact. Even though Louverture's correspondence "were not written by his hands" and

²³ Dubroca. *La Vie de Toussaint-Louverture, Chef des Noirs Insurgés de Saint-Domingue*. Paris: Dubroca, 1802. 50

²⁴ Deborah Jenson. *Beyond the Slave Narrative: Politics, Sex and Manuscripts in the Haitian Revolution*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011. 90-4

Toussaint “often turned to creole in communicating his ideas” since he “spoke French poorly”, “a divine instinct enlightened him about the value of words” and ideas articulated in the French language.²⁵ Louverture’s perfectionism was such that he made sure his secretaries were working constantly until they had found the exact *tournure* to express his original thought.²⁶ The omnipresence of images is especially striking in his political discourses, memoirs and letters as a means to convince his readers of his sincerity. Toussaint Louverture’s use of visual references provides his audience a poetics that transcends the politics inherent in his writings and masks the opacity of the kind of information disclosed or omitted. In one of his correspondences to the citizens of Upper Varettes, for instance, Louverture opens a letter written on March 22, 1795 with these words: “Toussaint Louverture à Tous ses frères et soeurs actuellement aux Verrettes/ Frères et Soeurs/ Le moment est arrivé où *le voile épais qui obscurcissait la lumière* doit tomber (...)”²⁷ (“Brothers and Sisters / The moment has arrived when *the veil obscuring the light* must fall (...)” (Nesbitt 13).²⁸ In this passage, Louverture uses the metaphor of light to reflect his knowledge of the “truth” and what the right citizens’ duties to the French Republic refer to in detail. With an authoritative and paternalistic tone, he reminds them of “the decrees of the National Convention” and expresses his “infinite joy of the return of the citizens of Upper Varettes within the Republic.” (13)²⁹ This example demonstrates the strategic use of the metaphor of the veil to persuade its readers of

²⁵ Laurent Dubois. *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004. 173

²⁶ Pamphile de Lacroix. *La Révolution de Haiti* (1819). Paris: 1995. 244 and 354

²⁷ Gérard M. Laurent claims. *Toussaint Louverture à travers sa correspondance (1794-1798)*. Madrid [No publisher], 1953. 171. Italics mine

²⁸ Nick Nesbitt. *Toussaint Louverture: The Haitian Revolution*. London: Verso, 2008. 13. Italics mine

²⁹ *Ibid.*

Louverture's authority, knowledge and power over the divided population of Saint-Domingue. Considering their previous alliances with the English, Royalists and the Spanish as "no more than errors", he makes clear to the citizens of Upper Varettes that their duties are "now to contribute with all your moral and physical might to strengthen your parish and to make flourish therein the principles of holy liberty." (14) ³⁰ In return for their loyalty, services and work, the "citizens united under the flag of the French nation" are guaranteed to remain under the protection and safety of the law. (14) ³¹ In his correspondence and memoirs, Toussaint Louverture uses many metaphors and images along with specific legal decrees to unveil the blindness, calumny, injustice, or mistakes vis-à-vis his specific audience. Louverture's famous metaphor after his arrest provides a good illustration of the power of metaphor as a form of resistance and reveals the resilience of the black population in Saint-Domingue: "En me renversant, on n'a abattu à Saint-Domingue que le tronc de l'arbre de la liberté des noirs; il poussera par les racines, parce qu'elles sont profondes et nombreuses" (Schoelcher 349). ³² ("In overthrowing me, they have uprooted in Saint-Domingue only the trunk of the tree of the liberty of the blacks; it will grow back because its roots are deep and numerous.") ³³ As Deborah Jenson argues, this image that Jean-Jacques Dessalines later altered and reused, "was a euphemism for the veiled fetishes of slavery and prejudice", and the tree of liberty became "l'arbre antique de l'esclavage et des préjugés" ("the ancient tree of

³⁰ *Ibid.* 14

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Victor Schoelcher. *Vie de Toussaint Louverture* (1889). Paris: Editions Karthala, 1982. 349

³³ Deborah Jenson. *Beyond the Slave Narrative: Politics, Sex and Manuscripts in the Haitian Revolution*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011. 90

slavery and prejudice”) (90).³⁴ In this vein, Toussaint Louverture is particularly gifted in playing a double game, where he takes advantage of vegetable and visual images to persuade readers of his sincerity.

Toussaint Louverture, with the help of his secretaries, mastered very well how to navigate and negotiate different degrees and forms of resistance in their narratives according to the specific audience, context and the power relationship at hand. One particular detail that is worth noticing is the degree of resistance, from a subtle form of resistance using images to strong and clear-cut arguments and facts, that Toussaint Louverture uses to make his point in a more efficient way according to his audience. As an example, in one of his letters to the French directory from November 1797, Toussaint Louverture defends his belief in “universal human rights”. Voicing his determination not to witness the return of slavery to Saint-Domingue while denouncing the racist attacks of the pro-slavery representative, Louverture denounces the actions of the French planter Viénot de Vaublanc in a direct and strong manner:

Toussaint L’Ouverture to the French Directory (...)
Vaublanc has threatened the blacks less than the certainty of the plans meditated upon by the property owners of Saint-Domingue. Such insidious declamations should have no effect upon the wise legislators who have decreed liberty to humanity. The attacks the colonists propose against this liberty must be feared all the more insofar as they hide their detestable projects under *the veil of patriotism*. (Nesbitt 32-33)³⁵

Louverture refers more specifically at the end of his letter to the decree of February 4, 1794, abolishing slavery in the French colonies, and makes his point even more clear. The population in Saint-Domingue knew how to face dangers to obtain their liberty and

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Nick Nesbitt. *Toussaint Louverture: The Haitian Revolution*. London: Verso, 2008. 32-33. Italics mine

how to brave death to maintain it.³⁶ C.L.R. James speaks highly of this letter in his book *The Black Jacobins*, and praises particularly how in this urgent context, the ex-slave Louverture was “dictating his thoughts in the crude words of a broken dialect”, before being written and rewritten by his secretaries “until their devotion and his will had hammered them into adequate shape.” (197-8)³⁷ For C.L.R. James, the uniqueness of Louverture’s writings are encapsulated in the fact that: “Toussaint could defend the freedom of the blacks without reservation, and this gave to his declaration a strength and a single-mindedness rare in the great documents of the time.” (198)³⁸ Gérard M. Laurent claims, in his work *Toussaint Louverture à travers sa correspondance (1794-1798)*, that Toussaint Louverture dictated his letters in either Haitian creole or French. Louverture’s numerous secretaries thus translated or transcribed his thoughts and spelled his correspondences according to their level of education.³⁹ This letter in particular shows the power of the trope as a means of resistance that can be articulated and expressed in a myriad of relevant ways.

Toussaint Louverture’s Strategy

The veil’s image reflects both a re-appropriation of Saint-Domingue’s history and Toussaint Louverture’s biography. In sharing specific aspects of his life that are put in a brighter light and hiding others, Louverture provides a credible version of himself. In playing with information and knowledge through his writings of letters and memoirs

³⁶ C.L.R. James. *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint Louverture and the San Domingo Revolution*. New York: Vintage, 1989. 197

³⁷ *Ibid.* 197-8

³⁸ *Ibid.* 198

³⁹ Gérard M. Laurent. *Toussaint Louverture à travers sa correspondance (1794-1798)*. Madrid [No publisher], 1953. 11

with the help of secretaries, Louverture is creating a portrait of himself that may fit with the Haitian and French imaginary and the leading charismatic figure he wants to embody. Another example regarding the degree of resistance can be found in Toussaint Louverture's memoir, when Louverture refers to "le voile de l'oubli" ("the veil of oblivion") in regards to France's amnesia towards the events that took place in Haiti on November 9, 1801:

He [General Leclerc] replied that an hour of conversation would be worth more than ten letters, giving me his word of honour that he would act with all the frankness and loyalty that could be expected of a French general. At the same time a proclamation from him was brought [to] me, bidding all citizens to regard as null and void that article of the proclamation of 16 February 1802 that made me an outlaw. 'Do not fear,' he said in this proclamation, 'you and your generals, and the people who are with you, that I shall search out the past conduct of anyone; I will draw *the veil of oblivion* over the events that were taken place at St-Domingue (...)' (Laurent 99)⁴⁰

This example shows the interaction between the trope of the veil and the question of race taking place in the French colony Haiti during the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries. According to Louverture's memoirs, this passage refers implicitly to General Leclerc's alleged willingness to overlook the insurrections of the blacks in Haiti and promise to offer the protection of the French government to Louverture.⁴¹ In this context, the "veil of oblivion" becomes not only a subtle way to refer to the contradiction, hypocrisy and prejudices on behalf of the French government. This specific choice is not naïve and puts cleverly into light the inconsistencies and

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 99. Italics mine

⁴¹ Joseph Saint-Rémy. *Mémoires du général Toussaint L'Ouverture, écrits par lui-même ... précédés d'une étude historique et critique avec un appendice contenant les opinions de l'empereur Napoléon Ier sur les événements de Saint-Domingue* by Toussaint Louverture. Paris: Pagnerre, 1853. 68-70

aporias of the unfair situation. Using the image of the veil produces a mirror effect that allows the reader to reflect upon and rethink Louverture's arrest.

Toussaint Louverture's strategic way of presenting himself in a very positive light through his use of the metaphors of the veil seemed to be always present according to the writings from the French general François Joseph Pamphile de Lacroix (1744-1841). This example is crucial since it shows how depending on the kind of audience to whom he speaks, Louverture and his secretaries knew very well how to strategically use literary devices and metaphors to appear more credible, as well as how to master the art of revealing and omitting information as necessary. In his first volume *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de la révolution de Saint-Domingue* (1809), Pamphile de Lacroix describes Toussaint Louverture as someone who used to work during long hours and until late with his secretaries. However, as any exceptional human being, it seems that Toussaint Louverture was still very much human in his desire to describe his trajectory from a Haitian slave to a general in fictionalized and mythical ways:

Comme les hommes extraordinaires, il avait le faible de vouloir envelopper son élévation de circonstances mystérieuses et difficiles à croire. Un capucin lui avait appris à lire dans sa jeunesse; il n'en convenait pas. Avec un air de bonhomie et de confiance, il disait quelquefois: *Dès les premiers troubles de Saint Domingue, je sentis que j'étais destiné à de grandes choses. Quand je reçus cet avis divin, j'avais cinquante-quatre ans; je ne savais ni lire ni écrire, j'avais quelques portugaises, je les donnai à un sous-officier du régiment du Cap; et, grâce à lui, en peu de mois, je sus signer mon nom et lire couramment.* (Lacroix 404)⁴²

(As with many exceptional men, he had the tendency to shroud his ascension with mysterious and difficult to believe circumstances. A Capuchin had taught him to read when he was young; but he would not admit it. With a false air of affability and confidence, he would sometimes say: *During the very first upheavals in Saint Domingue, I felt that I was destined for great things. When I received this*

⁴² Pamphile de Lacroix. *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de la révolution de Saint-Domingue*. Paris: Pillet, 1819. 404

divine portent, I was fifty-four years old; I did not know how to read or write; I had a few portugaises; I gave them to a junior officer of the Regiment du Cap; and, thanks to him, in a few months I knew how to sign my name and read correctly.)

In this apparent short autobiographical text, an idealized story depicts Toussaint Louverture to his audience, where Pamphile de Lacroix highlights the divine destiny of Louverture's life. According to Pamphile de Lacroix, Louverture referring to his belief and trust in God gives the impression of following miraculously God's divine signs and the path that was meant for him. In so doing, the portrait passes over some crucial aspects of Toussaint Louverture's life such as the fact that he received informal education from his godfather Pierre Baptiste Simon. As Nick Nesbitt noticed, in 1791 when the Revolution began, Toussaint had been a free man and a slave-owner for fifteen years since at least 1776, and had accumulated a comfortable amount of wealth and property.⁴³ In this above extract from Pamphile de Lacroix, the reader learns how in order to "begin his career" Toussaint Louverture joined the Spanish troops who offered asylum and protection to the black soldiers, until he realized that this option was not fruitful and decided to rejoin the French army when the French Republic proclaimed the general freedom of the black population.⁴⁴

Ironically, the visual images and strategic devices used in Louverture's letters, memoirs and speeches disclose the amnesia, prejudice, and manipulation around Saint-Domingue's complex history, but also demonstrate Louverture's own duplicity and opacity. It offers a more nuanced perspective of this time period as well as crucial insights into Toussaint Louverture's own deceptions and manipulations. The "double

⁴³ Nick Nesbitt. *Toussaint Louverture: The Haitian Revolution*. London: Verso, 2008. 40

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 40-1

game” played by Toussaint Louverture reveals his ability (with the aid of his secretaries) to excel in the French language and to use visual metaphors to convince his audience of his knowledge and power over the divided population of Saint-Domingue (16).⁴⁵ In focusing on Toussaint Louverture's stylistic approaches, such as the particular tropes on which he depends and the points of references (religious, symbolic, political, and mythical) he uses in his writing, one notices a clear pattern. Throughout his writings, Toussaint Louverture reveals France's own ambiguity towards Saint-Domingue regarding its position on the restoration of slavery. However, it also provides an understanding of Toussaint Louverture's mastery of self-representation and offers a powerful “mise-en-scène” regarding his own actions and objectives. In doing so, Toussaint Louverture manages to reappropriate for himself some of the same methods and tools that the French Empire had mastered, such as the use of the French language and of secretaries. ⁴⁶ Thanks to the mediation of his secretaries, Toussaint Louverture successfully co-produced letters, speeches and memoirs, which defend his usage of the French language as well as his usage of specific metaphors to assert his actions and convince his audience of his credibility and sincerity. ⁴⁷

In making write in his place as he dictated, Toussaint Louverture brings to light the importance of his authority and his need to be respected. ⁴⁸ The distance established between the author and the writing via this mediation plays the role of a dramatization

⁴⁵ Geggus, David Patrick. *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*. Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2002. 16, 17, 18 and 22

⁴⁶ Desormeaux, Daniel Ed. *Mémoires du général Toussaint Louverture*. Paris: Classique Garnier, 2011. 75

⁴⁷ Deborah Jenson. *Beyond the Slave Narrative: Politics, Sex and Manuscripts in the Haitian Revolution*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011. 26-7

⁴⁸ Desormeaux, Daniel Ed. *Mémoires du général Toussaint Louverture*. Paris: Classique Garnier, 2011. 64-5

of his empowerment and superiority. Even though, according to General Kerverseau, Toussaint Louverture knew how to read and write, he was dictating his letters and memoirs to his secretaries as a way to reinforce his power and status.⁴⁹ As Claude Lévi-Strauss explains in his book *Tristes Tropiques*, the primary function of written communication was to facilitate enslavement. According to him, so-called disinterested writings, which were written for intellectual or esthetic pleasures, became in the end another way to reinforce, justify or mask the desire to implement subordination.⁵⁰ Toussaint Louverture in this sense occupies a unique position in this corpus of texts, since he is not simply writing to express his resistance, but rather he is making other people write to articulate his ideas. In doing so, he reasserts his equality vis-à-vis the French government and especially the generals who acted similarly. It is precisely because Toussaint Louverture knows how to write, and yet still chooses to dictate his thoughts to his secretaries and scribes, that he stands out from other black generals and reveals how he is using the same codes and practices as his white counterparts. The fact of writing and making others write for him in French becomes then for Toussaint Louverture another tool to demystify racial prejudices. In fighting against “l’anéantissement du préjugé de l’épiderme” (Des Cayes 15), Toussaint Louverture was one of the first Haitians to understand the importance of resistance through writings

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* 64 “Le général de brigade Kerverseau, commandant de la partie est de l’île, en 1802, et considéré d’ailleurs comme l’un des principaux instigateurs de l’expédition de 1802, tient presque les mêmes propos dans le rapport qu’il rend au ministre de la Marine le 20 fructidor an IX (7 septembre 1801) lorsqu’il déclare: ‘Il [Toussaint] savait lire et écrire et c’était le seul. Cet avantage lui en donna un immense et le rendit l’oracle des conjurés.’ (...)”

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 65 and Claude Lévi-Strauss. *Tristes tropiques*. Paris: Plon, 1955. 344

composed in the French language, a tradition that Vastey and Chanlatte will then continue.⁵¹

⁵¹ Saint-Rémy des Cayes. *Vie de Toussaint Louverture*. Paris: Moquet libraire-éditeur, 1850. 15: “the destruction of the epidermal prejudice”

1.2. *The Politics of Rhetoric in Pompée-Valentin de Vastey's*

Le Système Colonial Dévoilé (1814)

Le travail que j'entreprends fait à la hâte (...) manquera certainement cet esprit de méthode et de correction qui font la beauté de la plupart des ouvrages d'ailleurs, haytiens, élevé sur le sommet des montagnes au milieu des forêts, il n'est pas étonnant si mes écrits fourmillent de fautes de littérature; mon but en écrivant, n'est pas d'aspirer à la gloire d'être homme de lettres, mais bien *d'être utile à mes compatriotes, de les éclairer et de dévoiler la vérité aux Européens*. (Vastey vii-viii).⁵²

(The work that I undertake has been made hastily, [and] will certainly lack this spirit of method and correction, which makes the beauty of most books from other places. Being Haitian, raised on the top of mountains and in the middle of forests, it might not be surprising if my writings are filled with literary mistakes. My goal in writing, is not to aspire to the glory of men of letters, but rather to be useful to my fellow countrymen, to enlighten them and to unveil the truth to Europeans.)

The second section of this first chapter focuses on colonial and postcolonial sources including Pompée-Valentin de Vastey's *The Colonial System Unveiled* (1814). This rare essay provides an important account of French colonizers in Saint-Domingue, which became Haiti after its independence in 1804. In this work, in which the metaphor of veiling and unveiling is omnipresent, Vastey reveals the artifices and perverse logic of the slave trade system, giving concrete examples of tortures inflicted on the subordinated population. In this sense, who actually were Pompée-Valentin de Vastey and Jean-Louis Vastey? Thanks to the use of the metaphor of the veil, what does Vastey's book reveal to its audience? To what extent did this author and this essay influence twentieth-century Caribbean writers?

⁵² Pompée-Valentin de Vastey. *Le Système Colonial Dévoilé* (1814). La Vergne: Nabu Press, 2010. (vii-viii). Italics mine.

Historical Context of the Haitian Printing System

Vastey's essay was written "in reply to an apologist for the French colonists" and published with the printer Pierre Roux during October 1814 in Cap-Henry, which is today Cap-Haïtien (Dash 29).⁵³ The printing system and the historical context in which books were published in Haiti are key, and Pierre Roux offers one excellent illustration of the power of publishing Haitian literary resistance during times of conflict. In his article on "Pierre Roux and Leméry, Printers of Saint-Domingue in Haiti", Patrick Tardieu reveals that a major shift happened in the production of printed monographs from 1789 to 1816. The major change can be found in the kind of documents that were being published. Half of all the publications during this time were not pure administrative writings any longer. Instead they were manifestos written by Toussaint Louverture for instance, and contributed to revolutionary resistance during this time of war and tension between France and Saint-Domingue.⁵⁴ In this sense, the importance of the state printers can not be underestimated since they gradually transformed themselves into strategic capital and peaceful weapon to help fight for the autonomy of Saint-Domingue and towards the Haitian independence:

L'imprimerie étant au service des gouvernants, elle sera d'abord arme de répression méthodique sous couvert scientifique, puis organe de défense des intérêts des pouvoirs locaux, mais très vite elle devint une arme puissante aux mains des nouveaux libres. (Tardieu 6)⁵⁵

(Printing being at the service of the people who ruled, it will first become a pseudo-scientific weapon of methodic répression. Then, printing will become a

⁵³ Charles Arthur and Michael Dash (Eds). *A Haiti Anthology: Libète*. London: The Latin American Bureau, 1999. 29

⁵⁴ Patrick D. Tardieu. "Pierre Roux et Leméry: Imprimeurs de Saint-Domingue à Haïti" in *Revue de la Société Haïtienne d'histoire et de géographie*. Volume 218. Port-au-Prince: Juillet-Septembre 2004. 2

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 6

tool for defending the interests of local powers, but will very quickly become a powerful weapon in the hands of the newly freed people.)

Pierre Roux started to publish books from 1793 in Saint-Domingue before becoming the Printer for the Government between 1801 and 1802. He also published the first edition of the 1801 Constitution between 1797 and 1803 along with more than twenty texts for Toussaint Louverture or the Haitian government. Pierre Roux became the printer of Jean-Jacques Dessalines between 1804 and 1806 along with the one of the Haitian king Henri Christophe from 1807 to 1816.⁵⁶

Vastey's name became strongly associated with the one of Pierre Roux along with Haitian history. For Duraciné Vaval for instance, one do not Haitian history if one do not know Vastey and his work.⁵⁷ Pierre Roux played as well a major role in the struggle and forms of resistance that took place during the difficult transition from being an important French colony to the first independent nation that arose from the slaves' revolts. He published in particular most of Pompée-Valentin de Vastey's writings including in 1814 *Notes à M. Le baron de V. P. Malouet, ministre de la marine et des colonies, de sa Majesté Louis XVIII, et ancien administrateur des colonies et de la marine, ex-colon de Saint-Domingue, etc. En réfutation du 4^{ème} volume de son ouvrage, intitulé: Collection de mémoires sur les colonies, et particulièrement sur Saint-Domingue, etc. Publiée en l'an X, par M. Le baron de J. L. Vastey.*⁵⁸ This detail provides an additional proof regarding the change of name from Jean-Louis Vastey to the one under which he published *Le système colonial dévoilé*, le baron Pompée-Valentin de Vastey. In 1815, Pierre Roux published Vastey's

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 7

⁵⁷ Duraciné Vaval. *Histoire de la littérature haïtienne ou "l'âme noire"*. Nendeln: Kraus Reprint, 1971. 129

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 27-8

political discourse titled “A mes concitoyens Haytiens!” and some of his essays including *Le cri de la conscience; ou, Réponse à un écrit, imprimé au Port-au-Prince, intitulé: Le peuple de la République d’Hayti, à Messieurs Vastey et Limonade* and *Le cri de la patrie ou Les intérêts de tous les Haytiens*.⁵⁹ In 1816, Pierre Roux published four pieces written by Vastey that are less well-known on African, Haitian and racial issues including *Réflexions politiques sur les noirs et sur les blancs* as well as *Réflexions sur une lettre de Mazères, ex-colon français adressée à M. J. C. L. Sismonde de Sismundi, sur les noirs et les blancs, la civilization de l’Afrique, le royaume d’Hayiti, etc.*⁶⁰ Thanks to his writings, Vastey became intimately associated with Haitian history.

Unveiling Vastey’s Biography

Depending on the sources, Pompée-Valentin de Vastey (1781-1820) is sometimes portrayed as a self-taught key Haitian figure and as “a remarkable polemicist who was born a slave and became King Henry-Christophe’s secretary” to quote Léon-François Hoffmann (51).⁶¹ Christophe Philippe Charles in *Les pionniers de la littérature haïtienne* confesses that very few information about the future writer and his family are available, but explains that based on Vastey’s personal writings, the reader is meant to believe that Vastey was an “autodidacte” who was born in 1735 (26).⁶² After conducting research inspired by the work done by Marlene Daut, Vastey’s own story was fictionalized as much as Haiti’s literary history has also been fictionalized during the

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 29

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 30

⁶¹ Léon-François Hoffmann. *Essays on Haitian Literature*. Washington: Three Continents Press, 1984. 51

⁶² Christophe Philippe Charles. “Pompée Valentin Vastey” in *Les pionniers de la littérature haïtienne*. Haiti: Editions Choucounne, 1999. 26

nineteenth century.⁶³ In fact, many sources are incorrect, and Vastey himself occulted some major information about his real identity and travels to France and Great Britain during the time period referred to in his book *Le Système Colonial Dévoilé* (1814). In so doing, it is not only the colonial system, but also Vastey's identity that become unveiled. According to his Christian baptismal certificate his birth name was not Pompée-Valentin de Vastey, but rather Jean-Louis Vastey. He was born in Ennery, a small province of Saint-Domingue near Gonaïves on January 21, 1781 and baptized on March 29, 1788.⁶⁴ He was the second son of a Frenchman, Jean Valentin Vastey who "had left France in 1769 to make his fortune in the thriving colony of Saint-Domingue" (Nicholls 131).⁶⁵ The certificate specifies as well that his father Jean Vastey was a "planter in Marmelade, before that miner at Boutin [plantation]".⁶⁶ His mother was a *mulâtresse* (mulatto in English), which refers to *gens de couleur*, who were the offspring of white men and black slave women. Even though many of them were granted their freedom by their fathers, becoming property and slave owners, they still suffered intense racial discrimination, and had no political rights.⁶⁷ It seems that Vastey's mother, named Marie Françoise Elisabeth Dumas, was a woman of mixed race who belonged to the wealthy Dumas family of planters even though he referred to her as the "African" who

⁶³ Daut, Marlene L. "From Classical French Poet to Militant Haitian Statesman: The Early Years and Poetry of the Baron de Vastey" in *Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 43, No.1, Spring 2012. 35-57

⁶⁴ Baptismal certificate, Jean Louis Vastey, 29 mars 1788, Paroisse de Plaisance, Saint-Domingue, Haiti. Archives Nationales d'Outre Mer, Aix-en-Provence, France: Micro Film, 85 MIOM 75

⁶⁵ David Nicholls. "Pompée-Valentin Vastey: Royalist and Revolutionary" in *Revista de Historia de América*. No. 109. Jan-Jun 1990. 131

⁶⁶ Baptismal certificate, Jean Louis Vastey, 29 mars 1788, Paroisse de Plaisance, Saint-Domingue, Haiti. Archives Nationales d'Outre Mer, Aix-en-Provence, France: Microfilm, 85 MIOM 75

⁶⁷ Charles Arthur and Michael Dash (Eds). *A Haiti Anthology: Libète*. London: The Latin American Bureau, 1999. 19

“gave [him] life” (Daut 3).⁶⁸ If the Dumas connection is correct, Jean-Louis Vastey was actually the second cousin of the nineteenth-century French writer Alexandre Dumas.⁶⁹

Vastey was an *affranchi* (free colored person), who according to his writing joined Louverture’s army at the age of fifteen, and “from then on identified himself with successive black leaders” (Nicholls 132), rather than with mulatto leaders.⁷⁰ According to David Nicholls, Vastey survived the revolutionary wars and became one of the main advisers to Henri Christophe, the early leader of independent Haiti.⁷¹ But, Vastey had also spent some time in Paris at the end of the eighteenth-century around the early 1790’s, very likely for his education at the highschool level. According to Marlene Daut’s recent findings, he published in France at least three collections of poetry under the pen name Pompée-Valentin Vastey along with several poems under the signature V. Vastey in French literary journals.⁷² In one of these poems titled “Satire”, he alludes to the fact that in French high schools, the students knew by heart French poems.⁷³ In one of Vastey’s letter to Thomas Clarkson on November 29 1819, he also stated that he had

⁶⁸ Marlene L. Daut. “From Classical French Poet to Militant Haitian Statesman: The Early Years and Poetry of the Baron de Vastey” in *Research in African Literatures*, Spring 2012. 3

⁶⁹ “Pompée-Valentin de Vastey”. Accessed on March 22, 2011 <http://www.haiti-reference.com/notables>

⁷⁰ David Nicholls. “Pompée-Valentin Vastey: Royalist and Revolutionary” in *Revista de Historia de América*. No. 109. Jan-Jun 1990. 132

⁷¹ Charles Arthur and Michael Dash (Eds). *A Haiti Anthology: Libète*. London: The Latin American Bureau, 1999. 29

⁷² Marlene L. Daut. “From Classical French Poet to Militant Haitian Statesman: The Early Years and Poetry of the Baron de Vastey” in *Research in African Literatures*, Spring 2012. 7

⁷³ I am very grateful to Marlene L. Daut for giving copies of some examples of Vastey rare poems during the Vastey’s workshop that took place at Duke University and the Haiti Lab on December 1 and 2, 2011: “Etendez, au Pont-Neuf, vos recherches utiles;/ Là, parmi cent bouquins l’un à l’autre colés,/ Se trouvent, au grand jour, avec soin étalés,/ Poèmes, Almanachs, Apolognes, Epîtres,/ Don’t par Coeur, au Lycée, on répète les titres:/ Quels précieux trésors! Qu’on y lit de beaux vers!/ Vous y verrez, de l’art, tous les secrets divers:/ La science des mots, seule, fait les poètes...” (106)

been married for twelve years and was the father of two daughters, Aricie and Malvina.

74

During his time in Paris, Vastey refers to the barrier of the color line, and looking behind this veil, one may appreciate a human being about whom very few scholars and readers may know. In his poetry, Vastey describes his love hate relationship with France and some of his French ladies such as “Angélique” and “Mirza” in his two love poems “Derniers Adieux” (1798) and “Les soupçons” (1808). According to Daut, these writings may reveal more than they suggest at first, since they give voice to Vastey’s “disillusionment with a revolutionary France that was riddled with violence and later with a Napoleonic France where rampant ‘racial’ and ‘color prejudice’ made life increasingly difficult for people of color” (Daut 75).⁷⁵ The reality was that many laws were put into place during this time to limit “the freedom and movement of free people of color”, even though they often served in the military and held key military and civil posts for France.⁷⁶ In his poem “L’Explication” (1808), Vastey points out the colonial, national, and racial issues at stake in France in the early nineteenth century. In one passage, he expresses the breaking point between himself and his unnamed love interest as a metaphor for the tangible barrier between France and Haiti: “Epouvanté, je vois la fatale barrière/ Que posent entre nous les destins ennemis: / C’en est fait! pour jamais nous sommes désunis!” (Daut 11)⁷⁷ The interracial discrimination between the two

⁷⁴ Many thanks to Laurent Dubois for sharing this information during the workshop. Clive Cheesman Ed. *The Armorial of Haiti: Symbols of Nobility in the Reign of Henry Christophe*. College of Arms manuscript JP 177. London: College of Arms, 2007. 168

⁷⁵ Marlene L. Daut. “From Classical French Poet to Militant Haitian Statesman: The Early Years and Poetry of the Baron de Vastey” in *Research in African Literatures*, Spring 2012. 40

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* 11

lovers and rivalry between the two countries become interrelated in this extract with the powerful image of the fracture. The voice of Vastey in these poems echoes in many ways the future style of his essay in which the use of metaphors become key instrumental and rhetorical devices to persuade his audience and to foster change through knowledge gained.

Reading critically his piece *The colonial system unveiled* provides a perfect example of his ability to fictionalize his own life and to present himself to his readers as a Haitian man who grew up in the mountains of the island, whereas he has been educated in Paris. Vastey apologizes in advance for the imperfect style and tone of his essay on the colonial system, claiming that since he is neither white nor a colonist, he can not pretend to the same education or eloquence in his writings. As Marlene Daut clearly explains this passage shows in a significant way the extent to which his real identity, family history, and liberty were hidden in order to appear more credible in front of his audience:

Vastey's deliberate misrepresentation of his involvement in the Revolution as well as his desire to conceal his white phenotype and education were likely his attempt to create a rapprochement between his status as an elite government official and the Haitian people, but also to mask a family history of slave ownership and former loyalty to the French that – like that of Toussaint L'Ouverture- was at odds with the goals of independent Haiti. For Vastey consciously constructs an oppositional Haitian identity that allows him to disavow his implicit access to certain elements of white privilege, including his French education, former planter status, and ultimately, relative freedom (...). (Daut 23)⁷⁸

These recent discoveries about Vastey are key since they provide a completely new approach to the identity and trajectory of Jean-Louis Vastey, who became Pompée-Valentin de Vastey by October 1814 when he signed under this name the “Adresse au

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* 23

Roi” for the Dauxion Lavaysse affair. ⁷⁹ Ironically, the motto chosen to represent Vastey’s symbol of nobility during the reign of Henry Christophe was: “Sincérité franchise”, which translates into English as “Sincerity frankness” (Cheesman 168). ⁸⁰ Even though some information about Vastey appears to be false or fictionalized, he still played an important role on the Haitian historical, literary, and political stage. Vastey has been a source of inspiration for numerous Caribbean writers. The Haitian historical context in which Pompée-Valentin de Vastey wrote his essay *Le Système Colonial Dévoilé* has been critically depicted in numerous plays. Two examples from Martiniquan authors include Edouard Glissant’s *Mr Toussaint* in 1961 and Aimé Césaire’s *La Tragédie du Roi Christophe* in 1963, where Vastey is presented as the “secretary of Henry Christophe” (Césaire 27). ⁸¹ In an enigmatic theatrical text titled *Monsieur de Vastey* (1975), the Haitian writer René Philoctète provides another less well-known example. ⁸² The Saint Lucian poet Derek Walcott also wrote several plays inspired by Vastey in *The Haitian Trilogy* including *Henri Christophe* and *The Haitian Earth* (2002).

Historical Context Before, During and After Vastey’s Publication

One of the key facts to keep in mind for understanding Vastey’s work is that under French rule, Saint-Domingue became a very prosperous colony producing vast quantities of coffee, cotton, indigo and sugar. The country was composed of *grands blancs*, who were small groups of plantation owners and merchants who amassed large

⁷⁹ Clive Cheesman Ed. *The Armorial of Haiti: Symbols of Nobility in the Reign of Henry Christophe*. College of Arms manuscript JP 177. London: College of Arms, 2007. 168

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ Aimé Césaire. *La Tragédie du Roi Christophe*. Paris: Présence Africaine, 1963. 27

⁸² Marlene L. Daut. “From Classical French Poet to Militant Haitian Statesman: The Early Years and Poetry of the Baron de Vastey” in *Research in African Literatures*, Spring 2012. 36

fortunes exploiting *black slaves*, who came from Africa and crossed the Atlantic during the slave-trade system.⁸³ The poor whites or *petits blancs* were the plantation managers, artisans, shopkeepers, clerks or lawyers. Since voting was based on the amount of property owned, the *petits blancs* just like the *gens de couleurs* were excluded from any role in the administrative or political life of the colony.⁸⁴ After an epic twelve-year struggle, the first and only successful slave revolution in history gave birth on January 1, 1804 to the independent republic of Haiti.⁸⁵ However, the new independent state was very fragile because the colonial powers, whose empires still depended on the slave trade, were openly hostile to the world's first black republic.⁸⁶

For several decades, the country was under a constant threat of invasion from the exterior and some important tensions began to appear as well from the inside. Among the Haitian population that survived the revolution, two distinct conceptions emerged regarding the form the new society should take. On the one hand, a small but powerful minority composed mainly of mulattos, who had been property and slave owners before the revolution, were now hoping to inherit the power and wealth previously enjoyed by the French colonists. On the other hand, the black ex-slaves, who composed the majority of the Haitian population, were against the idea of continuing work in the plantation system, and instead hoped for the opportunity to farm their own land.⁸⁷ Charles Arthur and Michael Dash in their Haitian anthology titled in kreyol *Libète*,

⁸³ Charles Arthur and Michael Dash (Eds). *A Haiti Anthology: Libète*. London: The Latin American Bureau, 1999. 29

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* 19-20

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* 45

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

claim that during the early decades of Haitian independence, the interplay between the racially and ideologically divided groups determined the economic, social, and political foundations of modern-day Haiti.⁸⁸ When Vastey published his first essay *Le système colonial dévoilé* in 1814, Haiti had been divided into a northern state from 1806 to 1820 and a republic in the western and southern part of the country. From 1807, the North was under the control of the black president Henri Christophe, who became the king of Haiti on June 2, 1811, while the South was under the supervision of the mulatto president Alexandre Pétion.⁸⁹ This division manifested the inner tensions present in Haiti, until the suicide of the King Henri Christophe in October 1820, and the murder of Vastey a few days afterwards by the troops of Pétion's successor, the new Haitian president Jean-Pierre Boyer.⁹⁰ In 1814, when Vastey wrote *Le système colonial dévoilé*, he found himself in the paradoxical situation of defending human dignity and liberty in the public sphere at a time when violence and a highly hierarchical and unequal society was instituted by Henri Christophe. Vastey's work offers a model of radical Enlightenment critique denouncing the slave trade system, tortures and colonialism without including a constructive political agenda regarding Haiti's future and governmental unity.

Unveiling Tropes in Le Système Colonial Dévoilé

In the very first page of *Le système colonial dévoilé*, Vastey provides a significant example of a piece of writing where the metaphor of the veil reveals his belief of the

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Jean-Elie Gilles. Dissertation on "Patriotism, Humanism and Modernity: Three European Concepts as a Basis for the Investigation and Affirmation of the Negro Soul in the Francophone Literature of Haiti from the Nineteenth through the late Twentieth Century". Washington: University of Washington, 2002. 344

⁹⁰ Chris Bongie. *Friends and Enemies: The Scribal Politics of Post/Colonial Literature*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008. 227

most important secret behind French colonialism in Saint-Domingue: “*Le voilà bien connu ce secret plein d’horreur: le Système Colonial, c’est la Domination des Blancs, c’est le Massacre ou l’Esclavage des Noirs.*”⁹¹ Vastey defines the colonial system as the domination of the white race and the enslavement of the black one. This system of domination refers implicitly to the problematic way of classifying and valuing human beings based on their color, and the inner perversity of this race distinction. Constructing racial difference among human beings living in Saint-Domingue, refers exactly to what Vastey is denouncing at length through the lens of the metaphor of unveiling. Playing on the literal and metaphorical image, his objective is to “enlighten and reveal the truth to Europeans.”⁹² Vastey’s *Le système colonial dévoilé* is a hybrid text composed of a tribute to the King of Haiti, but also of historical and literary research, legal decrees, and correspondences, along with an errata section at the end.

In his opening tribute to Henri Christophe, Vastey considers the King of the northern part of Haiti to be “the only black Prince, in short the only man of our color, who can speak up and make his voice prevail among the Sovereigns of Europe and at the Tribunal of Nations (...)” (Bongie 2).⁹³ Throughout his book, Vastey denounces the artificial basis in the construction of racial differences and hierarchies to benefit the colonial *system*. Vastey aspires to deconstruct this system and to provide an historical counter-discourse in order to offer a distinct voice regarding the aporia of critical representation of the French colonial system that is taking place in Saint-Domingue:

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Ibid.* viii

⁹³ Chris Bongie Ed. *The Colonial System Unveiled* by Baron de Vastey. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press: 2013. 2

La plupart des historiens qui ont écrit sur les colonies étaient des *blancs*, même des *colons*, ils sont entrés dans les plus petits détails sur les productions, le climat, l'économie rurale, mais ils se sont donnés bien de garde de dévoiler les crimes de leurs complices; bien peu ont eu le courage de dire la vérité, et encore en la disant, ils ont cherché à la déguiser et atténuer par leurs expressions, l'énormité de ses crimes. Ainsi, par des motifs pusillanimes, des vues intéressées, ces écrivains ont voilé les crimes atroces des colons. (Vastey 39)⁹⁴

(Most of the historians who have written on the colonies were *whites*, even *colonizers*. They have written in the most minute details about [Saint-Domingue] productions, climate, and rural economy, but they strategically avoided unveiling the crimes of their accomplices; very few have had the courage to say the truth, and even when they said it, they tried to mask and attenuate, thanks to their wordings, the enormity of their crimes. Thus, because of fainthearted reasons and biased points of views, these writers have veiled the obnoxious crimes of the colonizers.)

In this passage the trope of the veil appears as a judicious choice on Vastey's behalf to underscore the importance of revealing the tortures inflicted on the Haitian slaves by the French colonists. In another passage, Vastey provides more detail:

Haven't they [the French colonists] committed unheard-of-cruelties, crimes until then unknown to humankind? Haven't they burnt, roasted, grilled and impaled alive the unfortunate slaves? (...) Haven't they put men and women into barrels spiked with nails, closed at both ends, and rolled them from the tops of mountains, hurling the unfortunate victims inside to the abyss below? (Arthur and Dash 29)⁹⁵

This is one of the reasons why Vastey's work is relevant as its objectives are to convince and spread a message in the French language not only throughout Haiti, but also throughout France, Europe, and beyond. Hénock Trouillot in *Les origines sociales de la littératures haïtienne* explains the extent to which a large number of people pretended to offer their own truthful version of the history. But for him, Vastey is creating a genuine attempt to write an alternative historical piece that belongs to nineteenth-century

⁹⁴ Vastey de, Pompée-Valentin. *Le Système Colonial Dévoilé* (1814). La Vergne: Nabu Press, 2010. 39

⁹⁵ Charles Arthur and Michael Dash (Eds). *A Haiti Anthology: Libète*. London: The Latin American Bureau, 1999. 29

Haitian literary resistance.⁹⁶

Tracking down the use of tropes in Vastey's essay shows his desire to deconstruct the racial prejudices, to reveal the violence and perversity of the framework of the colonial *system* that took place during several centuries. In this vein, Vastey's book invites its reader to look critically at the perverse logic of the colonial system and to understand its motives (search for gold, sugar, coffee), mechanisms (colonial system secured through legal decree, torture, physical and psychological violence), and how to resist it through literary means (claiming equality among Haitian population and showing solidarity to the King Henri Christophe). The scholar Chris Bongie acknowledges the importance of tropes in Vastey's essay in these terms: "The tropes of reversal constitute the most obvious rhetorical move in Vastey's counter-discourse: it is the French colonists who are 'cannibals' (1817b, 2), they who play the role of white Cain to the black Abel (1814b, 32), they who descend from 'sordid origins' (1814b, 83)."⁹⁷ In regards to a relevant rhetorical device, the trope of reversal that Bongie refers to represents only the tip of the iceberg. Each passage using the metaphor of unveiling can be analyzed in depth since it reveals Vastey's literary resistance in a context when the Bourbon monarchy was restored in France and Haiti's independence was under serious threat. There were several attempts by France to negotiate "its way back into a position of power" in the former colony.⁹⁸ Even though Henri Christophe rejected right away this option, the southern part of Haiti under Alexandre Pétion was initially receptive to

⁹⁶ Christophe Philippe Charles. "Pompée Valentin Vastey" in *Les pionniers de la littérature haïtienne*. Haiti: Editions Choucoune, 1999. 30-1

⁹⁷ Chris Bongie. *Friends and Enemies: The Scribal Politics of Post/Colonial Literature*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008. 230

⁹⁸ *Ibid.* 231-2

the idea of negotiating with France, which explains the sense of urgency and the significance of tropes in Vastey's book. French colonization was over in 1814 in Haiti, but France only officially recognized Haiti's independence in 1825. It is not a coincidence that in the errata section at the very end of his essay, Vastey clarified to his readers that they should read throughout the book, "ex-colonized population of Saint-Domingue" instead of the "colonized population of Saint-Domingue."¹ This lapsus may be interpreted as a simple error. However, I will argue that it exposes the system of colonialism as a pervasive form of alienation from which it is difficult to extract oneself entirely.

For Vastey, slavery was an integral part of the plantation economy and colonial *system*.⁹⁹ In such a context, the prejudice of color and racial theories justified the cruelty of the masters and the slaves' degradation since "the difference of color is the key to all colonial questions."¹⁰⁰ The construction of intellectual, racial and social distinctions created in this situation an artificial difference and hierarchy that altered human interactions in Saint-Domingue and Haiti:

(...) à présent que nous avons des presses haytiennes, et que nous pouvons dévoiler les crimes des colons et répondre aux calomnies les plus absurdes, inventées par le préjugé et l'avarice de nos oppresseurs (...) Pourquoi nous ne dévoilerons pas les crimes de ces marchands de chair humaine et de ces odieux colons? (94-5)¹⁰¹

((...) now that we have the Haitian publishing houses, and can disclose the colonizers' crimes and answer to the most absurd slanders that were invented by the prejudice and greediness of our oppressors (...) Why should we not unveil the crimes of these merchants of human flesh and of these obnoxious colonizers?)

⁹⁹ David Nicholls. "Pompée-Valentin Vastey: Royalist and Revolutionary" in *Revista de Historia de América*. No. 109. Jan-Jun 1990. 137-8

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Vastey de, Pompée-Valentin. *Le Système Colonial Dévoilé* (1814). La Vergne: Nabu Press, 2010. 94-5

Le système colonial dévoilé does not pretend to be a work of art, and beyond the imperfections of Vastey's essay and "the paradoxical figure" of its author, it does an excellent job in articulating in detail the hypocrisy of pseudo-scientific racial constructions of difference.¹⁰²

When talking about Saint-Domingue, Vastey refers to the French colonists' desire to maintain racial discrimination between the "white race" and the others. In the proclamation from February 9 1779 for instance, the law decreed that "people of color" dressed elegantly in luxurious clothing and objects, were considered problematic. The idea behind this temporary decree was to prevent confusion among races and to avoid the confusion for some people of seeing people of color wearing clothing similar to the privileged white population in Saint-Domingue. This provisional decree has inspired the female Haitian writer Marie Vieux-Chauvet in the very first pages of her historical novel *La danse sur le volcan* (1957), which the fourth chapter focuses on in more depth.¹⁰³ According to this legal decree, it was in the interest of morals (or "l'intérêt des moeurs") to reduce the possibility of confusing different races and social statuses and to prevent the Haitian population from presenting exterior signs of luxury: "Le luxe extrême dans les habillements et ajustemens auquel se livrent les gens de couleur, ingénues ou affranchis, de l'un et de l'autre sexe, ayant également frappé l'attention des magistrats, du public et la nôtre, il est devenu nécessaire d'y apporter un frein (...)"¹⁰⁴ This population of color was composed of two categories according to this temporary decree.

¹⁰² David Nicholls. "Pompée-Valentin Vastey: Royalist and Revolutionary" in *Revista de Historia de América*. No. 109. Jan-Jun 1990. 142

¹⁰³ Marie Vieux-Chauvet. *La Danse sur le volcan*. Léchelle: Zellige, 2008. 1-3

¹⁰⁴ Vastey de, Pompée-Valentin. *Le Système Colonial Dévoilé* (1814). La Vergne: Nabu Press, 2010. 83-4

First, “les affranchis”, free people of color who were ex-slaves, and “les ingénus”, people who were free by birth. Vastey wrote his book in French, and in this language both expressions are strongly connotated. On the one hand, the expression “les affranchis” suggests that the persons have been released from slavery. However, despite the Code Noir in 1685 which “had prescribed equal treatment for the whole free population, the *affranchis* in the colony were excluded from a number of professions, and prohibited to sit with whites in public places such as theatres and churches.”¹⁰⁵ The *affranchis* of Saint-Domingue were therefore in an ambivalent position, were they shared economic interests as property-owners with the whites, while suffering from racial discriminations with the great mass of slaves.¹⁰⁶ On the other hand, the term “les ingénus” means literally that someone is born free, but also refers to a person that is supposed to have an innocent and naïve sincerity.¹⁰⁷ What is particularly telling about this example is how merely the fact of changing the racial and social dynamics and of having “people of color” wearing luxurious clothing and jewelry alters the strict separation between gender, race and status. In this sense, men and women of color play a key role here since this decree was implicitly referring to “les gens de couleurs” who were considered to become a serious threat to the white population in Saint-Domingue. This legal decree puts into question the construction of racial difference based on pseudo-scientific methods that the Haitian anthropologist Joseph-Anténor Firmin (1850-1911) will deconstruct in his 1885 book *On the Equality of Human Races*. Firmin’s

¹⁰⁵ David Nicholls. “Pompée-Valentin Vastey: Royalist and Revolutionary” in *Revista de Historia de América*. No. 109. Jan-Jun 1990. 131

¹⁰⁶ Charles Arthur and Michael Dash (Eds). *A Haiti Anthology: Libète*. London: The Latin American Bureau, 1999. 19

¹⁰⁷ *Le Petit Robert*. Paris: 1993. 1317

work, analyzed in the second chapter, offers an answer to Arthur de Gobineau's theory developed in *De l'Inégalité des Races Humaines* (1853-55), which used anthropological arguments to assert that racial distinctions were biologically determined.

Another component, however, is missing here, namely that physical attraction and sexual unions are clearly referred to in this passage, but are not explicitly stated. The decree speaks instead of "malentendus" ("misunderstandings"), "scandale" ("scandal") and of "l'intérêt des mœurs" ("the interest of the morals"), but what is implicitly alluded to here is the fear of miscegenation and the taboo of incest.¹⁰⁸ At this time the colonial society in Saint-Domingue was a rigid hierarchical and claustrophobic system, which "was obsessed with race, sexual liaisons and the most subtle gradations of color which emerged from them."¹⁰⁹ Vastey's subtle allusion to the slippery trope of racial constructions of difference, fear of miscegenation and the taboo of incest echoes Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*. In *Peau Noire, Masques Blancs* (1952), Fanon in his chapter on "Le Nègre et la psychopathologie" analyses a quote from Octave Mannoni's book *Psychology of Colonization*:

O. Mannoni, dans *Psychologie de la Colonisation*, écrit: "Un argument utilisé partout dans le monde, de la part des racistes contre ceux qui ne partagent pas leurs convictions, mérite d'être mentionné à cause de son caractère révélateur. "Quoi? Disent ces racistes, *si vous aviez une fille à marier, la donneriez-vous à un nègre?*" J'ai vu des gens qui n'étaient aucunement racistes en apparence, interloqués par ce genre d'argument, perdre tout sens critique. C'est qu'un tel argument touche en eux des sentiments très troubles (exactement *incestueux*), qui poussent au racisme par une réaction de défense." (...) [For Fanon] Le Blanc civilisé garde la nostalgie irrationnelle d'époques extraordinaires de licence sexuelle, de scènes orgiaques, de viols non sanctionnés, d'incestes non réprimés.

¹⁰⁸ Vastey de, Pompée-Valentin. *Le Système Colonial Dévoilé* (1814). La Vergne: Nabu Press, 2010. 84

¹⁰⁹ Charles Arthur and Michael Dash (Eds). *A Haiti Anthology: Libète*. London: The Latin American Bureau, 1999. 19

Ces phantasmes, en un sens, répondent à l'instinct de vie de Freud. Projetant ses intentions chez le nègre, le Blanc se comporte "comme si" le nègre les avait réellement. (Fanon 133-4) ¹¹⁰

In this sense, I agree with David Nicholls and Chris Bongie when they claim that the originality and significance of Vastey's *Le Système Colonial Dévoilé* lies " (...) in his critique of the colonial system and the dangers of neo-colonialism (...)" since "like Fanon, Vastey offers a comprehensive critique of colonialism as a *system*, one based on 'violence, theft, pillage, treachery – in short, the foulest, vilest of depravities'."¹¹¹ Vastey's writings may not have been necessarily flawless, and they were not always taken seriously as his main critic Noel-Michel Colombel loves to remind his reader. ¹¹² However, in *Le système colonial dévoilé*, Vastey does voice the injustices of slavery, colonialism and neo-colonialism and echoes Aimé Césaire's *Discourse on Colonialism* and Frantz Fanon's *Peau Noire, Masque Blanc* and *Les Damnés de la Terre*. Unlike Césaire and Fanon, Vastey's work distinguishes itself by the absence of any political doctrine that would be applicable to the Haiti of his time period. This silence encapsulates in a nutshell the originality, but also the limitations of Vastey's pioneering work.

¹¹⁰ Frantz Fanon. *Peau Noire, Masques Blancs*. Paris: Seuil, 1952. 133-4

¹¹¹ Chris Bongie. *Friends and Enemies: The Scribal Politics of Post/Colonial Literature*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008. 229

¹¹² Christophe Philippe Charles. "Noel-Michel Colombel" in *Les pionniers de la littérature haïtienne*. Haiti: Editions Choucouné, 1999. 34-6

1.3. *The Politics of Rhetoric in Juste Chanlatte's*

Histoire de la Catastrophe de Saint-Domingue (1824)

De cet échange inhumain des droits et de la propriété de l'homme contre la main de fer du malheur, ne pouvaient naître que des résultats épouvantables, et l'excès de ces crimes préparait dans la nuit du silence les éléments d'une effrayante explosion. (Chanlatte 18-9) ¹¹³

Juste Chanlatte (1766-1828) is another complex and intriguing major Haitian figure, who lived a versatile and rich life, changing often his political positions and personal convictions depending on the situation at hand. Acting like a chameleon, he collaborated alternately with the English, the Americans as well as the French. His *volte-face* were no secrets, and happened according to the changes within the political power dynamics in Saint-Domingue and Haiti. However, Juste Chanlatte stands out by the fact that one of his major writings, *History of the Catastrophe of Saint-Domingue (1824)* has been neglected and, indeed, has not always been attributed to him, either. Very few scholarly articles or books have focused on him as an engaged writer because of his frivolity and reputation. Knowing his ability to change sides depending on the circumstances, what were the main messages in Juste Chanlatte's *Histoire de la Catastrophe de Saint-Domingue (1824)*? To what extent did his use of the trope of the veil in this book reflect nineteenth-century Haitian literary resistance and reveal difference, opacity and secrets in the French Atlantic? How can analyzing Juste Chanlatte's piece help the reader look at him in a different light?

¹¹³ Auguste Jean-Baptiste Bouvet de Cressé Ed. *Histoire de la catastrophe de Saint-Domingue*. Paris: Librairie de Peytieux, 1824. 18-9

Chanlatte's Biography

Born in 1766 in Port-au-Prince, Juste Chanlatte was a mixed-race child and the son of Rémy Chanlatte and Olive Barreau.¹¹⁴ Educated and raised in Paris at the prestigious high school Louis-Le-Grand, Juste Chanlatte's passion and talent for words made him a journalist, playwright, and a poet. Depicted as an "official poet", Juste Chanlatte is for instance one of Aimé Césaire's characters in his play *La Tragédie du Roi Christophe* (1963), which is analyzed in more detail in this dissertation's third chapter.¹¹⁵ Strategic about his positions, Juste Chanlatte collaborated with the English during the revolutionary period in Saint-Domingue before taking shelter in the United States between 1798 and 1803 after the English's rout.¹¹⁶ Back in Saint-Domingue, Chanlatte worked with the French troops for the Emperor Jean-Jacques Dessalines and became his official secretary. On January 1, 1804, Saint-Domingue gained independence, and was named after its original name, Haiti. On May 20, 1805, Dessalines ratified the first Haitian constitution that his secretaries, including Juste Chanlatte and Boisrond Tonnerre, had written. I have found at the National Archives in Paris a copy of this constitution written by hand and signed with the names of the Haitian emperor Dessalines and his general secretary Juste Chanlatte.¹¹⁷

Juste Chanlatte played a key role behind the stage in the political life of Haiti, but also played a major role in the circulation of anti-colonial ideas that would deconstruct the arguments based on pseudo racial difference, which justify slavery in a

¹¹⁴ Christophe Philippe Charles. "Noel-Michel Colombel" in *Les pionniers de la littérature haïtienne*. Haiti: Editions Choucoune, 1999. 34-6

¹¹⁵ Aimé Césaire. *La Tragédie du Roi Christophe*. Paris: Présence Africaine, 1963. 56

¹¹⁶ Duraciné Vaval. *Histoire de la littérature haïtienne ou "l'âme noire"*. Nendeln: Kraus Reprint, 1971. 17

¹¹⁷ See Pictures

discrete but assertive way. By claiming officially and circulating the idea that black people were not part of the human race and denying them the fundamental rights of all human beings, the right to traffic human bodies was born, and the slave trade system became legitimate:

Désavouer chez les Nègres l'unité d'espèces, poser en fait leur infériorité morale, c'était légitimer en quelque sorte le trafic des vendeurs de chair humaine, et constituer en principe le droit de l'esclavage. (6)¹¹⁸

(To deny that Negroes are part of the human race, to assert as fact their moral inferiority, meant to legitimize in other words the traffic of the sellers of human flesh, and to set up as a rule slavery as a right.)

What is particularly exceptional about Juste Chanlatte's book is the way he successfully explains the perverse logic hidden behind the colonial system, just as Vastey did. However, Chanlatte managed subtly to invite his reader to appreciate and understand the resilience and resistance of the Saint-Domingue population until the ultimate explosion and revolution from the Haitian population. In doing so, Chanlatte may have succeeded in convincing his audience since he provides original correspondences from Henry Christophe and General Leclerc who may have not otherwise been well-known. Articulating brilliantly his arguments that deconstruct the rhetoric of slavery, Chanlatte offers the unique opportunity to hear a different version of the story and to continue the reading of his book edited and published with the support of Auguste Jean-Baptiste Bouvet de Cressé.

Chanlatte's Significant Writings

Juste Chanlatte's *Histoire de la Catastrophe de Saint-Domingue* (1824) is quite an

¹¹⁸ Auguste Jean-Baptiste Bouvet de Cressé Ed. *Histoire de la catastrophe de Saint-Domingue*. Paris: Librairie de Peytieux, 1824. 6

astonishing book in many instances for its content, form and impact. First of all, the name of its author is never explicitly mentioned but only alluded to several times throughout the piece. The book was printed in Paris by the “Librairie de Peytieux” and published by the printer Rignoux in 1824. The work was edited by a major figure in the Parisian intellectual and printing world, namely Auguste Jean-Baptiste Bouvet de Cressé. Cressé was a previous professor in rhetoric and chief in printing works in the French naval forces, who also wrote a book on French history.¹¹⁹ The name of Cressé is strategically mentioned in the book just below the title, so as to give the impression that Cressé was the author. Once the reader opens the work, however, there is no further ambiguity thanks to the fact that Cressé mentions clearly in his preface that he is not the author, but rather the one who edited and helped to publish *Histoire de la Catastrophe de Saint-Domingue*. The author of the book is referred as “M. J. C.” or more precisely “J...E CH.....E”, and described as “an orator, an historian, and one of the most distinguished writer from the New World” (i-ii).¹²⁰

After reading Cressé’s preface and looking at the book closely keeping in mind the Haitian context of the time, it appears obvious that Mr. Juste Chanlatte is indeed the rightful author. The reasons for this are numerous, and one may presume that Chanlatte may have certainly preferred to write and publish his essay without risking his life and prevent any kind of threats, critics and censorship. Throughout the book the names of living people are mentioned, but some others are simply initialized. Therefore one infers that this cautious tone is not mere coincidence but rather a discrete but deliberate act of

¹¹⁹ Auguste Jean-Baptiste Bouvet de Cressé Ed. *Histoire de la catastrophe de Saint-Domingue*. Paris: Librairie de Peytieux, 1824. Front cover and vii

¹²⁰ *Ibid.* i-ii

resistance. At the eve of the independence, Juste Chanlatte is writing an important book to unveil the complex relationship between Saint-Domingue and Haiti along with France and its previous colonizers. The situation being still tense, he may have preferred to protect his name and his life while sharing his convictions with French speaking readers. At the end of Chanlatte's book, Cressé mentions in a final note that he certifies the authenticity of the correspondences and documents gathered in Juste Chanlatte's *Histoire de la Catastrophe de Saint-Domingue*.

Divided into seven chapters, Chanlatte's work provides a literary history from the racial construction of differences among human races to the introduction of the slave trade system to Saint-Domingue and Haiti. The author is particularly gifted at showing the intimate and perverse relationship between the veil of prejudice regarding someone's skin, racial discrimination and violence:

(...) il fallait de criminels prétextes à des individus assez déhontés pour trafiquer de leurs semblables (...) Un système d'oppression tel que celui de l'esclavage, si froidement calculé, si froidement suivi, ne pouvait être pallié que par les idées les plus extravagantes, que par des artifices diaboliques.

Mais où nous entraîne la nature du sujet que nous traitons? Quelle plaie horrible de l'humanité nous venons de découvrir! Ah! puisque nous avons eu le courage de soulever *ce voile*, hâtons-nous d'en déchirer les lambeaux dégoutâns! et puissent-ils ne jamais reparaître sur la surface du globe! (5) ¹²¹

((...) some pretty shameless individuals needed some criminal pretexts in order to set up a human traffic of their fellows (...) A system of oppression such as slavery, so coldly calculated, executed, could not but be disguised by the most extravagant ideas, and most diabolic artifices.

But where does the nature of the topic we are dealing with lead us? What horrible wound of humanity are we discovering! Ah! since we have the courage to lift this veil, let's make haste to tear off its disgusting scraps! And may they never reappear on the surface of the globe!

¹²¹ *Ibid.* 5. Italics mine

This passage is particularly important since precisely the same metaphor had been previously used in the November 1803 proclamation of Haitian independence. This piece, which clearly inspired Chanlatte, was signed by “Dessalines, Christophe, Clerveaux” and another secretary of Jean-Jacques Dessalines called B. Aimé. Deborah Jenson refers to this metaphor regarding the veil of prejudice in her book *Beyond the Slave Narrative*: “Nous jurons de ne les jamais céder à aucune puissance, qu’elle qu’elle soit sur la terre; *le voile effroyable du préjugé* est déchiré en pièces; et il l’est à jamais. Malheur à quiconque oseroit tenter d’en rajuster les sanglans lambeaux!”¹²² In a very subtle way, Juste Chanlatte provides a testimonial and historical narrative based on archival material, which starts from the very conception of racial discrimination against the black race. Deconstructing the arguments and contradictions and unveiling the artifices and interests behind the introduction of slavery and the colonization of Saint-Domingue, Chanlatte offers to his reader a hopeful but fierce defense of human beings’ rights that is still very relevant today:

Je ne sais de quel côté sortira la lumière, mais un vaste champ s’est offert à mon imagination. Si jamais nous avons nos peintres, nos poètes, nos sculpteurs et nos historiens, que nos monumens seront déshonorans pour vous, si vos crimes y sont fidèlement retracés! Au tableau de vos vices, au récit de vos atrocités, justement révoltée, la postérité s’écrira: (...) blancs, à la vérité, de peau, mais noir de coeur et d’esprit. (29-30)¹²³

This passage echoes Fanon’s metaphor and rhetoric present in his book *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) that is discussed in the third chapter of this dissertation.

¹²² Deborah Jenson. “Before Malcom X, Dessalines: Postcoloniality in a Colonial World” in *Beyond the Slave Narrative: Politics, Sex and Manuscripts in the Haitian Revolution*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011. 91. Italics mine

¹²³ Auguste Jean-Baptiste Bouvet de Cressé Ed. *Histoire de la catastrophe de Saint-Domingue*. Paris: Librairie de Peytieux, 1824. 29-30

Chanlatte's Key Messages

In *Histoire de la Catastrophe de Saint-Domingue*, Juste Chanlatte gives a concrete portrayal of the atrocities and inhuman conditions in which the Haitian population lived, while explaining their desire for revenge, and paying tribute to the generous and exceptional human beings who helped them. In his fourth chapter and his conclusion, however, Chanlatte provides a clear understanding for the necessary basis needed to restore a fair and reciprocal relationship between the old and the new world. In the end, it is Chanlatte's future hope for humanity, justice and liberty that prevails: "*Malgré l'épaisseur du voile qui couvre encore ce séduisant avenir, l'imagination se plaît à écarter un coin du rideau, et toutes les puissances de l'âme sont émues à la moindre probabilité d'un événement qui doit resserrer l'union des deux mondes par des nœuds sacrés et indestructibles.*"¹²⁴ (In spite of the thickness of the veil, which still covers this attractive future, the imagination enjoys to draw a corner of the curtain, and all the strengths of the soul are moved at the slightest probability of an event, which must tighten the union of two worlds by some sacred and indestructible bonds.) Playing on the image of the veil of slavery, colonialism and racial distinction, Juste Chanlatte strategically uses this metaphor to strengthen his argument and transform his ideas into concrete and visual works of art:

(...) vous osez faire un tableau imaginaire de l'homme noir transporté dans les colonies, et affirmer que vous lui avez rendu un service essentiel en l'arrachant à ses contrées sauvages, pour le faire jouir des douceurs de votre administration paternelle! Quelle horrible lumière que celle qui jaillit des torches des furies! (14)

¹²⁵

¹²⁴ *Ibid.* 93. Italics mine

¹²⁵ *Ibid.* 14

Similarly to a visual artist who uses his colors to make more apparent one aspect of his painting, Juste Chanlatte as a writer takes full advantage of the poetics of the French language to spread knowledge and make a difference in politics. The figures of rhetoric, image and metaphor that appear throughout his book reflect the personal touch of an artist on his canvas. Every detail is there for a reason, and it is up to the reader to understand why and to derive his or her own interpretation and understanding of Saint-Domingue's catastrophe.

In trying to unveil the catastrophe of Saint-Domingue, Juste Chanlatte is hoping to provide some historical, political and racial backgrounds to fully grasp the situation at the time of the revolution. In this vein, Chanlatte, with his attempt to provide a more nuanced and complex picture of the Haitian landscape, appears as a pioneering thinker in nineteenth-century Haitian literature. Ultimately, what he offers is a behind the scene picture from the construction of racial discrimination against the black race to the introduction of the slave-trade system. The financial aspects of this human traffic become intertwined with the politics and economics of the Atlantic slave trade system. Resonating strongly with contemporary writings about the notions of disaster associated with Haiti throughout its history and especially after the earthquake taking place on January 12, 2010, Juste Chanlatte attempts to give a precise understanding of the difficult and fragile transition from a colonized country to an independent state.¹²⁶ Turning towards the past and the history of Saint-Domingue and Haiti gave Chanlatte

¹²⁶ Munro, Martin Ed. *Haiti Rising: Haitian History, Culture, and the Earthquake of 2010*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010
Dubois, Laurent. *Haiti: The Aftershocks of History*. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2012

the possibility to assess in a nuanced way the present and to create hope for the future of Haiti and the West Indies. For Juste Chanlatte, it is thanks to a reconciliation between the old and the new world and the triumph of exchange, justice, humanity, independence, and liberty that the prosperity and happiness of the Caribbean can and will prevail.¹²⁷

Chanlatte's Critics

As for Toussaint Louverture and Vastey, there were many critics of Juste Chanlatte's writings. Even though Chanlatte can be considered as one of the pioneers of Haitian literature, who claims to defend his country and culture, his style was still very influenced by French literature and, for some people, not enough by Haitian culture. Two contemporary Haitian writers, Louis-Philippe Dalembert and Lyonel Trouillot express this idea in their 2010 tribute to Haitian literature titled *Haïti: Une Traversée Littéraire*:

Au lendemain de l'Indépendance, il est vrai que nos premiers auteurs, Juste Chanlatte, Jules Solime Milcent ou encore Antoine Dupré, pour ne citer qu'eux, imitaient beaucoup les auteurs français des XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles, chez qui ils allaient chercher des images, un style et des formes fixes. Et il est vrai aussi que la réalité haïtienne, la vie de tous les jours, la culture, le créole, le vaudou ainsi que les traditions populaires, n'étaient pas présents dans leurs œuvres. En dehors des appels à l'unité en cas de nouvelle attaque de la part de l'armée française, c'était une littérature "nationale" sans "la nation", comme cela fut le cas pour de nombreuses sociétés postcoloniales. (13)¹²⁸

The idea of writing and creating literary forms about Haitian culture without including key Haitian references, such as Haitian creole, Haitian music, and the Haitian religions

¹²⁷ Auguste Jean-Baptiste Bouvet de Cressé Ed. *Histoire de la catastrophe de Saint-Domingue*. Paris: Librairie de Peytieux, 1824. 95-9

¹²⁸ Louis-Philippe Dalembert and Lyonel Trouillot. *Haïti: Une Traversée Littéraire*. Port-au-Prince: Presses Nationales d'Haïti, 2010. 13

among others, contribute to remind the importance of inner contradiction, disavowal and opacity present in postcolonial countries such as Haiti. Duraciné Vaval in *Histoire de la littérature haïtienne ou l'âme noire* sums up this situation very clearly in claiming that: “Le comte de Rosiers (c’est ainsi que J. Chanlatte s’appelait sous la royauté de Christophe) encensa dans ses écrits le monarque du Nord, tant que celui-ci tenait en main les destinées du pays (...)”¹²⁹ With flattery, hypocrisy and a clever strategy, Chanlatte avoided throughout his life sticking to his initial positions. This was a strong mistake according to Henock Trouillot, who claims that because of his hesitation at taking sides, his literary talents in poetry especially were diminished.¹³⁰ However, if Juste Chanlatte may have decided to protect his life and skin during the tense political transitional time in Saint-Domingue and Haiti, his secret book, *Histoire de la Catastrophe de Saint-Domingue*, seems on the contrary to reveal in a subtle way his most secret ideas and convictions. This is actually the plot of one of Juste Chanlatte’s plays titled *Le Philosophe-Physicien (The Physician-Philosopher)*, which offers an additional piece of evidence to bear in mind before judging him. This piece tells the story of a gifted physician named Gélanor, who is supposed to have mysterious and uncommon magic powers. To prove this fact, anyone who would step into his “office of truth” would see his or her most secret thoughts unveiled.¹³¹

Until the end of his life, Juste Chanlatte experienced a great deal of political and professional changes. Initially, he was in support of the new Haitian king Henry

¹²⁹ Christophe Philippe Charles. “Juste Chanlatte” in *Les pionniers de la littérature haïtienne*. Haiti: Editions Choucouné, 1999. 46

¹³⁰ Henock Trouillot. *Les origines sociales de la littérature haïtienne*. Port-au-Prince : Imprimerie N. A. Théodore, 1962. 29

¹³¹ *Ibid.* 49

Christophe after Dessalines' assassination, and wrote from 1807 to 1811 for la "Gazette Officielle de l'Etat d'Hayti". This newspaper became from 1811 to 1820 la "Gazette Royale d'Hayti" and was published in Cap by the state printer Pierre Roux.¹³² A member of the nobility under Christophe's reign, Juste Chanlatte's name changed to become "Comte de Roziers" in 1818. The motto that represented his symbol of nobility was: "Image of my zeal".¹³³ Following Christophe's suicide, Juste Chanlatte shifted sides and became closer to his previous political "enemy" on the republican side. He became the editor of "Le Télégraphe", which was the official newspaper of the new Haitian president Jean-Pierre Boyer and his government. Contrary to other newspapers, "Le Télégraphe" included numerous articles about the preservation of Haiti national independence and was against slavery and racial segregation.¹³⁴ Juste Chanlatte died at the age of 62 year old in Port-au-Prince in 1828. The French speaking academic and literary figure Auguste Viatte (1903-1993) offers a complex and nuanced portrait of Chanlatte's life in *Histoire Littéraire de l'Amérique Française*:

Elevé en France, collaborateur des Anglais pendant les guerres révolutionnaires, il a rédigé les proclamations de Dessalines puis est devenu publiciste officiel de Christophe: son *Cri de la Nature*, en 1810, a devancé les diatribes anticoloniales de Vastey; il compose, pour le couronnement de son Roi, une cantate où figurent (...) le génie d'Haïti, et autres allégories (...) quitte à flagorner Boyer lorsque la République aura vaincu. (Castera 45)¹³⁵

The relation between literature, history and opacity refers back to Edouard Glissant, and can maybe help us understand more fully the motives of Chanlatte's essay. If

¹³² Justin Emmanuel Castera. *Bref Coup d'Oeil sur les Origines de la Presse Haïtienne: 1764-1850*. Port-au-Prince: Imprimerie Henri Deschamps, 1986. 31

¹³³ Cheesman, Clive Ed. *The Armorial of Haiti: Symbols of Nobility in the Reign of Henry Christophe*. College of Arms manuscript JP 177. London: College of Arms, 2007. 90

¹³⁴ Justin Emmanuel Castera. *Bref Coup d'Oeil sur les Origines de la Presse Haïtienne: 1764-1850*. Port-au-Prince: Imprimerie Henri Deschamps, 1986. 35-6

¹³⁵ *Ibid.* 45

Histoire de la Catastrophe de Saint-Domingue is clearly influenced by the French tradition, its language and its literature, Juste Chanlatte, however, tries to distance himself from the fictionalization of French history by providing another version of the story: “Inconnue en Europe, la relation qu’on va lire des atrocités commises à Saint-Domingue, sous le consulat et par ordre de Napoléon Bonaparte, est une de ces monstruosités dont heureusement la nature est avare, et que l’histoire trouve rarement l’occasion de consacrer dans ses fastes immortels.”¹³⁶ In this sense, Juste Chanlatte perhaps appears more honest in this writing that one would first think, knowing his reputation of being insincere and interested. Chanlatte was faithful to his objectives in this book, which were to deconstruct the prejudices of racial difference and racial distinction, a legacy that Alphonse de Lamartine and Joseph-Anténor Firmin will also continue.

¹³⁶ Auguste Jean-Baptiste Bouvet de Cressé Ed. *Histoire de la catastrophe de Saint-Domingue*. Paris: Librairie de Peytieux, 1824. iv

Chapter Two

Haitian Metamorphoses: Pioneer Allegories in the Work of Emeric Bergeaud,

Joseph-Ant enor Firmin, & Marie Vieux-Chauvet

Abstract

Chapter two, “Haitian Metamorphoses: Pioneer Allegories in the Work of Emeric Bergeaud, Joseph-Ant enor Firmin, and Marie Vieux-Chauvet” analyses prose and novels, chronologically distributed over the broad time period from 1859 to 1957, that nevertheless share a figuration of postcolonial resistance and internal revolution as through the metamorphosis of intellectual pioneer figures. In Haiti’s first novel, *Stella*, Bergeaud uses the story of the diversely racialized siblings Romulus and R emus, children of the maternal “Marianne” figure Marie l’Africaine, to represent the emergence from colonized Saint-Domingue of the independent country named Haiti. In *De l’Egalit  des Races Humaines (Anthropologie positive)*, Firmin shares his own transformative experience as a Haitian intellectual who is accepted to the Paris Anthropological Society, at a time when he is supposed to belong to an inferior race. From this paradoxical situation Firmin draws the inspiration for his 662 page deconstruction of racist theories developed in Joseph Arthur de Gobineau’s (1816-1882) *Essai sur l’In galit  des Races Humaines*. Vieux-Chauvet offers an in-depth analysis of the metamorphosis of the first person of color in Saint-Domingue allowed to sing and perform at the Com die in Port-au-Prince --the “mulatta” actress Minette-- as a metaphor for Saint Domingue’s transformation. Through these fictions of inaugural metamorphoses, Bergeaud, Firmin and Vieux-Chauvet allegorize the importance of individual and collective resistance, solidarity and transformation as a springboard for an ongoing Haitian national revolution.

2.1. *Post-colonial Resistance in Emeric Bergeaud's Stella (1859)*

Introduction

The first section of this chapter revisits the transition from slavery to liberty, and its impact on the population of Saint-Domingue and Haiti. In doing so, it sheds light on the metamorphosis from colonized Saint-Domingue to the birth of an independent country named Haiti, and the subsequent attempts to preserve their dignity. Throughout the writing of *Stella*, Emeric Bergeaud (1818-1858) explores in detail this change, and unveils how the enslaved population in Saint-Domingue was abused within the context of the slave trade. The strength of this book is to enlighten the quest of Rigaud, Toussaint, Dessalines and Pétion to fight back to gain their freedom.¹ In his writing, Emeric Bergeaud provides the example of a strong resistance in pioneering Haitian literature in depicting the lives of two brothers Rémus and Romulus, who will help both the enslaved population and Saint-Domingue to become both free and free of prejudices. At the frontier between fiction, history and literature, Bergeaud combines elements of mythology, surrealism, and historical references about Saint-Domingue and Haiti. This hybrid and original piece of writing deserves some close attention for its ability to bring together the beauty of a complex history in the form of a fable. In doing so, Emeric Bergeaud composes an Ode to Haiti and to Liberty personified by the abstract and idealized character called Stella. Her name echoes the title of his book, which is a tribute to the humanity, resistance and solidarity of Haiti as a united country. Composed during his exile in Saint Thomas, Emeric Bergeaud wrote

¹ Emeric Bergeaud. *Stella*. Carouge-Genève: Editions Zoé et Les Classiques du Monde, 2009. 19: “La révolution de Saint-Domingue, laborieux enfantement d’une société nouvelle, a donné naissance à quatre hommes qui en personnifient les excès et la gloire: RIGAUD, TOUSSAINT, DESSALINES, PETION.”

his book *Stella* for his country, his fellow citizens and their future. Bergeaud himself did not survive the publication of this piece. He came to Paris in 1857 with the hope of recovering from his illness, but facing the fact this was unlikely, Bergeaud gave the copy of his manuscript to his friend, the Haitian historian and politician Alexis Beaubrun Ardouin (1796-1865). Published for the first time in 1859 by Ardouin, the book would be published again in 1887 by Bergeaud's wife, who then omitted the forward and biographical information.² Why exactly was Emeric Bergeaud in exile at the time during the writing of *Stella* and what was his intention in writing this last piece before his death? This section firstly puts into light how Emeric Bergeaud's book can be analyzed through the lense of sound. Secondly it reveals the difficulty of establishing a common united basis for the diverse Haitian population. Thirdly, it explores to what extent the recognition of the Haitians' dignity, liberty and unity is key for the future of its country.

Emeric Bergeaud's Biography

Born in the southern Haitian city called Les Cayes in 1818, Emeric Bergeaud witnessed throughout the first thirty years of his life the plots and conflicts for power in Haiti along with the political coups, riots and civil wars which took place during the construction of this newly independent country.³ He worked as a secretary for his uncle the Haitian General Borgella, who was major of the Cayes quarter and the chief of the

² Emeric Bergeaud. *Stella*. Carouge-Genève: Editions Zoé et Les Classiques du Monde, 2009. 5

³ Anne Marty. "Préface de Anne Marty" in Emeric Bergeaud's *Stella*. Carouge-Genève: Editions Zoé et Les Classiques du Monde, 2009. 9

southern state. ⁴ However, Emeric Bergaud was forced to exile after the bloody rebellion in Port-au-Prince and additional uprisings taking place in Cayes on April 16, 1848 to revolt against the Haitian President Faustin Soulouque. ⁵ Because Bergaud was involved in one of these conspiracies against the government of Faustin Soulouque, he was obliged to continue to live and write in Saint Thomas, which constitutes nowadays one of the islands of the United States Virgin Islands. ⁶ Bergaud stayed there until 1857, when he travelled to Paris concerned about his health, and came back to Saint Thomas the following year during which he passed away on February 23, 1858. ⁷ Faustin Soulouque had been an officer and a general in the army of Haiti before officially accepting the role of President of Haiti on March 2, 1847. His name changed to Faustin I on August 26, 1849 when thanks to the support of a very loyal militia he was proclaimed Emperor of Haiti. It was in this context, during Emeric Bergaud's exile in Saint Thomas, that *Stella* was written between 1848 and 1857. ⁸

Reception of Stella

Bergaud's only published book *Stella* has been ignored by many literary critics, who often considered this historical novel to be "a blind imitation of French literature that does not reveal Haiti's uniqueness," and as such did not belong to the real Haitian

⁴ Raphaël Berrou et Pradel Pompilus. *L'Histoire de la littérature haïtienne illustrée par les textes: Tome I*. Port-au-Prince: Editions Caraïbes, 1975. 192

Duraciné Vaval. *Histoire de la littérature haïtienne ou "l'âme noire"*. Nendeln: Kraus Reprint, 1971. 141

⁵ Raphaël Berrou et Pradel Pompilus. *L'Histoire de la littérature haïtienne illustrée par les textes: Tome I*. Port-au-Prince: Editions Caraïbes, 1975. 192

⁶ Léon-François Hoffmann. *Haïti: Lettres et l'être*. Toronto: Editions du Gref, 1992. 147

⁷ Ghislain Gouraige. *Histoire de la littérature haïtienne: de l'indépendance à nos jours* (1960). Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 2003. 28

This example echoes the trajectory of another Haitian key figure, Joseph-Anténor Firmin, who was also compelled to exile himself in Saint Thomas.

⁸ Christiane Ndiaye. "Stella d'Emeric Bergaud: une écriture épique de l'histoire" in *Caraïbe et Océan Indien: Questions d'histoire*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 2009. 23

literary tradition.⁹ Ghislain Gouraige for instance in his *Histoire de la littérature haïtienne: de l'indépendance à nos jours* explains that:

Écrit en 1858, après les terribles persécutions impériales contre les mulâtres, le roman de Bergaud (lui-même proscrit par Soulouque) avait une signification pour l'époque et l'on comprend qu'Ardouin, (autre victime du régime) en ait assumé la publication. Ce sont là, en somme, les vrais mérites de l'œuvre qui, du point de vue historique et romanesque, suscite un intérêt limité. (29)¹⁰

However, Hénoc Dorsinville, in one of his article from *L'Essor littéraire et scientifique*, considers *Stella* to be “un petit livre rare dont on perd le souvenir.”¹¹ Emeric Bergaud's book constitutes the first Haitian novel and throughout my analysis of *Stella*, I argue that far from being disconnected from Haitian political issues, it sets the tone for the beginning of the Haitian historical novelistic tradition written in French while providing key messages for its readers. One of the first scholars to notice and analyze this book in depth, Léon-François Hoffmann, noticed that one of the main points of this book is to persuade Haitian readers “that the antagonisms present between the Blacks and the Mulattoes, present at the origins of Haiti's history, were the cause of all the country's misfortunes (...)”¹² Because this hostility between them made the progress in Haiti impossible, Emeric Bergaud urges his readers to overcome this division and to

⁹ Daut, Marlene L. “Between the family and the nation: parricide and the tragic mulatto/a in nineteenth-century fictions of the Haitian revolution” in *Science of Desire: Race and Representations of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World, 1790-1865*. Indiana: Notre Dame, 2008. 298

¹⁰ Ghislain Gouraige. *Histoire de la littérature haïtienne: de l'indépendance à nos jours* (1960). Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 2003. 29

¹¹ Hénoc Dorsinville. Conférence [sur les lettres haïtiennes] in *L'Essor littéraire et scientifique*. Number 15, June 1913. 346

Léon-François Hoffmann. *Haïti : Lettres et l'être*. Toronto : Editions du Gref, 1992. 147

¹² Daut, Marlene L. “Between the family and the nation: parricide and the tragic mulatto/a in nineteenth-century fictions of the Haitian revolution” in *Science of Desire: Race and Representations of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World, 1790-1865*. Indiana: Notre Dame, 2008. 299

Léon-François Hoffmann. *Haïti : Lettres et l'être*. Toronto : Editions du Gref, 1992. 159

remain as united as possible in order to preserve and save the independence and liberty of the Haitian society.¹³

Stella's Audience

In *Stella*, the question of audience is crucial, to whom exactly was this book addressed? Written in French, this book seems to be primarily intended for both the French and Haitian elite as well as younger and older generations of literate French-speakers. On the one hand, Bergaud is presenting a concise but respectable portrait of Saint Domingue, its history and its culture to a French audience at a time when Soulouque is offering a negative image of Haiti. On the other, Bergaud wants to inspire his Haitian readers with pride and respect for their country by looking back at Haiti's history. The Soulouque government persecuted educated mulattoes, and the Haitian elite was getting more in the habit of criticizing its own country while praising instead French culture and Parisian society. Léon-François Hoffmann explains therefore that in writing *Stella*, Emeric Bergaud had in mind to reverse this tendency:

L'élite haïtienne était en train de s'enfoncer dans ce "bovarysme collectif" que Price-Mars dénoncera vigoureusement. Il s'agissait donc de rappeler aux Haïtiens leurs origines et leurs sacrifices consentis par leurs ancêtres pour conquérir la dignité humaine. (159)¹⁴

In this sense, the first Haitian novel of Emeric Bergaud belongs to the genre of the "literature engagée", which used writings as a form of political resistance. In writing this book for a specific reason and for a particular audience in mind, Bergaud offers to both French and Haitian audiences a relevant historical novel to change the perception

¹³ Daut, Marlene L. "Between the family and the nation: parricide and the tragic mulatto/a in nineteenth-century fictions of the Haitian revolution" in *Science of Desire: Race and Representations of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World, 1790-1865*. Indiana: Notre Dame, 2008. 299

¹⁴ Léon-François Hoffmann. *Haïti : Lettres et l'être*. Toronto : Editions du Gref, 1992. 159

of Haiti at home and abroad and to resist Haiti's current political situation. Far from writing a literary text disconnected from his contemporary context, Emeric Bergaud offers a subtle novel, which offers clear messages of resistance to educate and convince his readers to act and implement changes.¹⁵

History & Memory

Emeric Bergaud emphasizes in *Stella* the crucial importance of history and memory to build a country that can transcend its inner divisions across race, class and gender to become stronger and fully aware of its potential. One specific sound resonates throughout his writings to remind his reader of this fundamental principle. The human cry and scream symbolically echo the recognition of the human dimension in each and every character present in his book. It not only reflects the necessity to break the silence, but also to reconnect the reader with a basic fact: which is that every life begins with a *cri* (in French) and a *scream* (in English). In this sense, the scream reveals the inherent nature and common characteristic of all human beings, brought into the world with a scream because they are alive and healthy, and throughout their life come back to this initial stage to grow, resist and survive. This "survival skill" represents in many ways the common human characteristic in all protagonists, including Rémus, Romulus, Stella and the Colon. Each of them at some point in the story will experience an extreme situation during which they will revert to this initial cry to break the silence and accept their fear, fragility and ultimate humanity. The first encounter between Rémus, Romulus, Stella and the Colon encapsulates how the scream reveals their common desire for life and human instinct for survival and love. After an insignificant incident,

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 160

the Colon orders the beating of Marie l'Africaine, the mother of Rémus and Romulus, who is of African descent, and who will ultimately die; the two brothers then decide to seek revenge and kill the Colon. One night, as the Colon is silently asleep in his house, Rémus and Romulus plan to set his house on fire. In this intense scene, the human scream plays a key role in the book's section titled "Représailles," and embodies this instinct for survival in the characters:

La flamme perce le toit et circule comme une lave au milieu des tuiles. Ses progrès sont rapides, effroyables : au *cri sinistre* qui l'annonce, un *cri plus sinistre* répond de l'autre côté du bâtiment.
Ces cris, le grondement de l'incendie, le fracas des tuiles brisés dans leur chute, tous ces *bruits rententissants* ont enfin réveillé le Colon qui, à demi vêtu, entrebâille sa porte et avance timidement la tête. Soudain *siffle* et brille une manchette tranchante dont le coup mal dirigé effleure son visage.¹⁶

If it is thanks to these noises and screams that the Colon awakens, then, it is thanks to additional and slightly different sounds that Rémus and Romulus discover the presence of Stella in the Colon's house:

Tout à coup *une voix lamentable* s'élève des flammes, une *plainte lugubre* traverse les régions de l'air et parvient aux deux frères qui, la prenant pour un *cri d'angoisse* du Colon expirant, y répondent par un *rire cruel*.
Pendant qu'ils se réjouissaient, *un second cri plus douloureux* se fait entendre. Ils prêtent attention, ils distinguent au milieu des flammes une forme humaine: ce n'est pas un homme, c'est une femme échevelée, éperdue, qui se débat *dans l'horreur et le désespoir d'une mort certaine* (...) *Un dernier cri* les transporte au-delà du rempart de feu, et ils enlèvent dans leurs bras une jeune fille presque sans vie. (46-7)¹⁷

In this passage, it is worth noticing that the scream of despair convey a sense of emergency and tragedy in a more powerful way than words can express, and remind both brothers of their naturally good instinct to save this unknown person from her

¹⁶ Emeric Bergeaud. *Stella*. Carouge-Genève: Editions Zoé et Les Classiques du Monde, 2009. 46-7. Italics mine.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 48. The italics are mine.

immanent death. In so doing, Bergaud shows how his protagonists and his readers have the shared responsibility to remember where they originate as human beings, as a country, as Haitians, and to act accordingly. One of the messages of Emeric Bergaud in this book is to reveal the importance of showing respect for Saint-Domingue's history, memory and ultimate independence in order for Haiti to move forward as a united and strong nation speaking with the same voice.

Resistance & Solidarity

However, Emeric Bergaud expresses at the same time the difficulty of resistance and solidarity in the face of racism and the construction of human inequalities based on the color of one's skin, which were omnipresent during the slave trade and colonial systems in Saint-Domingue and Haiti. In *Stella*, the reader understands this dichotomy from the very beginning of the book with the example of Rémus and Romulus. Both brothers share the same mother, Marie l'Africaine, but differ in skin color since their fathers are not the same. Romulus' father was an African officer, who passed away during a tribal war in Africa; hence Romulus' skin color is dark.¹⁸ The father of his brother Rémus is the white plantation owner called the Colon, who refused to recognize him as a legitimate child; hence Rémus' skin color is brown:

Par une bizarrerie, un jeu pittoresque de la nature, le moins âgé de ces jeunes gens avait la nuance pâlie de l'acajou, tandis que l'aîné pouvait être comparé à l'ébène le plus noir. Cette différence de couleur n'excluait pas entre eux un air de famille qui les eût fait, à première vue, reconnaître pour frères. (28)¹⁹

¹⁸ In *Stella*, Rémus embodies the Mulattoes, Romulus metaphorically represents the Blacks, Marie l'Africaine personifies the motherland, and Stella becomes the allegory of Freedom, Unity and Wisdom. Léon-François Hoffmann. *Haiti : Lettres et l'être*. Toronto : Editions du Gref, 1992. 156

¹⁹ Emeric Bergaud. *Stella*. Carouge-Genève: Editions Zoé et Les Classiques du Monde, 2009. 28.

Rémus works with his brother Romulus and his mother Marie l'Africaine in one of the plantations of his biological father. When Marie is flogged to death under the order of the Colon for protecting another slave, the depiction of the noises and effects of the whip on her body when she is tortured to death echoes in the reader's imagination the importance of this universal human instinct, shared by all regardless of color:

Aussitôt *le fouet terrible retentit*, une scène d'horreur dont les détails font frémir commence. Au bruit multiplié des coups se mêlent des *cris aigus, déchirants, qui s'affaiblissent peu à peu jusqu'à s'éteindre dans un râle*. Le fouet frappe, frappe deux heures. La victime bondit, se tord, *grince les dents*. Sa bouche écume, ses narines s'enflent, ses yeux sortent de leurs orbites. Il n'y a plus de vie, mais la matière tressaille encore et *le fouet frappe toujours* pour ne s'arrêter enfin que sur un cadavre inerte. (34)²⁰

In this context, the ambivalence of human nature within the colonial system is revealed. On the one hand, every human being possesses the same instinct and is capable of him or herself. On the other hand, Bergaud reminds his reader that human nature is also capable of exactly the opposite: "S'il est des êtres d'exception que le ciel a doués de toutes les supériorités morales, il en est malheureusement d'autres auxquels la nature a refusé ses meilleurs instincts, et dont elle a fait quelque chose d'inférieur à la bête féroce elle-même."²¹ This ambiguity is explored in more depth in the chapter "Colonial Machiavelism," wherein Rémus and Romulus, after fighting the Colon together and being strongly united, experience some inner division due to the negative influence of the Colon, who warns Romulus to mistrust Rémus. After the first hostilities between Rémus and Romulus and the Colon, the latter decides during a time of peace in Saint-Domingue to ingratiate himself with and to convince Romulus that his darker

²⁰ *Ibid.* 34. The italics are mine.

²¹ Emeric Bergeaud. *Stella*. Carouge-Genève: Editions Zoé et Les Classiques du Monde, 2009. 34

complexion is the reason why Rémus thinks that his brother is morally inferior to him. In creating this lie, the Colon manages to lead Romulus to give up his strong union with his brother. Now that the slaves have won their freedom, both Rémus and Romulus have become powerful men, who led the way to the independence of the country. The purpose of this tactic was to oppose them to one another in order to create a civil war and to alter their ambitious project of independence, while strengthening the colonizers' own interests including establishing slavery in Saint-Domingue again. Remembering the fable of the damned fig tree that their mother told them, Romulus tries to use the moral of this metaphorical story to show how the perverse influence of the Colon on Rémus can be dangerous for his brother. In this creole fable, a deviant and sterile fig tree, condemned to crawl because of its evil nature, pleads to the other trees of the forest. He begs them for pity, since his branches are too weak to grow. Every tree in the forest, knowing the intentions behind his surreptitious attempt, refuse to help him, with the exception of the candid elm, which, moved by his entreaties, bends to help him grow. As soon as the elm does so, the fig tree climbs up and spread his branches to reach the elm before eating its heart. Since it becomes impossible for the elm to breathe, he dries and ultimately dies, while the fig tree grows to be the biggest tree in the forest.²² Emeric Bergaud in his footnote, written in the original publication of *Stella*, explains to the reader the extent to which this fable was a creole invention. To illustrate his point, Bergaud refers to a passage from a letter written on April 20, 1799 by the mulatto military leader, Benoit Joseph André Rigaud (1761–1811), in which Rigaud complains about the widespread military strategy of creating suspicion and tension among friends

²² *Ibid.* 113-4

and brothers in order to divide the solidarity and unity of the army fighting for the good of the country: “Pourquoi faut-il que les ennemis les plus perfides aient aujourd’hui la faculté d’irriter frères contre frères, amis contre amis ? Jusques à quand la défiance portera-t-elle les uns à soupçonner les autres et à détruire l’union et l’accord si nécessaires à notre bonheur (...) ?” (251) ²³ In putting this example in context, Emeric Bergaud therefore reveals a larger issue, which starts from this apparent simple strategy of division.

Human Dignity, Equality & Liberty

Understanding the importance of respect for human dignity, equality and liberty while putting this into practice constitutes one of the leitmotifs in *Stella*. Throughout his book, Bergaud reveals the key behind slavery: breaking the equality and shared humanity inherent in human beings and establishing human racial prejudices based on the color of one’s skin creates a vicious circle by which profit is made on the backs of other human beings, and from which it is difficult to escape :

Une misérable question, la plus misérable qui ait jamais été soulevée parmi les hommes, est sans contredit la question vulgairement appelée de couleur. Elle renferme une proposition dont le simple énoncé est absurde, et qu’il est conséquemment inutile et même ridicule de discuter. Les raisons d’être de l’esclavage et des préjugés qui en forment le hideux cortège sont connues. Elles tiennent toute à une insatiable cupidité. Pour torturer sans remords les malheureux Africains, les maîtres, voilant le crime sous le sophisme, ont prétendu qu’ils étaient inférieurs aux autres individus de l’espèce humaine, par cela seul qu’ils étaient noirs. (116) ²⁴

In the crucial final chapter of his book titled “Haïti,” Bergaud deconstructs the inherent inequalities within the slave trade-system. While the European *flibustiers* (freebooters) in

²³ Emeric Bergeaud. *Stella*. Carouge-Genève: Editions Zoé et Les Classiques du Monde, 2009. 251

²⁴ *Ibid.* 116

Saint-Domingue worked temporarily and were therefore temporarily under the servitude of the colonizers, the enslaved population from Africa extracted by force from their countries and made to work intensely in the plantation, was perpetually enslaved physically and morally. This chain of racial prejudice corresponds to what Emeric Bergaud called “une fatale chaîne qui se prolongeait dans le néant.”²⁵ After being physically enslaved, the few slaves who were able to purchase their freedom, or to obtain it after becoming pregnant from their masters, or else by performing some extraordinary service, had to face the everyday moral humiliation and persecution, which justified slavery: “Ils étaient toujours moralement esclaves. La véritable chaîne, celle qui avait pesé sur leurs membres, sur leur volonté, sur leur vie et sur la vie de leurs familles était brisée; une autre chaîne, invisible, impalpable, la chaîne des préjugés, se repliait autour d’eux et les étouffait.”²⁶ This form of open racism became a constructed pretext to legitimize the lie on which the slave trade and colonial system was built.

Legacies & Lessons from the Haitian Revolution

One of the answers that Emeric Bergaud offers to overcome this construction of color distinctions is to remember and inspire oneself from the legacies of the Haitian revolution. For Bergaud, it is thanks to the Haitian population’s solidarity, resistance, courage and sacrifice beyond one’s personal pride or ego that Haiti has been and will continue to be successful as a united country. In this sense, the tortures and executions of many Haitians including Vincent Ogé, Jean Baptiste Chavannes, and Toussaint

²⁵ Emeric Bergeaud. *Stella*. Carouge-Genève: Editions Zoé et Les Classiques du Monde, 2009. 242

²⁶ *Ibid.* 242-3

Louverture were not in vain. They represent significant sacrifices that must be remembered as fundamental to the birth of free Haiti:

Ainsi s’accomplit la révolution de Saint-Domingue, inaugurée par un supplice, le supplice d’Ogé, de Chavannes et d’autres martyrs, terminée par un massacre... Malgré tous ces crimes qui ont ensanglanté son cours, cette révolution fut aussi grande que pas une. Le peuple qu’elle émancipa peut aujourd’hui s’en glorifier; il doit même s’y reporter souvent par l’esprit, afin d’apprendre à ne pas déroger de son passé. (247)²⁷

The question of the imagination is key here, since Emeric Bergaud recommends to his readers to appreciate fully and to keep in mind the meaningful actions of many including their executions, for the future good of the country. Remembering means in this case, not only forgetting the sacrifices of previous generations, but also breaking the silence in order to continue to move forward. This transition from slavery to liberty is not only experienced by the Haitian population, but by the nation as a whole, and this metamorphosis is once again hinted at by a scream. This time, it is God, who according to Emeric Bergaud is asking the Haitians to walk and to work together peacefully and lovingly:

La civilisation n’est pas exclusive ; elle attire au lieu de repousser. C’est par elle que doit s’opérer l’alliance du genre humain. Grâce à sa toute-puissance influence, il n’y aura bientôt sur la terre ni noirs, ni blancs, ni jaunes, ni Africains, ni Européens, ni Asiatiques, ni Américains : il y aura des frères. Elle poursuit de ses lumières la barbarie qui se cache. Partout où celle-ci, *de sa voix mourante* conseille la guerre, la civilisation prêche la paix; et quand retentit le mot haine, elle répond amour. Notre pays n’est pas étranger aux idées progressives du siècle. *Dieu lui crie: marche !* et, dans sa pénible ascension, nos vœux sincères l’accompagnent. (248)²⁸

²⁷ *Ibid.* 247

²⁸ Emeric Bergaud. *Stella*. Carouge-Genève: Editions Zoé et Les Classiques du Monde, 2009. 248. Italics mine.

Thus one of the main messages in *Stella* is that color distinctions among the Haitian population are a legacy inherited from the slave trade and colonial times, which foster division and create scission, risking the loss of Haiti's independence. Bergaud stresses the fact that Haiti has to embrace *métissage* as a fruitful and enriching process leading to the continuous unity and liberty of its country.²⁹ As a new, free country it should not continue to think in terms of racial distinctions, which makes its freedom more fragile and difficult to maintain over time. In referring to God in the last line of his historical novel, Emeric Bergaud expresses his strong desire to see this lesson implemented not for his sake, but for the sake of the divine creator. This call for unity though a divine voice can be interpreted as an ultimate way to convince his readers of the necessity to hear and listen the divine calling to help Haiti preserve its liberty.

The Relevance of Sound in Stella

In analyzing *Stella* through the lense of sound, the reader can appreciate most fully Emeric Bergaud's writings and message. In his book, sound is the natural element which breaks the silence of history and reminds the Haitians of their legacies and sacrifices made during the Haitian revolution. The reader listens to the voice of Stella, who reminds Rémus and Romulus of their common humanity and of their necessity to continue fighting together for their mother country. Ultimately, though, the reader is asked to be attentive to the voice of God, who warns the Haitians to stay united and make Haiti stronger in the future while accepting her past and current population without reference to any color line. In moments of extreme joy for instance during the

²⁹ Daut, Marlene L. "Between the family and the nation: parricide and the tragic mulatto/a in nineteenth-century fictions of the Haitian revolution" in *Science of Desire: Race and Representations of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World, 1790-1865*. Indiana: Notre Dame, 2008. 309-310

abolition of slavery in Saint-Domingue, the reader witnesses the sound of music mixed with the voices of the Haitian population, screaming for joy when the publication of the legal decree to abolish slavery is read aloud.³⁰ *Stella* teaches its reader the importance of resisting through remembering and writing, but also of resisting through *listening*.

³⁰ Emeric Bergeaud. *Stella*. Carouge-Genève: Editions Zoé et Les Classiques du Monde, 2009. 92

2.2. Post-colonial Resistance in Joseph-Anténor Firmin's

On the Equality of Human Races (1885)

Introduction

Born in Cap-Haïtien, Joseph-Anténor Firmin (150-1911) studied law in Haiti and traveled to the French capital as a diplomat in 1883. In the city of Paris, Firmin met the Haitian scholar Louis-Joseph Janvier (1855-1911), the French physician Simon Alexandre Ernest Aubertin (1825-1893) and his colleague Gabriel de Mortillet (1821-1898), who were all members of the Société d'Anthropologie de Paris. On July 17, 1884 Firmin was admitted as *Membres Titulaires* to the Paris Anthropological Society. During the following eighteen months, he attended Society meetings and wrote a 662-page book titled *De l'Égalité des Races Humaines (Anthropologie positive)*.³¹ Written in French in 1885, it was largely ignored at the time, before being recognized later on as a proper anthropological work. Thanks to Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban and Asselin Charles, it was translated into English for the first time in 2000 and published in French again with an introduction by Jean Métellus in 2005.³² In this work, Firmin deconstructed Joseph Arthur de Gobineau's (1816-1882) racist theory developed in *Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines*, but also countered racist thoughts that were present in American and European scholarship. Dedicated to Haiti, to its history and people, Firmin's book opens

³¹ Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban and Asselin Charles Ed. Anténor Firmin. "Introduction" in *The Equality of Human Races*. New York: Garland publishing, 2000. xiv

³² *Ibid.* "Note on the Translation". ix-x

According to Asselin Charles the main challenges in translating this book were to reproduce in modern English Joseph- Anténor Firmin's modulated style, scientific terminology, documentation techniques and frame of intellectual reference.

Anténor Firmin. *De l'égalité des races humaines: Anthropologie positive (1885)*. Montréal: Mémoire d'encrier, 2005.

with a portrait of Toussaint Louverture, whose example is used as a counter-argument to Gobineau's theory and to one of the chapters in his book specifically.³³ Born in 1850, Firmin was among the third generation of post-independence Haitians who took pride in the heroic accomplishment of being the world's first Black Republic and provides an example of post-colonial resistance in *De l'Egalité des Races Humaines* (1885).³⁴ To what extent is the voice of Firmin particularly crucial in deconstructing the racism embodied in Joseph Arthur de Gobineau's *Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines* (1853-55)?³⁵ How does Joseph-Anténor Firmin specifically portray the accomplishments embodied in the Haitian independence? In this section, I explore first of all the crucial importance of Firmin's reaction to the atmosphere of the Paris Anthropological Society, before analyzing in depth the reasons why Firmin dedicated this book to Haiti, and finally the extent of its global impact on postcolonial imaginations.

Joseph-Anténor Firmin's Biography

In order to appreciate the boldness, challenges, and subtleties inherent in writing and publishing such a piece, this first part of this section unveils the specific context of resistance in which Joseph-Anténor Firmin composed *De l'Egalité des Races Humaines* (*Anthropologie positive*). Coming from a humble family, Firmin loved intellectual work, and continued to learn for pleasure for two years after highschool under the supervision of one of his previous professors, Jules Neff, who received his

³³ Anténor Firmin. "Rapidité de l'évolution dans la race noire: Toussaint-Louverture" in *De l'égalité des races humaines: Anthropologie positive* (1885). Montréal: Mémoire d'encrier, 2005. 331-340

³⁴ *Ibid.* "Preface". xiii

Joseph-Anténor Firmin. *De l'Egalité des Races Humaines* (*Anthropologie positive*). Paris: Librairie Cotillon, 1885

³⁵ Joseph Arthur de Gobineau. *Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines* (1853-55). Paris: Editions Pierre Belfond, 1967

diploma from the Ecole Normale Supérieure in Paris.³⁶ Firmin combined several careers throughout his life, from engaged intellectual work as a writer, researcher and lawyer, to diplomacy as an ambassador, to politics as a Minister of Finances and Exterior Relations for Haiti. Firmin's life was punctuated by failed attempts to play a significant political role as a President in Haiti because of the opposition in his country. As a result he was forced throughout his life to exile himself to Saint-Thomas in the Caribbean and to Paris, France. However, his times in exile were highly productive and Firmin used these years spent overseas to write about delicate questions regarding Haiti and to publish some of his most important works, including *De l'Egalité des Races Humaines (Anthropologie positive)* in 1885, *M. Roosevelt, Président des Etats-Unis et la République d'Haïti* (1905) and *Lettres de St-Thomas* (1910). In addition, he founded a liberal news paper in Cap-Haïtien called *Le Messager du Nord*. Married to the daughter of the Haitian president Sylvain Salnave who led the country from 1867 to 1870, Firmin was part of the Haitian elite. Firmin's legacy was mostly ignored during his lifetime, but since then he has been remembered for fighting for the development and respect of his mother country and the rehabilitation of the black race worldwide.³⁷ Through he was not always appreciated and taken seriously by his intellectual and political counterparts, he was able not only to deconstruct and resist racial prejudices, but also to bring to light the history and independence of Haiti. In doing so, and in leaving behind him legacies of

³⁶ Raphaël Berrou et Pradel Pompilus. *L'Histoire de la littérature haïtienne illustrée par les textes: Tome I*. Port-au-Prince: Editions Caraïbes, 1975. 636

³⁷ Raphaël Berrou et Pradel Pompilus. *L'Histoire de la littérature haïtienne illustrée par les textes: Tome I*. Port-au-Prince: Editions Caraïbes, 1975. 641 "Firmin a vécu avec cette noble idée de travailler à la prospérité de son pays et au relèvement de la race noire."

Laurent Dubois. *Haiti: The Aftershocks of History*. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2012. 181

Pradel Pompilus. *Manuel Illustré d'Histoire de la Littérature Haïtienne*. Port-au-Prince: Editions Henri Deschamps, 1961. 188

post-colonial resistance in his books, he became a source of inspiration for many hopes and ideas to concretize and be implemented in subsequent generations.

Historical Context

The twentieth-century Haitian diplomat, ethnographer and thinker Jean Price-Mars (1876-1969) for instance has dedicated an entire book to the life of Firmin titled *Anténor Firmin*. Published posthumously in 1978, Price-Mars provides some important insights into the intellectual and scientific atmosphere at the prestigious Paris Anthropological Society in 1884 and 1885, at which time Joseph-Anténor Firmin and Louis-Joseph Janvier were both accepted.³⁸ During this time, the firm belief in the inferiority of the black race was endorsed by many Parisian, French, and European intellectuals and scientists.³⁹ The founder of the Paris Anthropological Society, Paul Broca (1824-1880) and one of his members, the diplomat and writer, Joseph Arthur de Gobineau, claimed for example that the inequality among human races was undeniable and scientifically proven. The paradox of having both Firmin and Janvier, who were both black Haitians, being accepted to the Paris Anthropological Society, at a time when they were supposed to belong to an inferior race is telling. Firmin shares his impressions as he finds himself in this contradictory situation in the “Preface” of *De l’Egalité des Races Humaines*:

Je n’ai pas à le dissimuler. Mon esprit a toujours été choqué, en lisant divers ouvrages, de voir affirmer dogmatiquement l’inégalité des races humaines et l’infériorité native de la race noire. Devenu membre de la Société d’anthropologie de Paris, la chose ne devrait-elle pas me paraître encore plus incompréhensible et illogique? Ets-il naturel de voir siéger dans une même société et au même titre des hommes que la science même qu’on est censé représenter semble déclarer inégaux?

³⁸ Jean Price-Mars. *Joseph Anténor Firmin*. Port-au-Prince: Imprimerie du Séminaire Adventiste, 1978. 148

³⁹ *Ibid.* 148-150

(xxxiv)⁴⁰

In his book, Firmin argued against Broca and Gobineau and demonstrates using the positivist methodology, history and common sense that there is only one human species and that racial hierarchies among human beings do not exist. However, Firmin shows how these racist theories are strategies put into place to justify the slave trade, colonialism, and the exploitation and extermination of some human beings by others.

The main argument in Gobineau's *Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines* intended to prove that some human beings were superior to other people. Gobineau's theories of racial differences in the nineteenth-century were later used during the twentieth-century to support Hitler's myth of Aryan supremacy in Germany. According to Gobineau, human beings were divided into three races, first the Aryans ("white race" based in Europe), then the Yellows ("yellow race" based in the Asian continent) and finally the Negroes ("black race" present in Africa and the Caribbean).⁴¹ For Firmin and Jean Price- Mars, such theories were constructed to justify the invasion of Africa and the Caribbean islands as well as the division of their land (which contained natural resources such as gold, diamond, woods, cacao, coffee, and tea) among the powerful European countries. During 1884 and 1885, the same years that Firmin joined the Société d'Anthropologie de Paris, writing and publishing *De l'Egalité des Races Humaines*, the Berlin Conference started to regulate European colonization and trade in Africa. The African continent was then split into territories among its colonizers, which

⁴⁰ Anténor Firmin. *De l'égalité des races humaines: Anthropologie positive* (1885). Montréal: Mémoire d'encrier, 2005. xxxiv

⁴¹ Joseph Arthur de Gobineau. *Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines* (1853-55). Paris: Editions Pierre Belfond, 1967. 155

included England, the Netherlands, Spain, Portugal, Italy and France.⁴² It is not difficult to imagine therefore the scandal that aroused with Firmin's answer to Gobineau, at a time when pseudo-scientific racist theories were acclaimed in Europe and beyond.⁴³

To grasp Firmin's strategy, it is important to keep in mind that instead of creating a formal scandal by requesting a debate or by expressing his disapproval regarding racial inequality during one of the Society meetings, he chooses instead to discretely focus his energy in writing his detailed book, *De l'Égalité des Races Humaines*. In his "Preface", Firmin explains how he could have requested a discussion based on scientific evidence, which would have put into light the exact motives and reasons for scientists to divide humans into superior and inferior ones. Even though this thought was very appealing to Firmin, his common sense warned him that he might simply be considered an intruder, and would therefore not be taken seriously.⁴⁴ In choosing to meticulously deconstruct the purported scientific basis for racial inequalities, Firmin chooses to provide scientific and logical rebuttals to this commonplace misconception that would resound against the beliefs circulating within and beyond the Paris Anthropological Society:

Puisse donc ce livre contribuer à répandre la lumière dans les esprits et rappeler tous les hommes au sentiment de la justice et de la réalité! En y réfléchissant, peut-être bien des savants européens, convaincus jusqu'ici de la supériorité de leur sang, seront-ils surpris de constater qu'ils ont été le jouet d'une méchante illusion. La situation actuelle des choses, les mythes et les légendes, dont on a bercé leur enfance et qui ont présidé à la première éclosion de leur pensée, les traditions dont

⁴² Jean Price-Mars. *Joseph Anténor Firmin*. Port-au-Prince: Imprimerie du Séminaire Adventiste, 1978. 155

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Jean Métellus Ed. Anténor Firmin. *De l'Égalité des Races Humaines: Anthropologie positive*. Montréal: Mémoire d'encrier, 2005. xxxiv

leur intelligence a été continuellement nourrie, tout les entraînant invinciblement à une doctrine, à une croyance que les apparences semblent si bien justifier. Mais peuvent-ils persévérer dans une erreur dont le voile est déchiré, sans renoncer à l'exercice de la raison qui est le plus bel apenage de l'humanité? (...) (403) ⁴⁵

(My wish is that this book will enlighten minds, inspire a sense of justice in all, and compel one and all to face reality. Perhaps European scientists, who are still convinced of the superiority of their race, will stop, think, and realize that they have been the victims of an illusion. The current state of the world, the myths and legends which had shaped their thought as children, the traditions that had continuously fed their intelligence, everything necessarily led them to a doctrine, to a set of beliefs, which appearances seem to justify. But can they persevere in a proven error without renouncing the exercise of reason, the greatest endowment of humanity?) ⁴⁶

In spite of the absence of any solid scientific argument to back up the claim that human beings are not equal, the persistence indissemminating such a claim illustrates the importance to keep this conviction firmly rooted “in the minds of the most enlightened men of Europe”. ⁴⁷ In reality, such a conviction and mindset had been created for centuries during the slave trade and colonialism to produce and shape what was and still remains today naturalized racial prejudices. ⁴⁸ The case of Saint-Domingue and Haiti had been used as an argument by Gobineau and would later be used as a counter argument by Firmin.

Haiti's Independence as an Argument

The second part of this section on Firmin assesses the crucial importance of Haiti's independence and the legacy of its history as an argument to deconstruct the

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 403

⁴⁶ Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban and Asselin Charles Ed. Anténor Firmin. *The Equality of Human Races*. New York: Garland publishing, 2000. 450

⁴⁷ Laurent Dubois. *Haiti: The Aftershocks of History*. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2012. 183

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

idea of racial inequality in Firmin's book.⁴⁹ The choice of Firmin's first illustration to open the original edition of *De l'Egalité des Races Humaines (Anthropologie positive)* in 1885 is not innocent. The portrait of Toussaint Louverture, the formerly enslaved black leader of the Haitian revolution, visually sets the tone of his work.⁵⁰ On the first page and on the left handside of Firmin's book, the reader can see Toussaint Louverture's dignified medaillon along with his handwritten signature at the bottom, and a note written by Firmin at the top, where he pays tribute to the Paris anthropological Society.⁵¹ On the right handside, the title of the book is composed of different font for each part of the title. The first one: "*De l'Egalité*" is elegantly put forward with a font that reminds one of the one used by the French motto, which was inspired by the French revolution: "Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité." This device later became the official motto of the Haitian Republic, when it was included in article four of the 1987 Haitian Constitution: "La devise nationale est: Liberté – Egalité - Fraternité."⁵² The second part of the title, "*Races Humaines*" is written in large bold letters, which piques the attention and suspicion of the reader. The third part of the title is presented very discreetly since "*(Anthropologie Positive)*" is mentioned below the second part in very small bold characters. When the reader turns these first pages, he notices that Firmin dedicates his book to his motherland, Haiti, and expresses the hope that his contribution may make a difference in the rehabilitation of the black race and inspire all children of the black race:

⁴⁹ Ramsey, Kate. *The Spirits and the Law: Vodou and Power in Haiti*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011. Print. 92

⁵⁰ See Pictures

⁵¹ Jean Métellus Ed. Anténor Firmin. *De l'Egalité des Races Humaines: Anthropologie positive*. Montréal: Mémoire d'encrier, 2005. "Hommage respectueux à la Société d'anthropologie de Paris. A. Firmin."

⁵² *Constitution de la République d'Haïti, 29 mars 1987* [archive], Port-au-Prince, Éditions Henri Deschamps, 1991.

A HAITI

Puisse ce livre être médité et concourir à accélérer le mouvement de régénération que ma race accomplit sous le ciel bleu et clair des Antilles! Puisse-t-il inspirer à tous les enfants de la race noire, répandus sur l'orbe immense de la terre, l'amour du progrès, de la justice et de la liberté! Car, en le dédiant à Haïti, c'est encore à eux tous que je l'adresse, les déshérités du présent et les géants de l'avenir. (xxxii) ⁵³

This *mise en page* or setting is not only very well organized and precise, it also presents immediately to the reader the conviction that this piece of writing is fundamentally distinct in its message and crucial in its contribution.

Using many examples including Haiti as a key counter argument to Gobineau's point of view, Firmin provides concrete proof of the moral and intellectual equality of the black race. In the very first pages of Firmin's "Preface", the reader understands the motives and urgency of his writings very clearly. Firmin emphasizes that "Haiti must serve to the rehabilitation of Africa," and that "there are no fundamental differences between the Blacks of Africa and those of Haiti." ⁵⁴ In addition, he asserts the importance of education and freedom to demystify racial prejudices among the elite and popular cultures since they are "an unfortunate legacy from the past that has been internalized." ⁵⁵ In one of his chapters focusing on "The Role of the black race in this history of civilization," Firmin unveils how meaningful and significant the independence of Saint Domingue had been in the eyes of history:

Quand on eut vu les Noirs de Saint-Domingue, livrés à leurs propres ressources, réaliser ces prophéties que personne n'avait voulu prendre au sérieux, on se mit à

⁵³ Jean Métellus Ed. Anténor Firmin. *De l'Egalité des Races Humaines: Anthropologie positive*. Montréal: Mémoire d'encrier, 2005. xxxii

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban and Asselin Charles Ed. Anténor Firmin. "Preface" in *The Equality of Human Races*. New York: Garland publishing, 2000. lv

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* "Intellectual Evolution of the Black Race in Haiti". 313

réfléchir (...) La conduite des Noirs haïtiens apportait, en effet, le plus complet démenti à la théorie qui faisait du Nigritien un être incapable de toute action grande et noble, incapable surtout de résister aux hommes de la race blanche. (358) ⁵⁶

In another chapter titled “Intellectual Evolution of the Black Race in Haiti”, Firmin gives concrete examples of Haitian people who constitute the living proof that men of all races are equal. However, Firmin pays attention not to provide an idealized portrait of Haiti: “Aussi, tout en reconnaissant que la race noire d’Haïti a évolué, avec une rapidité étonnante, je suis loin de nier que, maintenant encore, il ne lui faille faire bien des efforts, afin de rompre avec certaines habitudes qui ne sont propres qu’à paralyser son essor. Quand on est en retard, il convient peu de s’amuser sur la route.” ⁵⁷ This critical perspective on Haiti’s situation provides an instance of Firmin’s auto-critical and objective analysis and shows his attempt to rigorously focus on “the thirst for truth and the need for light”. ⁵⁸ Respect for justice, liberty and the rule of law constitutes the necessary step to elevate “to the same heights all human beings and all races.” ⁵⁹ It is this kind of freedom of speech, along with civic and political liberties, that Firmin considers to be essential to the development of human beings.

In *Essai sur l’Inégalité des Races Humaines*, Gobineau used the example of Saint-Domingue to prove to his readers that racial inequalities were biologically constructed and not the result of education or institutions in order to support his argument about

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* “Rôle de la race noire dans l’histoire de la civilisation”. 358

⁵⁷ Anténor Firmin. *De l’égalité des races humaines: Anthropologie positive*. Montréal: Mémoire d’encrier, 2005. Xxxviii: “While recognizing that the Black race in Haiti has progressed with an astonishing rapidity, I cannot deny that it still needs to do its best to break with certain habits that can only hold it back. When one is late, one cannot afford to dawdle *en route*.”

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* “Preface”. lv

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* “Preface”. lviii

the inherent racial inferiority of the black race. In one passage, Gobineau asserts for instance that the Haitians possess the exact same institutions as in France, however their morals are very distinct:

Veut-on, dans ce pays-là, [Saint-Domingue] s'approcher d'un haut fonctionnaire ? on est introduit près d'un grand nègre étendu à la renverse sur un banc de bois, la tête enveloppé d'un mauvais mouchoir déchiré et couverte d'un chapeau à cornes largement galonné d'or (...) Si cet homme ouvre la bouche, il va vous débiter tous les lieux communs dont les journaux nous ont fatigués depuis un demi-siècle. Ce barbare les sait par cœur (...) au fond, il n'a de sérieux soucis que de mâcher du tabac, boire de l'alcool, éventrer ses ennemis et se concilier les sorciers. Le reste du temps, il dort. (76-7) ⁶⁰

For Gobineau, the population in Haiti is as “depraved, brutal and savage as in Dahomey or among the Fellatahs”. ⁶¹ According to him, Haiti was exemplifying what happens when “European forms of government were imposed upon people of different and lower races.” ⁶² One key element, however, that Gobineau omits to say is that his own mother, Anne-Madeleine de Gercy, was herself the daughter of a French planter, who was the director of the farms of Bordeaux, and of a creole woman from Saint-Domingue. ⁶³ In other words, Joseph Arthur de Gobineau had ancestors in Saint-Domingue since his maternal grandmother was “creole”, which means that he was also himself and to a certain degree of black descent. His silence and denial on this topic is particularly worth mentioning since it is not brought to the reader’s attention in Firmin’s book.

As an answer to Gobineau’s, Firmin puts forth seventeen examples in support of the conviction “that the small Haitian Republic (...) will provide sufficient evidence in

⁶⁰ Joseph Arthur de Gobineau. *Essai sur l'Inégalité des Races Humaines* (1853-55). Paris: Editions Pierre Belfond, 1967. 76-7

⁶¹ *Ibid.* “Introduction”. xxxi

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Website accessed on December 30, 2012: <http://www.19e.org/biographies/G/gobineau.htm>

support of the idea of the equality of the races in all its ramifications.”⁶⁴ Mentioning for instance the Haitian writer Emmanuel Edouard whose poetry avoids exotic clichés about Haitian culture, even though this strategy would have helped him to find “easy success among foreign readers”.⁶⁵ Another example is Tertulien Guilbaud, whose talent is manifested in his poem “*Toussaint Louverture Beholding the French War Fleet*” written in 1802. In this piece, Louverture communicates his fear for the black population of Saint-Domingue as he sees General Leclerc’s expeditionary army approaching the island:

Ces vaisseaux dans leurs flancs ramène l’Esclavage...
 Se peut-il qu’en nos champs du commandeur sauvage
 Vienne encore tonner l’épouvantable voix? (...)
 Oh! Non, je combattrai (...)
 (...) des Noirs dans ma main je tiens la délivrance (...) (309)⁶⁶

(These ships are bringing back slavery in their holds...
 Is it possible that the savage overseer
 Should return to terrify with his frightening voice? (...)
 No, I shall fight (...)
 (...) I hold in my hands the deliverance of the Blacks (...)?⁶⁷

Just like Toussaint Louverture, who metaphorically holds in his hands the key to Haiti’s liberation, Joseph-Anténor Firmin offers intellectual arguments based on common sense and concrete examples to deliver human beings’ minds from racial prejudices. The realization of the equality among human races constitutes for Firmin “the true basis of human solidarity” and contributes to “the work of universal progress”.⁶⁸ In this vein

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* “Intellectual Evolution of the Black Race in Haiti”. 295

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 301

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 307-9

⁶⁷ Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban and Asselin Charles Ed. Anténor Firmin. “Intellectual Evolution of the Black Race in Haiti” in *The Equality of Human Races*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2002. 309

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* “Conclusion”. 448-50

Firmin asserts and demonstrates that differences of color among human beings are insignificant and a sincere interest in the happiness and progress of human beings reveals “the greatest achievement of the human heart and mind.”⁶⁹ For Firmin the only “invisible chain” that connects human beings to each other reveals the links of our common humanity and unveils our human solidarity. However, Firmin is realistic in describing human nature as highly ambiguous since it is able at the same time to fall victim to illusion or to its own pride and racial prejudices, as well as to change, develop and improve itself endlessly.

Impact of Firmin’s De l’Egalité des Races Humaines on Postcolonial Imagination

The third part of this section highlights the impact of Firmin’s book on the postcolonial imagination in Haiti, Africa, the United States and France. Joseph-Anténor Firmin’s work was largely ignored by the members of the Paris Anthropological Society; however, Firmin remains to this day revered in Haiti as an important scholar, politician and diplomat.⁷⁰ Even though the reception of his book was not welcomed among intellectuals, Firmin was successful in providing a book that will be able to reach a key audience, the worldwide black population. If Firmin wrote his book for scholars and intellectuals, he also invites Haitians and international black readers to take Haiti’s fight for independence as an example to grasp the crucial importance of their freedom of speech, liberty of action and equality in the name of law in order to bloom and become not only in theory, but also *in practice* real free and equal human beings:

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* 450

⁷⁰ Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban. “Anténor Firmin and Haiti’s contribution to anthropology”, *Gradhiva*, 1, 2005, mis en ligne le 10 décembre 2008. 8 URL: <http://gradhiva.revues.org/302>

En Haïti comme ailleurs, il faut à la race noire la liberté, une liberté réelle, effective, civile et politique, pour qu'elle s'épanouisse et progresse. Si l'esclavage lui fait horreur, horrible aussi doit lui paraître le despotisme. Car le despotisme n'est rien autre chose qu'un esclavage moral: il laisse la liberté du mouvement aux pieds et aux mains; mais il enchaîne et garrotte l'âme humaine, en étouffant la pensée. Or, il est indispensable qu'on se rappelle que c'est l'âme, c'est-à-dire la force de l'intelligence et de l'esprit qui opère intérieurement la transformation, la rédemption et le relèvement de toutes les races, sous l'impulsion de la volonté libre, éclairée, dégagée de toute contrainte tyrannique! (xxxix) ⁷¹

This quotation from Firmin's "Préface" anticipates and echoes W.E.B DuBois *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), and in another chapter on the "Rôle de la race noire dans l'histoire de la civilisation," Firmin pays tribute to Haiti's history for its role model in the abolition of slavery in the United States. He also provides a visionary statement regarding the important growing presence of the black population in US politics and the possibility for the US to be the first country to elect a black president:

Par les citations que nous avons déjà faites du discours de Wendell Philips, on peut se convaincre facilement de quelle importance a été l'exemple d'Haïti en faveur de la cause de l'abolition de l'esclavage aux Etats-Unis d'Amérique. Cette vaste contrée est destinée, malgré toutes les apparences contraires, à porter le dernier coup à la théorie de l'inégalité des races. Dès maintenant, en effet, les Noirs de la grande République fédérale ne commencent-ils pas à jouer le rôle le plus accentué dans la politique des divers Etats de l'Union américaine? N'est-il pas fort possible, avant cent ans, de voir un homme d'origine éthiopique appelé à présider le gouvernement de Washington (...)? (359-60) ⁷²

Referring in his book to the speech on Toussaint Louverture made by the US abolitionist and renowned orator, Wendell Philips, on the eve of the American Civil War on December 1861 in Boston and New York, Firmin was inspired by Haiti's history to pave the way for subsequent discourses, speeches and writings to defend the

⁷¹ Anténor Firmin. "Préface" in *De l'égalité des races humaines: Anthropologie positive*. Montréal: Mémoire d'encrier, 2005. xxxix

⁷² *Ibid.* 359-60

rights and powers of a united black race on the international stage.⁷³ Even though, it took twenty three more years than predicted by Firmin to elect Barack Obama, the first black president of the United States, (he was not elected one hundred year after 1885 in 1985, but in 2008), Firmin's bold assertion and prediction remains with us today, just as his book.

Considered a pioneer and a role model, Firmin, along with Louis-Joseph Janvier and Hannibal Price, are still highly remembered and respected in Haiti. Firmin has influenced many Haitians including Jean-Price Mars, who became the founder of ethnology and folklore studies in Haiti and dedicated a book to him as a tribute. But Firmin's work has also influenced Caribbean scholars and Pan-Africanists. In 1900, Firmin attended as "ex-President Légitime from Haiti and (...) most important intellectual and statesman of Haiti" the First Pan-African Congress taking place in London, where he met W.E.B. Du Bois.⁷⁴ Firmin's work is also often depicted as an avant-garde version of the Négritude movement: "Writers like Anténor Firmin, Hannibal Price, Claude McKay, George Padmore, and Jean-Price Mars were in the vanguard of the revaluation of African culture long before the nationalist awakening in Africa and before the concept of "négritude" was developed in the Caribbean."⁷⁵ Both Firmin and Jean Price-Mars argued for a nuanced and thorough study of Africa. They also made an effort to rehabilitate Haitian culture in valorizing its folklore and

⁷³ Smart Bell, Madison. "The Image of Toussaint" in *Toussaint Louverture: A Biography*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2007. 291

⁷⁴ Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban and Asselin Charles Ed. Anténor Firmin. "Introduction" in *The Equality of Human Races*. New York: Garland publishing, 2000. xxxix

⁷⁵ Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban. "Anténor Firmin and Haiti's contribution to anthropology", *Gradhiva*, 1, 2005, mis en ligne le 10 décembre 2008. 8 URL: <http://gradhiva.revues.org/302>

intellectuals as well as the past and present glory of Africa.⁷⁶ Price-Mars saw Haiti as an African society in the New World and considered Firmin's work as the basis of modern Afrocentrism. The seeds of this pioneering root can be found according to Price-Mars in the works of Cheik Anta Diop and Basil Davidson. The former was a post-independence Senegalese scholar and the latter a European historian who deconstructed the idea that Africa had no history before the arrival of Europeans.⁷⁷

The legacy of Firmin's *The Equality of the Human Races* goes well beyond a simple contribution to the field of anthropology, and this, even though his work was not taken seriously by European anthropologists, who continued to focus on theories of racial differences and hierarchy until Franz Boas.¹ Since Firmin's book was introduced to the French language in 1885, and was only translated for an English audience in 2000, Firmin's legacy is still unfolding before our eyes. Its impact transcends continents, fields, languages, and time. One thing is certain: the influence of Firmin's book on the postcolonial imagination of the Haitians has been very strong, as the example of Jean Price-Mars confirms. But this work has also been essential in contributing to postcolonial discourses of racial resistance, including "Le Mouvement de la Négritude" in France and the Pan-African Movement in the United States. It was in Paris that the Négritude movement was born, thanks to the Martiniquan Aimé Césaire (1913-2008), the Senegalese Léopold Sédar Senghor (1906-2001), and the French Guyanese Léon-Gontran Damas (1912-1978). Firmin's foremost goal was to

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* 13

⁷⁷ Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban and Asselin Charles Ed. Anténor Firmin. "Introduction" in *The Equality of Human Races*. New York: Garland publishing, 2000. xxxvi

deconstruct racial prejudices and to “inspire in all the children of the Black race around this big world the love of progress, justice, and liberty.”⁷⁸

⁷⁸ Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban and Asselin Charles Ed. Anténor Firmin. “To Haiti” in *The Equality of Human Races*. New York: Garland publishing, 2000. li

2.3. Post-Colonial Resistance in Marie Vieux-Chauvet's

La Danse sur le Volcan (1957)

Introduction

The front and back covers of the 1959 American edition of *Danse sur le Volcan* (1957) indicate that this book is a novel written by Marie Vieux-Chauvet's (1916-1973), and which tells the story of a lady living in Haiti, thanks to the subtitle "Dance on the Volcano: A novel of Haiti".⁷⁹ The cover shows the portrait of a woman luxuriously attired in an evening dress, bejeweled and made-up, with her hair elegantly arranged in the back of her head. However, it is not possible to make out the color of the protagonist's skin since the book's cover is a combination of white and deep blue. To the right of her face, the reader distinguishes an island filled with colorful houses, palm trees, a volcano, a carriage and two sailing boats. The fact that it is impossible to guess if this woman is black or white or maybe both, is mirrored in the picture of Marie Vieux-Chauvet on the back cover.⁸⁰ The sepia portrait of the female writer accentuates this ambiguity, and because of the subtle contrast between the black and white colors of the picture, it is difficult for the reader to know whether Vieux-Chauvet is either black or white, or a mixed of the two colors. This uncertainty continues throughout Chauvet's novel itself since Minette manages thanks to her exceptionally gifted voice to cross the strict boundaries between the black and white worlds in Saint Domingue, ultimately creating her own world made of white, creole and people of color. In reality both

⁷⁹ See colored picture of the front and back covers of the book. Vieux-Chauvet, Marie. *Dance on the Volcano*. Trans. Salvator Attanasio. William Sloane Associates : New York, 1959. Print.

⁸⁰ Werner Sollors. *Neither Black nor White, Yet Both: Thematic Explorations of Interracial Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997. Print.

Chauvet and Minette are mulattoes, of mixed color, who are divided between the two worlds of black and white, and fighting to create a third one, where both worlds can peacefully meet and interact with each other.

Taking Jean Fouchard's *Le Théâtre à Saint-Domingue* (1955) as a point of departure for her historical novel, Vieux-Chauvet offers in her book *La Danse sur le Volcan*, a rare female perspective regarding Saint Domingue's stark inequalities across gender, economic, social and racial lines. In doing so, the twentieth-century female Haitian writer provides an example of post-colonial resistance in revealing the historical and fictionalized trajectory of Minette in Saint-Domingue. In focusing on the story of this young woman of color who lives in Port-au-Prince and possesses a unique talent for singing plays and operas, the reader follows her journey from "the girl next door" to "la Jeune Personne," who was the first fourteen-year-old person of color allowed to perform at the prestigious venue reserved primarily for the elite white population called the Comédie in Port-au-Prince.⁸¹ To what extent is the voice of Marie Vieux-Chauvet particularly distinct in this historical novel? How does she specifically portray the racial and social contexts in Saint-Domingue at the eve of the Haitian revolution? This section explores first of all the extent to which Vieux-Chauvet offers uncommon historical, literary and racial perspectives on Saint-Domingue based on real events. Secondly, it offers an in-depth analysis of Minette's metamorphosis as a metaphor for Saint Domingue's own internal transformation. Thirdly, this section puts into light the crucial significance of resistance and solidarity among Saint-Domingue's population in

⁸¹ Fouchard, Jean. *Le Théâtre à Saint-Domingue*. Port-au-Prince: Imprimerie de l'Etat, 1955, Print. 320

order to organize and create the necessary revolution to win the fight for racial freedom, gender equality and social dignity in Haiti.

Plot of La Danse sur le Volcan

Born in Port-au-Prince in 1916, Marie Vieux-Chauvet was the daughter of Constant Vieux, a Haitian senator and ambassador, and of Delia Nones, a Jewish mother originally from the Virgin Islands.⁸² The only woman in this dissertation's corpus, Chauvet is one of the pioneering female Haitian writers, who wrote and denounced the abuses against women and the poor from the colonial system in Saint-Domingue to the Duvalier dictatorship in Haiti. In *La Danse sur le Volcan*, Marie Vieux-Chauvet was inspired by the story of two sisters, Minette and Lise, who became the first young persons of color to perform on the stage in Saint Domingue's theaters. This historical novel based on true events is made explicit in the very first pages of her book where she pays tribute to the historical archives and research made by Jean Fouchard's *Le Théâtre à Saint-Domingue*. In this book, Fouchard dedicated a section to "Minette et Lise," and provided rare archival and historical documents from this time period regarding their pathbreaking experiences. The main protagonist, Minette, along with her sister Lise, were the daughters of a French planter and a previously enslaved woman, and had distinct trajectories according to their own affinities in Fouchard's and Chauvet's books. Their differences in terms of styles and values are explored in depth in Chauvet's book in particular. On the one hand there is Minette, who is fond of the French language and of French classic authors such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Racine and Bossuet. Minette

⁸² <http://www.lehman.cuny.edu/ile.en.ile/paroles/chauvet.html>

only performs theatrical plays or operas in Saint Domingue's capital and shows an inclination for sophisticated clothes and French refinement and luxury:

Le français qu'elle [Minette] parlait était la langue du maître et symbolisait le bon ton et le raffinement d'éducation.

Leur mère, qui avait appris à parler français à la case des maîtres, les reprenait dix, vingt fois par jour. « Parlez français, parlez français. » Lise et Minette avaient entendu pendant toute leur enfance cette petite phrase. Dans les pièces locales le seul côté dégardant, d'après elle, était qu'on y parlât créole et dans le refus de Minette de les accepter il entraît aussi un peu de ce complexe. (163)⁸³

Lise, on the other hand, enjoys performing popular plays written in Haitian Creole such as "Thérèse et Jeannot" in Cayes and Léogâne.⁸⁴ Both Fouchard and Chauvet explore these important distinctions between the two sisters and their preferences regarding language (French or Haitian creole), plays and music (Haitian versus French).⁸⁵ It is crucial to notice that the internalization of the inferiority complex that we find in Minette and her mother Jasmine regarding the use of Haitian Creole echoes the complex history and resistance embracing a language composed of both African dialects and French:

Minette a opté pour le grand classique. La jeune actrice née au Port-au-Prince, et condamnée par la couleur de sa peau, demeure opposée à la représentation sur les scènes de comédies puisant leur intrigue dans la vie coloniale. Pareille inspiration lui semble pauvre (...) Ce style poissard l'effrayait moins que la vulgarité du patois de Saint-Domingue. Jamais elle ne se décidera à avaliser le créole. Ce parler signifiait à ses yeux la dégradation. Ce complexe encore persistant dans les élites haïtiennes, Minette en été affectée au plus haut point, ainsi d'ailleurs que nombre de noirs et mulâtres libres qui faisait du français, langue du maître, le symbole de bon ton, de la distinction et de l'élégance.

⁸³ Vieux-Chauvet, Marie. *La Danse sur le volcan*. Léchelle: Zellige, 2008. Print. 163

⁸⁴ Fouchard, Jean. *Le Théâtre à Saint-Domingue*. Port-au-Prince: Imprimerie de l'Etat, 1955, Print. 310 and Vieux-Chauvet, Marie. *La Danse sur le volcan*. Léchelle: Zellige, 2008. Print. 285

⁸⁵ Fouchard, Jean. *Le Théâtre à Saint-Domingue*. Port-au-Prince: Imprimerie de l'Etat, 1955, Print. 323 and Vieux-Chauvet, Marie. *La Danse sur le volcan*. Léchelle: Zellige, 2008. Print. 163-4

(Fouchard 321-3) ⁸⁶

The sense of shame that Minette feels regarding her mother tongue goes hand in hand with her denial of her colonial past (her mother Jasmine was previously enslaved by a white master who raped her; she gave birth to Minette and Lise before becoming free). It also accounts for her desire to wear refined pieces of clothing as a way to escape the strong racial, social and economic boundaries present in Saint Domingue.

Intertextuality between Marie Vieux-Chauvet & Pompée-Valentin de Vastey

The intertextuality present in Chauvet's *Dance on the Volcano* offers one of the keys to understand the richness and significance of this work. After referring explicitly to Fouchard in the opening notes of her book, the very first pages of her novel wink at Pompée-Valentin de Vastey in *The Colonial System Unveiled* (1814). In his writing, Vastey mentioned in a footnote the discriminatory legal decree from February 9, 1779, which decreed that "people of color", dressed elegantly with luxurious clothing and adornments, were not in "the interests of the morals." Marie Vieux-Chauvet chooses for her opening scene precisely this proclamation. The rivalry and tension between the colored and black women and their white and European counterparts open the story and are then explored in more detail in the first three pages of the novel. Based on genuine historical documentation and events, the reader follows the challenging ascension of the protagonist, Minette. As the first colored Haitian young woman to sing on stage, who thanks to her resilience and vocal talent obtained not only the privilege to perform in Port-au-Prince in front of the white elite, but also determined to fight in order to obtain

⁸⁶ Fouchard, Jean. *Le Théâtre à Saint-Domingue*. Port-au-Prince: Imprimerie de l'Etat, 1955, Print. 321-3

rights for the *gens de couleurs*, *affranchis* and slaves. Vastey's subtle allusion to the slippery trope of racial constructions of difference and sexual rivalry is made more explicit in the first pages of Marie Vieux-Chauvet's *La danse sur le volcan*: "Les jupes de calicot, rayées ou fleuries, des affranchis frôlaient quelquefois avec ostentation les lourdes jupes de taffetas et les gaules de mousselines vaporeuses et transparentes des blanches. Les seins que voilaient à peine, de part et d'autre, de légers et transparents corsages, attiraient les regards heureux des hommes habillés (...)" ⁸⁷ This tension regarding the sexual rivalry of black and creole with European women reflects the strong gender inequities present at this time in Saint-Domingue. It is worth noting that on the outside there seemed to be no conflict, when in fact these inequities represented only the tip of the iceberg of an extremely tensed situation that was on the verge of exploding. In addition to the novel's title and its metaphor of a volcano which is to be found throughout the book as a leitmotiv, this scene reveals the upcoming rebellion and revolution about to take place in Saint-Domingue:

Entres les femmes de Saint-Domingue, la rivalité avait soulevé une lutte à mort qui régnait d'ailleurs à cette époque au sein de toute chose; rivalité entre colons blancs et "petits blancs", entre les officiers et le Gouvernement, entre les nouveaux riches sans noms ni titres et ceux de la grande noblesse de France; rivalité encore entre les planteurs blancs et les planteurs affranchis, entre les esclaves domestiques et les esclaves cultivateurs. Cet état de choses ajouté au mécontentement des affranchis et à la muette protestation des nègres d'Afrique traités comme des bêtes, *créait une tension perpétuelle qui alourdissait étrangement l'atmosphère. A cause de tout cela, sans doute, on sentait, malgré l'animation, les rires, les toilettes et les perruques, planer dans l'air comme une sorte de menace. Pourtant, extérieurement, rien ne la révélait.* (2-3) ⁸⁸

Both scenes are charged with repressed tensions between women, men and different

⁸⁷ Marie Vieux-Chauvet. *La Danse sur le volcan*. Léchelle: Zellige, 2008. 1

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* 2-3. Italics mine.

hierarchical statuses living and co-existing in Saint Domingue. This apparent silence reveals the fierce animosities and the use of women's bodies, clothes and jewelry as forms of weapons in order to resist racial, social and economic distinctions among women living in Saint-Domingue. Minette distinguishes herself from this context, in using her talent and voice as weapon to resist the construction of racial segregation and differences.

Minette's metamorphosis from poor Haitian girl to respected young lady reflects Saint-Domingue's own transformation from an enslaved nation to a free and independent country. Minette's exceptionalism, bravery and strength encapsulates Saint Domingue's struggle for equality, dignity and respect in Chauvet's book. Minette becomes the allegory and personification of Saint-Domingue's *prise de conscience* and determination to change the current colonial situation based on slavery and on the instrumentalization of human beings and the exploitation of slaves. The first time that Minette becomes fully aware of the injustices and violence inherent in Saint-Domingue takes place in the streets of Port-au-Prince when a *nègre marron*, who has successfully escaped his master, tries to hide himself. During this scene, the slave is caught, tortured, and beaten to death by his white master in front of Minette and her family friend Joseph. Terrified, Minette screams out of fear as she makes eye contact with the slave. This moment encapsulates a turning point for Minette since her own mother used to experience the same treatment as a female slave. This is the very first time that Minette becomes aware of what slavery *is* and *means*, and it subsequently changes her abstract conception of what slavery *does* and produces an internal transformation and

commitment to use her talent to change the inequities and violences perpetuated against Saint-Domingue's slaves (37-8).

Ambivalence of Minette's Exceptionalism

Minette's exceptionalism is both a blessing and a curse in the sense that she has the rare ability of getting access to the world of the white elite, the artists and comedians with whom she works. However, she would set no precedent for women of color to emulate her afterwards nor would she be compensated for her talent and work. This ambivalence is demonstrated in both Fouchard's archival research and Chauvet's novel in the way Minette's talent is evaluated, and in the way she is treated differently regarding her financial remuneration. As a *mulâtresse affranchie* (free mulatta), Minette has the privilege of obtaining some rights such as singing at the Comédie and of officially not having a master, but at the same time in *Danse sur le Volcan* her relationship with François Mesplès, the shareholder who provides the funds for François Saint-Martin (who directs the Comédie and supervises the plays and operas performed at Port-au-Prince's theater), is close to a master-slave relationship. She is able to rehearse, perform on stage and participate in some prestigious receptions, but Minette is not actually remunerated for her work like the other artists. She receives some money to pay for her costumes and is allowed to organize some events for her benefit, but she does not have a contract or steady income. This precarious situation is illustrated in more detail in one key scene, in which Minette confronts François Mesplès, and the truth regarding her status is revealed:

- Allez, viens. Ma parole, tu as l'air d'une dame. Qui t'as payé tous ces bijoux, hein, qui? Je ne sais ce qui vous prend ces jours-ci de vouloir imiter les blanches. Vous singez les gestes des autres comme des macaques et vous perdez tout avec ces falbalas. Qu'est-ce qui se passe, tu as peur?
- Bien qu'elle tremblât devant lui et qu'elle se sentît mortifiée de cette réception, elle fit un effort pour parler (...)
- Je quitte la Comédie, monsieur, si je ne travaille pas d'après un contrat (...)
- Alors, c'était cela. Tu l'as sorti de ton sac, hein? Je l'avais prédit à Saint-Martin que tu deviendrais prétentieuse (...) Tu ne fais partie d'aucune troupe, lui cria-t-il encore, on te laisse chanter, c'est tout. (111-3)⁸⁹

After this conversation follows some violent verbal and physical exchanges where Minette is brutally slapped in the face several times and insulted until she manages to escape: "C'est ça, sauve-toi, si tu ne veux pas que je t'écrabouille, sale petite graine de négresse" (113). The fact that Minette is regarded from the beginning to the end of this conversation not as a human being but as a "filthy little Negress" speaks for itself. She is present in theory as part of the company, but absent and invisible in legal terms (109).⁹⁰ More importantly, in the imagination she is yet another black *courtisane* who uses her talent to obtain favors and privileges otherwise out of reach. Minette's talent means that she is exceptional enough to break the rule of racial discrimination in an artistic setting thanks to her voice, but in reality her professional presence and natural expectations are forced to remain silent and unfulfilled.

Jean Fouchard confirms this discrimination and shows in detail how Minette worked during three years at the Comédie in Port-au-Prince without receiving her annual 8,000 livres from François Saint-Martin. This information is also certified by the fact that Saint-Martin, the director of the Comédie, mentioned in his will that he

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* 111-3

⁹⁰ Vieux-Chauvet, Marie. *Dance on the Volcano*. Trans. Salvator Attanasio. William Heinemann: London, 1959. Print. 109

planned on paying her but never actually did. He therefore chose to make this explicit in his will so as to ensure the amount would be given to Minette. According to Fouchard's research, however, there is no trace of such a payment to Minette, even though there is evidence that a house was given to François Mesplès, who was the person in charge of executing his will. According to Fouchard, it is highly possible that Minette worked in some ways figuratively *as a slave* for three years without receiving the compensation she deserved:

La principale créance, la dette d'honneur, celle qui représentait trois années de travail de la Jeune Personne ne semble pas avoir été acquittée. Pourtant, ces trois années avaient été emplies de triomphes, car Minette, en mûrissant ses talents, n'avait cessé de grandir dans l'admiration des fervents de la Comédie. Les longues répétitions, la fatigue d'une répétition soignée, la peine de retenir dans sa petite tête des pièces de vers, des tirades épuisantes, les essayages de costumes, tout cela avait été au bénéfice des autres. (319)⁹¹

However, Minette's strength is exemplified in both Fouchard's book and Chauvet's novel as she represents a role model for her resilience and resistance to fight against injustices.

Minette's Resistance & Solidarity

Minette's resistance and solidarity is exemplified throughout Chauvet's novel and Fouchard's research and it foreshadows the success of the Haitian population's eventual independence. Minette decides to fight for a real contract and to obtain the same freedom and respect as other artists in the company. In resisting this inequality, Minette faces gender, racial and economic injustices and in the process of this metamorphosis, opens her eyes and witnesses the injustices taking place around her. In chapter ten, during a serious discussion with the artists who discovered Minette's talent

⁹¹ Fouchard, Jean. *Le Théâtre à Saint-Domingue*. Port-au-Prince: Imprimerie de l'Etat, 1955, Print. 319

and her mother Jasmine, Minette presents her condition. She refuses to continue to work for the company without receiving compensation and the same rights as her colleagues: “Je ne pourrai plus faire partie de la troupe sans réclamer le respect et la liberté d’action dont jouissent mes partenaires. Il est suffisant que l’on m’exploite” (95).

⁹² After this scene, in chapter eleven, another key moment happens that would be revelatory experience for Minette. As she is going to the market to pick up some vegetables for her family, Minette passes a crowd of people including a merchant with two young men and a woman who are slaves for sale. The young woman is asked to undress in front of the audience while the merchant exhibits her body, such as the firmness of her breasts, to convince potential buyers that they are making a good purchase. When one of them finally decides to buy the female slave for 1,500 livres, the merchant assures the new master, as the slave cries and dresses herself, that he made an excellent transaction since the woman is a virgin. Upon witnessing this scene, Minette is outraged and determines to change this infuriating situation. This scene recalls to Minette’s mind the fact that her own mother had been a female slave who had also been bought, beaten, and humiliated in the past (14):

Minette, bouleversée, suivit des yeux la jeune esclave. Son cœur battait à se rompre car tandis qu’elle regardait la scène, elle voyait défiler le passé de sa mère, ce passé que Zoé avait évoqué avec une force si terrible qu’il l’avait marquée à jamais. Une affreuse révolte souleva en elle à cet instant une telle énergie qu’elle se sentit capable de tuer (...) Elle frissonna et se rendit compte que son regard devait être aussi chargé de fièvre et de passion que celui des Lambert et comprit qu’une métamorphose était en train de s’accomplir en elle. (105-6) ⁹³

⁹² Vieux-Chauvet, Marie. *Dance on the Volcano*. Trans. Salvator Attanasio. William Heinemann: London, 1959. Print. 95

⁹³ *Ibid.* 105-6

This internal transformation in Minette reflects the transition from an innocent girl to a mature and resolute woman who takes into her own hands her destiny and puts into practice the changes she wants to see in her life.

The empowerment of Minette is apparent not only in her actions and her decisions, but also in her ability to stare back frankly at powerful white men. In doing so, Minette asserts her status as a free *affranchie* who has rights that she wants to see respected, an equal who desires to make a difference in the world around her beyond her age, class, gender, and race. This attitude makes a strong impression on everyone she meets, especially since such behavior was unusual during this time period and represented a direct confrontation and *remise en question* of the colonial and slave-trade systems. It also reveals an original way for Minette of convincing her audience of her ambition and determination while earning their respect in using her personality and boldness. Once again, Minette distinguishes herself from her female counterparts since in Chauvet's novel many female characters are using their beauty and sexuality for "obtaining material gain and social prestige" (Curtis Small 243). One of Minette's friends, Nicolette, sums up this sexual dynamic and strategy in a few words: "Nous couchons avec les blancs pour l'argent et la parade, mais nous allons chercher nos amants de cœur parmi les affranchis." ⁹⁴ Twice Minette shows her courage with François Mesplès that she is not afraid of looking directly into his eyes during particularly tense moments. The first time instance takes place during the key scene mentioned above when she is asking him for a legal contract to acknowledge her work:

⁹⁴ Small, Curtis. "The Ambiguities of Agency: Marie Vieux-Chauvet's *La Danse sur le Volcan*." *Journal of Haitian Studies*. Volume 15: No. 1 et 2, Spring 2009: 243-4. Print.

- Alors, tais-toi, et viens ici. Oh ! Oh ! Tu me regards dans les yeux, tu fais la fière, tu es passablement effrontée.
Il se leva, mit ses mains dans ses poches et marcha jusqu'à elle.
- Qu'es-tu venue faire chez moi?
Minette respira profondément. Tant pis pour ce qui allait arriver, elle était venue pour parler, elle parlerait. Il était accoutumé sans doute à recevoir des affranchis courtisanes flatteuses et cauteleuses qui lui parlaient à genoux. Mais, elle allait l'étonner en lui parlant d'égal à égal, sans honte, mais avec tout le respect qu'elle savait lui devoir. (112)⁹⁵

The impertinence of Minette strikes François Mesplès a second time after she decides to temporarily stop singing at the Comédie to show her disapproval and get compensated. The theatre at this time is facing a major financial crisis, the director François Saint-Martin was just passed away, and the audience wants to hear Minette on stage again. During this climactic moment, Mesplès notices once more the strength of Minette to reaffirm her position and decision: "C'est la plus belle petite peste d'affranchie que j'ai vue de ma vie, conclut-il; ça n'a pas honte de regarder un blanc dans les yeux... Ah ! Si elle n'avait pas cette voix !..." (238).⁹⁶ It is Minette's exceptional voice and personality that make her metamorphosis a difficult but powerful transformation, just as the Haitian revolution will successfully lead to the country's independence after years of rebellion, revolt and sacrifice.

The importance of resistance and solidarity is brought to light throughout Marie Vieux Chauvet's *La Danse sur le volcan*. In this book, the characters' instruction, understanding of voodoo represent key elements in the preparation and the implementation of Saint-Domingue's revolution. Minette, along with additional key characters in the novel such as her family tutor Joseph Ogé, her lover Jean-Baptiste

⁹⁵ Vieux-Chauvet, Marie. *Dance on the Volcano*. Trans. Salvator Attanasio. William Heinemann: London, 1959. Print. 112

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* 238

Lapointe, and her black friend Zoé who is affranchie are motivated by the injustices present in Saint-Domingue to make a difference in their own respective ways. In chapter two of Chauvet's book, Joseph has a major influence on Minette in teaching her how to read and shares the fundamentals of French history and literature with Racine, Corneille, Molière, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and l'Abbé Raynal. After her instruction, when Jasmine and Joseph find out that Minette wishes to buy all the slaves so as to liberate them, Joseph is very understanding:

Le jeune homme alla s'agenouiller devant le lit où Minette, pelotonnée, sanglotait. Il lui releva la tête, sortit un mouchoir de sa poche et lui essuya les yeux.
C'est bien, c'est très bien d'avoir eu de si belles et généreuses pensées lui dit-il. Ne pleure plus. Viens, j'ai apporté avec moi aujourd'hui un livre. C'est un abbé qui l'a écrit. Il s'appelle l'abbé Raynal. Viens entendre ce qu'il dit du droit à la liberté et du sort des esclaves... (62)⁹⁷

In Chauvet's novel, Joseph Ogé is the half-brother of Vincent Ogé, and he illegally teaches young slaves how to read. He was himself taught how to read by a free mulatto called Labadie. For Joseph, the reason why the authorities are prohibiting slaves from learning how to read and write comes from the fact that: "(...) they are afraid to see us educated because education drives people to revolt. Ignorance breeds resignation" (12).⁹⁸ In chapter 13, quoting Bossuet, Joseph reads aloud to Minette and Lise a passage extracted from *Sermons* where the common origin of the human race is unveiled: "De quelque superbe distinction que se flattent les hommes, ils ont tous une même origine et cette origine est petite" (139).⁹⁹ Through the instruction and education of young slaves

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* 62

⁹⁸ *Ibid.* 12

⁹⁹ *Ibid.* 139

and affranchis, Joseph desires to end ignorance, but he will later pay the price of his resistance by having his tongue cut out in chapter 23.

Abuse of the Law & Injustice

The question of the law represent a central issue to understand the abuses in terms of the political rights of free people of color in Saint-Domingue and in France. As a young woman of color, Minette is actually prevented from singing and performing on the stage of the Comédie by law. Mr and Mrs Acquaire, the artistic couple who discovered Minette are taking this risk in order to reimburse their creditors:

- J'ai confiance, tu comprends, disait-elle à son mari quand celui-ci paraissait trop nerveux, j'ai confiance, et dans le talent et dans le charme de cette petite.
- Talent et charme n'empêchent qu'elle est une fille de couleur et que nous transgressons la loi.
- Elle est si peu fille de couleur que la loi pardonnera. (33)¹⁰⁰

In this sense, Minette's vocal talent and physical beauty become the center of attention and the reason behind this legal experiment that may potentially change or alter the legal rights present in Saint Domingue or simply become the exception, which confirms a rule that will remain firmly in place. This racial discrimination is also reflected in the way the theater at the Comedie is divided between the whites and the elite population on the one hand, who are in front of the stage, and the people of color on the other, who sit in the boxes at the very high end of the theater. The result of Minette's concert is a huge success, yet the reaction of the governor of Saint Domingue speaks volumes:

- Vous avouerez avec moi, monsieur le Gouverneur, que cette jeune fille a un talent exceptionnel, dit le directeur de la Comédie.
- Mon cher monsieur Saint Martin, les gouverneurs sont des hommes et ils ont, croyez-moi, des yeux pour voir et des oreilles pour entendre. Cette

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.* 33

“jeune personne” est belle à ravir et chante comme un ange. *Encouragez-là, mais de grâce, qu’elle soit la seule...* (59) ¹⁰¹

Minette is the very first and the last to break the strict rules against people of color in Saint-Domingue. Her case becomes an excellent argument for refuting the ambiguity and ambivalence regarding racial prejudices that are inscribed in the law. It is a case in point that it is not impossible to break the law, but this case will certainly not become a case law.

It is this injustice that Minette is determined to resist with the solidarity of Joseph, Jean-Baptiste Lapointe, and Lambert who is the chief of the rebels and who hides runaway slaves and helps them to escape. In a crucial turning point in chapter nine, Minette meets Zoé, a black girl from Martinique. During her conversation, Minette encounters a word she has heard and felt before, but without truly understanding its meaning until this very moment:

- Mes parents ont été esclaves, esclaves à la Martinique, c’est un pays qui ressemble tout à fait à Saint-Domingue – sous l’angle de la souffrance et de l’injustice.
Le dernier mot fut jeté avec tant d’âpreté que Minette eut l’impression qu’elle l’entendait pour la première fois.
L’injustice! Qui avait dit cela avant Zoé? pensa-t-elle. Qui? L’injustice qui retenait les esclaves dans les fers, qui permettait de les battre, de les torturer, de les tuer. L’injustice envers les affranchis, cette même injustice qui lui défendait de jouer à la Comédie, d’aller au bal des blancs, de s’instruire, toutes ces lois injustes, tout cet ordre des choses, injuste, ce préjugé social, injuste... (87) ¹⁰²

At this moment, Minette becomes fully aware of the internalization of her racial inferiority complex and of her aspiration to become similar to the white population through her talent, her clothes, linguistic preferences and types of performances. The

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.* 59. Italics mine

¹⁰² *Ibid.* 87

word *injustice* strongly resonates with Minette and allows her to understand the reason why she feels this word to be familiar to her:

Mais qui lui avait dit tout cela avant Zoé ? Joseph ? L'abbé Raynal ? Non, c'était une sensation pénible qu'elle avait senti se manifester dans tout ce qui l'entourait et qui lui avait été révélée, non parce qu'on le lui avait signalé mais parce qu'en elle-même, elle avait senti gronder une révolte sourde contre tant d'absurdité. Cette révolte datait de loin. Elle avait pris corps dès le jour où elle comprit qu'elle et Lise, parce qu'elles avaient dans le sang quelques gouttes de sang noir, étaient mise en quarantaine même par de petites filles blanches de leur âge. Seulement, elle avait continué à vivre avec sa révolte sans même se douter qu'elle était là et mangeait, dormait, enviait le sort des blancs comme faisaient généralement les gens de sa classe. *Mais en entendant parler Zoé, un voile venait de se déchirer, mettant à nu tout ce qui se cachait si bien en elle et qui lui avait inspiré sans doute ce besoin d'insulter les blancs, de leur cracher au visage et de les haïr.* (87-8) ¹⁰³

This sensation was hidden deep in her mind and reminds her of a moment from her childhood. It also echoes W.E.B. DuBois' *prise de conscience* in the quotation mentioned in this dissertation's introduction.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.* 88

Chapter Three

Toussaint Louverture as the Personification of Haiti's legacies in

Aimé Césaire, Edouard Glissant, & Bernard Dadié

Abstract

This dissertation's third chapter explores the legacy of Toussaint Louverture in a selection of plays and essays from 1961 to 1973. In "Toussaint Louverture as the Personification of Haiti's legacies in Aimé Césaire, Edouard Glissant and Bernard Dadié," I analyze the allegorical adaptation of the Haitian revolution to visions and revisions of African and Afro-diasporic statehood in the twentieth century. The three Francophone African and Caribbean authors in question frame Toussaint Louverture's roles and limitations during the transition from Saint-Domingue to Haiti as an exemplary case for their own evolving geopolitical identities. In *Toussaint Louverture: La Révolution Française et le Problème Colonial*, Aimé Césaire discusses Saint-Domingue's exceptionalism and Toussaint Louverture's pioneering role in harnessing the tensions between the different socio-economic and racial groups for the purposes of radical social change. Edouard Glissant offers in *Monsieur Toussaint* a portrait of Louverture as both a "charismatic hero and a tragic figure," playing the role of the prophet with a vision of the significance of the unfolding transformation in the *Perles des Antilles*. In his play *Iles de Tempête*, Bernard Dadié unveils Louverture's mimetic attitude vis-à-vis France and Napoléon Bonaparte using authentic archival letters and drawing a key parallel between Saint-Domingue and newly independent African countries. Ultimately, Césaire, Glissant, and Dadié offer a complex and human portrait of Louverture, putting into perspective the legacy of his accomplishments, errors and visions for subsequent generations of independence movements and accommodation of colonial legacies.

3.1. Aimé Césaire's *Toussaint Louverture: la Révolution Française* &

le Problème Colonial (1961-2)

Introduction

The title of Aimé Césaire's *Toussaint Louverture: la Révolution française et le problème colonial* presents several intriguing problems. Why is Toussaint Louverture the figure for the entire Haitian revolution? Why is the Haitian revolution referred to in terms of the French Revolution? This chapter follows Césaire's model by considering Toussaint Louverture as the focal narrative consciousness for the literary description of the undoing of French Saint-Domingue from the perspective of a 20th century period in which the idea of the "Haitian revolution" was slowly taking shape.

Among Aimé Césaire's masterpieces one text is quite often overlooked, and it is precisely this text that I would like to analyze in depth in this section. Beyond the fact that *Toussaint Louverture: la Révolution Française et le Problème Colonial* has received limited attention among general audiences, it is also rarely put into dialogue with the works on Saint-Domingue and Toussaint Louverture written by Vastey, Vieux-Chauvet, and Dadié. Césaire is mostly known for being one of the founders of the Négritude movement in France along with Léon Gontran Damas and Léopold Sédar Senghor: however, as Bancel, Blanchard, and Vergès note, it was Césaire's trip to Haiti in 1944 that constituted a life-changing experience regarding his historical perception and political vision of the Caribbean islands. Haiti's history and especially the trajectory of Saint-Domingue from a colonial state to an independent nation was a significant source of inspiration for Césaire and profoundly marked and shaped his anti-colonial

reflections and thoughts (Bancel, Blanchard, Vergès, 34).¹ In this vein, the landmarks, accomplishments and failures of Toussaint Louverture play a major role in Césaire's conceptualization of a uniquely Haitian revolutionary process. (By contrast, *La Tragédie du roi Christophe* presents a dramatic portrait of the psychic life of the new Haitian state.) Basing his analysis on archival, historical and literary references, Aimé Césaire pays tribute to Louverture's genius, pioneering spirit, and ultimate sacrifice for his country. Why is Louverture a key precursor for Césaire and why does Césaire dedicate an entire book to understanding the process of the revolution, one that was initially led by whites, then by free people of color, and finally by the black population of Saint-Domingue? To what extent does this shed light on the uniqueness of the Haitian revolution, particularly as distinct from the French revolution?

Toussaint Louverture & Saint-Domingue as Exemplary Role Models

Within Césaire's portrait of Saint-Domingue, Toussaint Louverture and the black population serve as exceptional role models. Saint-Domingue is praised for being exemplary as "un modèle (...) de la colonie d'exploitation." Toussaint is considered a pioneering figure doing his best to enact the Declaration of the Rights of Man in Saint-Domingue. The third constitutes the secret weapon for the success of Haiti's independence after Toussaint Louverture has been arrested and sent to jail in Fort de Joux. The exemplary status of Saint-Domingue ("une colonie exemplaire," 21) is nevertheless ironic since it provided the French metropolis with a significant annual wealth of two hundred millions (22), thanks to Saint-Domingue's agriculture and

¹ Bancel, Nicolas, Pascal Blanchard and Françoise Vergès. *La Colonisation Française*. Toulouse : Editions Milan, 2007. Print. 34

privilege trade system (“le commerce exclusif”, 23). In this symbolic master-slave relationship, Saint-Domingue is depicted as “the pride of France” (“l’orgueil de la France,” 21) exactly as if the ego and power of France were shown to the eyes of the world in the form of Saint-Domingue’s exploitation. For Césaire, Saint-Domingue encapsulates the starting point to the question: how do we solve the complex issues related to the colonial system? How do we deconstruct or undo our status as a previously colonized country, and then work toward independence? What are the weapons, strategies, and marks of resistance available to make this revolution successfully take place?:

Quand Toussaint-Louverture vint, ce fut pour prendre à la lettre la déclaration des droits de l’homme, ce fut pour montrer qu’il n’y a pas de race paria; qu’il n’y a pas de pays marginal; qu’il n’y a pas de peuple d’exception. Ce fut pour incarner et particulariser un principe; autant dire le vivifier (...) Le combat de Toussaint-Louverture fut ce combat pour la transformation du droit formel en droit réel, le combat pour la reconnaissance de l’homme et c’est pourquoi il s’inscrit et inscrit la révolte des esclaves noirs de Saint-Domingue dans l’histoire de la civilisation universelle. (344)

For Césaire, Louverture embodies the consciousness or *the thought* (“la pensée”, 343) behind the implementation of these universal rights of liberty and equality, while the revolution represents in itself the necessary catalyst, which accelerates the reaction and transformation of a country (343). The logic behind the importance of the model of Saint-Domingue lies in the fact that to free all social classes from the colonial system (all white, black and free people of color), one must precisely free them all, and in doing so, free Saint-Domingue as a whole (342).

Césaire argues in *Toussaint Louverture: la Révolution Française et le Problème Colonial* that Saint-Domingue is exceptional, but not for the same reasons that France

contextualized it as an exemplary colony. For Césaire, if Saint-Domingue is unique it is because of its status as being the very first country in modern times to have asked and provided an answer to the complex economic, racial and social questions intertwined with the colonial problems that were so integrally relevant to Césaire's own political role in navigation the 20th century identity of Martinique:

Saint-Domingue est le premier pays des temps modernes à avoir posé dans la réalité et à avoir proposé à la réflexion des hommes, et cela dans toute sa complexité, sociale, économique, raciale, le grand problème que le XX^e siècle s'essouffle à résoudre: le problème colonial.
Le premier pays où s'est noué ce problème.
Le premier pays où il s'est dénoué.
Cela vaut sans doute la peine qu'on s'y arrête. (24)

Saint-Domingue' exceptionalism comes from the very fact that it was the pioneering country and nation to experience and address the colonial problem in all its complexity. This explains why Césaire wants to explore the distinct objectives behind the Haitian revolution, since according to him, every single revolution in every single French colony is unique.

Throughout *Toussaint Louverture: la Révolution Française et le Problème Colonial*, Césaire makes clear that the situation in Saint-Domingue is extremely tense and ready to explode from distinct economic, social, and racial classes. First the whites, then the free people of color, and ultimately the black population are successively attempting to implement changes in the complex relationship between France and its most wealthy colony. For each social class, even though the issues at stake are different, the tensions remain strongly present across Saint-Domingue. In their respective ways, the *mulattos* and the black population attempt to resist the natural order ("l'ordre naturel") to the social, political, racial and economic distinctions. Within this rigid colonial system, the

different social classes try to transform the explosive situation and defy the fear of change, the noisy silence, and the denials surrounding the colonial question in the *Perles des Antilles*. This distinct situation makes the case of Saint-Domingue an exceptional one, and facing this rather unusual situation, Saint-Domingue is in need of an exceptional man, namely Toussaint Louverture.

Césaire presents Toussaint Louverture's exceptionalism right away and introduces him as a pioneering figure, providing a flattering and yet nuanced portrait of Louverture's accomplishments and failures. Depicted as a "man of transition", who encapsulates "an historical articulation" (331), Louverture represents in Césaire's book the first anti-colonial leader, who had the understanding and political vision to grasp the complexity of the task at hand. For Césaire, there was no ambiguity to the fact that he was the only one with the political mindset to fully appreciate the difficulty, but also the opportunity this occasion provided for the black population in implementing and fighting for what they truly believed in, namely freedom for all:

Alors Toussaint acheva de se convaincre de trois choses, trois choses qui précisément de Toussaint Bréda firent Toussaint-Louverture, c'est-à-dire le premier grand leader anti-colonialiste que l'histoire ait connu : d'abord que la conquête de la liberté générale serait une œuvre de longue haleine; ensuite que ce serait l'affaire du peuple, du peuple noir; que c'est dans sa tête et non dans la tête des colons qu'il fallait en faire mûrir l'idée; qu'enfin pour mener à terme le long combat commencé, fougue et bravoure ne suffiraient pas; qu'il y faudrait ce que ni Boukman ni Makendal n'avaient eu: une tête politique. (205)

Césaire makes explicit in this passage that Louverture is the only political leader with the acute perception of how one could learn from previous mistakes and manage the complex colonial system in Saint-Domingue. Aimé Césaire also makes clear in his book that Louverture stands out not only thanks to his political intuition and vision, but also

thanks to his discrete ambition and strategic intelligence as well as his determination to implement changes:

C'était le cocher d'un planteur, Bayon de Libertas, procureur de l'habitation Breda, appartenant au comte de Noé, d'où le nom sous lequel Toussaint fut désigné quelque temps: Toussaint Bréda, dit Louverture. Agé de quarante-huit ans, sachant lire et écrire, il jouissait parmi les siens d'un prestige certain, dû aussi bien à la fermeté de son caractère qu'à sa supériorité intellectuelle (...) Toussaint était homme de tact . Il sut s'insinuer dans la place et en prendre possession sans alarmer personne (...) dès que l'émeute, par sa persistance, eut gagné chance de se transformer en insurrection, Toussaint l'avait rejointe. Mais dès que Toussaint s'y fut engagé, il n'eut de cesse qu'elle ne s'élargit en révolution. Et cela signifiait essentiellement discipliner la révolte et l'élever. Elever son niveau militaire, bien sûr, mais plus encore son niveau politique. *Et d'abord la rendre consciente d'une chose: que, par-delà les hommes, c'était un système qu'il fallait détruire. Le but, le seul but valable, ce ne pouvait être que la liberté, la liberté générale.* (195-6)

In knowing that this perverse system is interrelated in many ways to the political, economic, social and racial issues, Louverture is aware of the necessity to transform this revolt into a revolution in order to deconstruct this entire system while putting into practice the principle of liberty for all in Saint-Domingue.

For Césaire, Louverture's exceptionalism is manifested in his pioneering actions such as for instance, when he became the precursor to the very first act of Haitian independence with the "traité de la Pointe Bourgeoise" (259). In deciding to sign this treaty of peace between the French colony of Saint-Domingue and France's rival England, Louverture enforces for the first time his desire to make Saint-Domingue independent from the French government. In addition, Louverture was in advance of his time in his idea of a French Commonwealth. Césaire salutes Louverture's act of choosing to apply local laws and a local Constitution in Saint-Domingue, which were made and agreed by Louverture rather than the French government:

Intuition géniale. L'idée d'un Commonwealth français était là en germe. Toussaint n'avait qu'un tort: d'être en avance sur son époque, et d'un bon siècle et demi. Son offre, c'était à l'Europe, c'était à la France, "offre du destin": la chance qui de longtemps ne se renouvelle pas et que nulle nation ne rejette impunément. Et c'était en effet pour la France une chance exceptionnelle de liquider dans de bonnes conditions, sans pertes et avec surcroît de prestige, la mésaventure coloniale. On sait comment il y fut répondu. (283)

Using an impressive collection of archival documents throughout *Toussaint Louverture: la Révolution Française et le Problème Colonial*, Aimé Césaire quotes at length from the original constitutions, decrees, letters and speeches made by Toussaint Louverture, the general Kerversau, Napoléon Bonaparte as well as Robespierre, the Abbé Grégoire and Marat. In one of these proclamations, Louverture refers explicitly to the Catholic religion and God in particular to justify his political ideas and actions. This strategy is used many times by Louverture as a way to persuade his audience of the good intentions of his acts since they follow the divine order. However, in doing so Louverture also puts himself in an exceptional intermediary position between God and the population of Saint-Domingue, producing a religious legitimization and sacralization of his political power and decisions. When the general Moïse is arrested and killed under the order of his uncle Toussaint Louverture, Louverture decides to share this news in a proclamation and to present the situation from a specific angle:

"Dans toutes les occasions, j'ai cherché à lui expliquer les saintes maximes de notre religion, à lui prouver que l'homme n'est rien sans la puissance et la volonté de Dieu, que lorsqu'un homme brave la Providence, il doit s'attendre à une fin terrible. Que n'ai-je fait pour le ramener à la vertu, à l'équité, à la bienfaisance, pour changer ses inclinations vicieuses, pour l'empêcher de se précipiter dans l'abîme? Dieu seul sait. Tel est le sort réservé à tous ceux qui voudront l'imiter. La justice du ciel est lente, mais elle est infaillible et tôt ou tard elle frappe les méchants et les chasse comme la foudre." (275)

With a strong paternalistic tone, this *mise en scene* clearly conveys the message that Louverture did his best to prevent his nephew from this tragic end, and subtly but firmly reinforces the idea that anyone will suffer the same fate if they challenge Louverture' authority. With Providence being defined and articulated by Louverture, one can very easily see the uneasy juxtaposition between Louverture's role as a general-in-chief of Saint-Domingue and his position as a religious figure acting *in the name of* God for Saint-Domingue's welfare. In so doing, it becomes almost impossible for the audience and reader to criticize or put into question the attitudes and decisions of Louverture.

Unveiling Toussaint Louverture's Faux-Pas

In a desire to appear more credible and nuanced for its readers, the exceptional portrait of Toussaint Louverture given through the eyes of Aimé Césaire also includes strong criticisms of his important *faux-pas*. In focusing his attention entirely on restoring the economic prosperity of Saint-Domingue, Louverture lost sight of the essential, namely to keep the mobilization of the population deeply engaged and to preserve their convictions being firmly rooted in his political actions. Blinded by his desire to show to the French government and Napoleon Bonaparte in particular that Saint-Domingue can successfully govern without France, Louverture's becomes more militant and condescending in his attitude, which creates and accentuates an economic and social chasm between him and Saint-Domingue's population and army. Because of this situation, Louverture has to violently repress the women and men including his nephew Moïse, who did not agree with his actions and perspectives:

Cependant, sur ce front économique-social, Toussaint connu un échec d'importance. Il ne suffit pas qu'un mot d'ordre soit juste. Et sans doute le souci de Toussaint du relèvement économique de Saint-Domingue était-il juste. Mais il faut réussir à en faire plus qu'un mot d'ordre. *Il faut réussir à le faire vivre dans la conscience des masses.* Bref la caporalisation compromit la mobilisation. Et c'est par là que Toussaint échoua. Le meilleur signe de cet échec est qu'il dut avoir recours à la répression. (274)

This rigidity and inability to compromise can also be seen in the lack of clear communication between Louverture and Saint-Domingue's population regarding the specific reasons for their sacrifices. In not unveiling the reasons behind his political actions and decisions and gathering his troops against a specific enemy, Louverture loses the support and trust of his supporters, who expect to understand the concrete motives behind his strict political plans:

La vérité est que la défaite de Toussaint ne fut pas d'ordre militaire, mais d'ordre politique. *L'échec de Toussaint, c'est qu'il ne réussit jamais à démasquer complètement l'ennemi aux yeux des masses (...)* Il y a un mot magique que Toussaint refusa toujours de prononcer: le mot *indépendance*. Autant dire qu'il manqua de *mot d'ordre*. *La notion de mot d'ordre n'a de sens que lié à la notion de structure. Le mot d'ordre digne de ce nom est celui qui dévoile aux yeux des masses la structure d'une situation embarrassante et structure en même temps la lutte que mènent les masses pour sortir de cette situation.* (304-5)

The absence of the word "independence" reflects the frustration of Saint-Domingue's population, who feels disconnected from Louverture's political visions and objectives for his nation. Until Louverture's arrest by the French government, which Césaire considers a form of political act ("acte politique" 313) and sacrifice for his country, Césaire remains both appreciative and critical of his mistakes, thereby providing a nuanced portrait of Louverture.

Beyond Saint-Domingue and Toussaint Louverture's exceptionalism, Césaire acknowledges as well the bravery and resilience of Saint-Domingue's population, who

understood early on the importance of taking into their own hands the future of their country. The very fact that the black people of saint-Domingue chose to fight for their own rights without waiting for any assistance from the bourgeois revolution, the French government or Paris reveals the exceptional strength of their engagement and *prise de conscience*:

Attendre l'abolition de l'esclavage d'un geste spontané de la bourgeoisie française, sous prétexte que cette abolition était dans la logique de la Révolution et plus précisément de la Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme, c'était, à tout prendre, méconnaître que sa propre tâche historique, la révolution bourgeoise elle-même, la bourgeoisie ne l'avait accomplie que harcelée par le peuple et comme poussée l'épée dans les reins. *L'étonnant est que les masses nègres aient si vite compris qu'il n'y avait rien à attendre de Paris et qu'ils n'auraient en définitive que ce qu'ils auraient le courage de conquérir.* (171)

The black population of Saint-Domingue represents for Césaire the crucial element in a series of fights and revolts, which successfully challenged the French colonial system. Nick Nesbitt also agrees with this idea and claims that, "In fact, Haitians invented the process of decolonization that would only take hold in the majority of European colonies a century and a half later, and recent events have reconfirmed that imperialism was by no means ended by 1960, that it continues to haunt us today" (5).² In one of his letters, Louverture asserts the determination of the black population to not be fooled by some veiled patriotism towards France, and their readiness to fight to the death in order to be recognized as free in their own country:

"Le discours impolitique et incendiaire de Vaublanc n'a pas affecté les noirs autant que la certitude des plans que projettent les propriétaires de Saint-Domingue: des déclarations insidieuses ne devraient avoir aucun effet des sages législateurs qui ont décrété la liberté des nations.

² Nesbitt, Nick. "Troping Toussaint, Reading Revolution." *Research in African Literatures*. 35.2, 2004: 18-33. Ethnic NewsWatch. ProQuest Research Library. Web. 28 Jan. 2013. Print. 5

Mais les atteintes contre cette liberté que proposent les colons sont d'autant plus à craindre qu'ils recouvrent leur détestable projet du voile du patriotisme (...) Mon attachement à la France, ma connaissance des noirs me font un devoir de ne pas vous laisser dans l'ignorance, ni des crimes qu'ils méditent, ni du serment que nous renouvelons d'être enterrés sous les ruines d'un pays que la liberté a ressuscité, plutôt que de souffrir le retour à l'esclavage (...) nous avons su affronter les dangers pour obtenir notre liberté, nous saurons affronter la mort pour la maintenir." (252-3)

The motivation and resistance of Saint-Domingue's population is also illustrated in its ability to resist interdictions and laws, such as the one prohibiting the free people of color to dress in luxurious clothes. After Vastey and Vieux Chauvet, Aimé Césaire refers specifically to this decree before concluding that this social class in Haiti will become twenty years later full of confidence and optimism for the future (36).

3.2. *Edouard Glissant's Monsieur Toussaint (1961)*

Introduction

The uniqueness of Edouard Glissant's play *Monsieur Toussaint* lies in his ability to address the crucial questions surrounding the charismatic, enigmatic and tragic figure of Toussaint Louverture as a metaphor and a reflection for the Haitian revolution's decolonization. Behind the racial, social and political barrier, what were the motivations for Louverture? Why does he appear as an ambiguous character, and how can we explain the ambiguity regarding his actions, motives and visions at the end of his life? In this section, I analyze first the ambivalent portrait of Louverture, before focusing in depth on his ambiguity and finally putting into light Louverture's poetics of resistance.

In his portrait of Louverture, Glissant exposes Louverture's fatal flaw, namely that Louverture's worst enemy in his fight for Saint-Domingue's independence is his own self. In doing so, Glissant guides his reader through a series of reactions by his characters (alive or dead) in which Louverture's successes, but especially his failures, are commented upon. For instance, Louverture's inability to clearly communicate to his soldiers and population his political plans, reveal the fragility and ambiguity of his methodology and strategy. In the second act of the play titled "Les morts" ("The dead"), the runaway black slave Mackandal reveals the confusion and tension in regards to Louverture's diplomacy and distant attitude:

Mackandal: Il y avait une lumière par-devant, nous avons marché sur elle. C'était simple: vaincre ou mourir. Voilà que d'autres mots sont dans ta bouche, que nous ne comprenons plus. Cette diplomatie, ton peuple ne la comprends pas, Toussaint. Explique-nous. Nous te suivons sur la route, mais nous trébuchons, nous tombons, et tu ne te retournes même pas. (81)

Paradoxically, the more progress Louverture makes, the more isolated and disconnected he becomes, first from his wife, then from his children and his nephew Moyse, and finally from some of his most faithful soldiers and supporters including Christophe and Dessalines,. Louverture's success comes with a price, the inability to preserve the stability and unity around him. The tempest of Saint-Domingue, which includes the violence and death of many soldiers, creates a state of instability within Louverture himself, which separates him from his circle of trusted friends and family members:

Toussaint: Chaque fois que le sort me fut propice, l'avez-vous remarqué, je dus payer cher le prix de ses faveurs. Quand j'arrachai la liberté générale, quand je repoussai l'attaque des Anglais, ce fut la première séparation avec mon épouse. Quand je rétablis la prospérité, le gouverneur que j'étais vit s'éloigner ses enfants, ils allèrent en France où le Directoire tenta de leur apprendre à me hair. Quand j'ai réprimé les désordres de Rigaud, ce fut Moyse qui qui me quitta (...) Et quand j'ai occupé les terres de l'Espagnol, après mes plus brillantes compagnes, Dessalines se détacha de moi. (179)

This isolation is created in part because of his uncommunicativeness and his obsession with Saint-Domingue's liberty and recognition as a successful nation, which underlines the paradox of his situation. The more charismatic and victorious Louverture becomes, the more exposed and delicate his tragic figure becomes, to the point where his convictions and good intentions are disregarded. Louverture gradually loses the aura and trustworthiness on which his success relied.

With his sacrifice and final arrest, Louverture agrees to give his life for his country and experiences humiliation and privation as a result. As a Biblical or Greek tragic figure, Louverture after reaching the similar status of a God, and enjoying prestige and adulation in the eyes of his population, will go back to the simple life he used to live as a slave. In one scene from the third act, titled "Le peuple" ("The people"),

Louverture reflects upon the foundations that he has laid for Saint-Domingue, on which Dessalines can then build the independence of the country: "Toussaint: (...) J'ai passé à travers Saint-Domingue, je ne l'ai pas élevée dans le ciel. Mais les fondations sont bâties: à Dessalines de construire!" (134-5) In other words, it is thanks to Louverture's fall and arrest that Dessalines can continue the pioneering work started by Louverture. In the same act, Louverture acknowledges and anticipates in a prophetic way that Saint-Domingue needs his absence to become truly successful: "Mes enfants, il faut nous séparer" (170). Similarly to a parent who will sacrifice himself for the wellbeing of his children, Louverture decides to separate and sacrifice himself for the future of Saint-Domingue's population. This sacrifice symbolizes Louverture's love and ultimate gift of his life for saving his country from the slave trade and colonial systems:

Toussaint: Ce que veut Dessalines est loin au-delà de ma vie. Ce que veut Dessalines, je ne pouvais le vouloir. Cependant, il a besoin de moi. Il faut que j'appelle sa trahison, pour que sa trahison devienne fidélité. Il faut que j'accepte son ingratitude, afin qu'elle soit ma récompense. Il faut que je tombe encore, et qu'il m'oublie encore, pour que ma victoire soit la sienne, et que ma défaite allume sa victoire (...) Mes yeux ne verront plus mon pays, et mon pays a besoin de mon absence. (181-2)

Beyond the uncertainty surrounding Louverture and his real plans regarding the political situation in Saint-Domingue, Louverture appears in Glissant's play as the triumphant but tragic figure who transcends the confusion to prove one last time his charisma and the dignity of his actions and sacrifice.

Louverture's final political sacrifice and inevitable fall leads to his final political achievement, meaning the delivery from slavery and the implementation of liberty for Saint-Domingue's population. In the fourth and last act of the play titled "Les héros" ("The heroes"), Dessalines as he is deploying the independent flag of Haiti pays

immediate tribute to Louverture's legacy: "*Dessalines déploie le drapeau de Haïti. Il crie. Dessalines: La liberté ou la mort! C'est en l'honneur du général Toussaint, et pour la délivrance des hommes!*" (214) As a tragic figure, the reader knows thanks to the clues spread throughout the play that Louverture's tragic end is unavoidable, which accentuates the fascination in Louverture. In other words, it is his exemplary and uncommon trajectory combined with his very *human* and fragile nature, which makes Louverture's portrayal an excellent point of entry to understand the beauty of the Haitian revolution and the difficulty for becoming full post-colonial, free from the previous colonial systems and truly independent as a nation.

Toussaint Louverture's Ambiguity

In *Monsieur Toussaint*, the ambiguity of Louverture is unveiled in this play in a poetic and metaphorical way. Glissant portrays Louverture as a prophet who anticipates a reality that few can foresee or completely grasp. This clarity of vision that one can find in Louverture is brilliantly intertwined with his coolness in front of the exasperation and frustration of his wife, soldiers and surroundings, which reinforces the ambivalence of his character. It is precisely because Louverture understands the complexity of Saint-Domingue's situation all too well, that he acts and thinks in a way that seem to those around him illogical or absurd, when they are in fact only a different way of tackling the issue in a more opaque way. In one scene when Louverture, his wife along with Dessalines opens and reads the special inscription mentioned on the flags offered by Bonaparte, Louverture is very lucid about what this detail entails and means for his country and its population:

Un soldat apporte des drapeaux. Toussaint les étale sur la table. Madame Toussaint épelle lentement l'inscription sur les drapeaux.

Madame Toussaint: "Braves Noirs, souvenez-vous que le peuple français seul reconnaît votre liberté et l'égalité de vos droits."

Toussaint: "Braves Noirs!..." Ce n'est pas une liberté de circonstance concédée à nous seuls, que nous voulons, c'est l'adoption absolue du principe que tout homme né rouge, noir ou blanc, ne peut être la propriété de son semblable. (112)

What creates the uneasiness in Louverture's prophetic vision is that he is not very good at communicating his ideas, thereby creating a chasm between his world and theirs. In this context, the prophetic visions of Louverture are mixed with the disapproval and incomprehension of his supporters, once again highlighting the pioneering and charismatic, but at the same time, tragic figure of Louverture. His stubbornness sometimes appears as an arrogant and insensitive gesture, when he actually does not mean to hurt anyone, but simply omits to disclose his sincere ideas with those around him. This discrepancy between what Louverture thinks, and ultimately wants to accomplish, with what he actually does, contributes to create a situation of confusion. Louverture's wife, Mme Toussaint finds herself in this state of bewilderment when Louverture decides to meet with general Brunet even though it is obvious that this is a political trap to arrest Louverture and deport him discreetly:

Madame Toussaint: Mon époux, les mots que tu emploies me font peur. Si Toussaint ne comprend pas qu'on doit l'arrêter sans éclat et le déporter aussitôt; si Toussaint ne comprend pas qu'en devenant un paisible campagnard il s'est rendu suspect, lui le soldat; alors c'est que Toussaint ne veut pas comprendre. (186)

This tension between the intelligence and vision of Louverture and the very concrete task at hand during the conflict with the French army encapsulates the paradoxical disconnect between Louverture and his supporters who used to believe in him and in his capacity to liberate his country.

This tension is explored in depth in all four acts. Glissant subtly refers to those tensions between Louverture and Christophe, Moyse, Mackandal and Macaïa allowing the reader to fully understand why the fall of Louverture is inevitable. The discordance between what Louverture wants to achieve and the way it is perceived by those around him, clearly exemplifies the discrepancy between Louverture's own consciousness and the way his actions reflect in other people's minds. An example of this can be found in the final and last act titled "Les héros":

Toussaint: (...) J'écris le mot "Toussaint", Macaïa se penche, il épelle "traître". J'écris le mot "République", Mackandal devine "mensonge". J'écris le mot "discipline" et Moyse, sans même jeter un regard sur la page, crie aussitôt "tyrannie". J'écris le mot "prospérité", Dessalines s'éloigne, il pense dans son coeur "faiblesse". (195-6)

Ironically speaking Louverture's own tragic end when he is arrested, deported and put on a boat called "The hero," unveils the complexity and ambivalence of his life and accomplishments as a tragic hero. Louverture's nephew Moyse shares in a very moving scene the injustice and sense of absurdity for the soldiers killing Moyse. The fact that Moyse also belongs to the same family as Louverture confirms that in ordering his death, Louverture is a line and starts to become less credible and respected as a commandant in chief and governor of Saint-Domingue:

Moyse: Cent fois je les portai à la victoire. Mes soldats. Ils demandaient: "Pourquoi notre commandant veut-il que nous tirions sur Moyse? Moyse n'est-il pas le premier après Toussaint? Le premier en courage et en amour pour la vérité?" Je me taisais, Gouverneur, pour ne pas avouer l'injustice. Et comme ils pleuraient doucement, je leur ai crié: "Feux, mes amis!" Comme si nous attaquions tous ensemble la mort, et que nous pointions une rafale avant de bondir les sabres et les coutelas. (140)

In a distinct way, Christophe justifies himself for deciding to join the troops of the enemies and defends his position convincingly by claiming it was not he who betrayed

Louverture, but rather Louverture who betrayed Christophe and the other military soldiers in not sharing his advice and strategies with them:

Christophe: On dit que Christophe s'est rendu avec ses troupes, qu'il sacrifia ainsi la cause de ses frères. Christophe doit se défendre contre une telle accusation (...) Aucun d'entre nous ne pénétrait les intentions du général. Nous ne lui portions plus cette confiance aveugle que le fils témoigne à son père. Les populations, irritées par son gouvernement n'auraient peut-être pas poursuivi jusqu'au bout l'effort de la bataille. Enfin, le capitaine général multipliait les proclamations, il affirmait que les libertés seraient préservées (...) Si Toussaint nous avait admis dans ses conseils, nous aurions peut-être gardé la terre. (176-7)

In reversing the blame and deconstructing the myth of Louverture as an ideal leader of Saint-Domingue, Christophe reveals the extent to which the charismatic figure of Toussaint Louverture attracted a lot of support, passion, and enthusiasm, but also created bitterness and the impression that one has been fooled for endorsing a political belief that one was ready to die for previously.

This feeling of disillusionment is produced by the distinction between what Louverture wants to accomplish in theory, namely the freedom and the independence of his country, and what he is doing in practice, namely staying faithful and trusting the French government. It is for this reason that Louverture's main soldiers such as Dessalines are becoming frustrated and unhappy with his diplomacy when the price to pay is an ever higher number of lost lives. Dessalines thus decides to end his support for Louverture for a valid cause and in order to finish the work that he started. Dessalines' bravery and resilience during the Haitian revolution are illustrated in a key scene, where he encourages his soldiers to persevere while emphasizing explicitly the importance of their efforts and sacrifice. This open and brave attitude contrasts sharply

with Louverture's opacity and inability to clearly convey his objectives as well as the outcomes of this sacrifice for the future of the soldier's country:

Dessalines: Courage, vous dis-je, courage. Ils ne seront pas capables de demeurer longtemps à Saint-Domingue. Bientôt ils vont tomber et mourir comme des mouches. Écoutez-moi! Si Dessalines se rend à eux une centaine de fois, il les trompera cent fois. Je le répète, prenez courage, et vous verrez que nous les harçèleront, nous les battons, nous brûlerons les récoltes, et nous nous retireront dans les montagnes. Ils seront incapables de tenir le pays et seront forcés de s'en aller. Alors je vous rendrai indépendants! (166-7)

Dessalines exemplifies the kind of leader that will successfully lead his country to victory in explaining clearly his military plans and focusing on the present, while keeping in mind and putting into perspective its relevance for the future. The fact that Louverture is shown mostly giving orders and primarily interested in convincing through words rather than actions exposes the different tactics and styles between Dessalines and Louverture. Dessalines is depicted as being very pragmatic, firmly grounded in implementing actions and committed to obtaining what he wants by force or violence. Louverture is more aloof and primarily tries to implement an idealized version of what Saint-Domingue should look like, at the expense of losing sight of the urgent priorities and the cost of the significant sacrifices from its people for his ideal political vision.

Toussaint Louverture's Poetics of Resistance

The poetics of resistance endorsed by Louverture's political vision for Haiti unveils his desire to make Saint-Domingue's revolution part of the universal history of black resistance and. In the last pages of Glissant's play, the character Langles, who is the second in command at Fort de Joux in French Jura where Louverture is imprisoned, confirms the power of controlling and reshaping history according to the interests of

those in power. In this passage, Langles not only confesses that the knowledge found in books and encyclopedias becomes a form of propaganda, while at the same time keeping secret some other taboo subject:

Langles: (...) Mais pour finir, les hommes t'effaceront comme ils effaceront Langles. Ils écriront: l'Expédition VICTORIEUSE de Saint-Domingue. Ils le publieront dans leurs ouvrages, ils l'inscriront dans leurs encyclopédies. Oui, nos descendants y veilleront, jusqu'à la troisième génération et au-delà. Ils tiennent pouvoir de décider sur le juste et le faux! Ils t'enfermeront dans un Fort plus terrible que Joux, dans une montagne plus abrupte que le Jura: c'est le silence public. (232)

It is exactly this kind of power and the possibility of making general audiences fully aware of Toussaint Louverture's life, mistakes and accomplishments that Glissant, Césaire and Dadié are exemplifying and putting into practice. In rewriting in their own words their perception of this important page of history, Glissant, Césaire and Dadié are creating a poetics of resistance thanks to a reappropriation of knowledge through writings.

Louverture's determination to fight the artificial barriers within human beings established by the slave trade and colonial systems, which were based on unfounded racial prejudices, illustrates his firm commitment to use military methods and orders. Such a discipline is a way for Louverture to show the strength and intelligence of his soldiers, who are no longer slaves, and are able to fight like any other human beings, with precision, strategy and logic: "Toussaint: (...) Je vous le dis, je vous donne une armée. Ne pillez pas, fusillez les voleurs, battons-nous avec la méthode. Si vous gagnez dans le désordre et la folie, vous êtes encore des esclaves." (37) However, this attitude also reveals Louverture's lack of confidence and his obsession with how his soldiers will be perceived in the eyes of the French army, and his inability to fully decolonize himself

from the gaze of white colonizers. Thankfully, Louverture is successful in reaching his objective of deconstructing the artificial barriers of colonial and racial difference with Deassalines' independence of Haiti on January 1, 1804:

Delgrès: Dans ton sommeil, Toussaint, général, ou dans ton agonie.
Tu ramasses ta terre, et tu l'as labourée.
Tu peux dormir parmi les étoiles, tu peux dormir (...)
Et la barrière est tombée.
Vois je pars durant ton sommeil, puisque le trou est comblé.
Il y a devant nous un grand pays et des heures nouvelles.
Ceux qui aiment, ceux qui haïssent, ceux qui pleurent,
Nous ouvrirons pour eux le chemin malgré eux.
Un pays de nouveauté. (220-1)

Louverture's obsession with equality and liberty for all translates itself in his commitment to see racial solidarity and brotherhood taking place in Saint-Domingue. In a last moment of resistance, as numerous soldiers defect, Louverture tries to recapture the momentum of his past by finally explaining what is at stake in the Haitian revolution: "Toussaint: Ils vous promettent la liberté, ils comptent vous asservir. Ils ne daignent pas vous reconnaître comme leurs fils soumis, et si vous n'êtes pas leurs esclaves, vous êtes des rebelles. La mère patrie, égarée par le Consul, n'est plus pour vous qu'une marâtre..." (159) In one key scene, Louverture speaks in a monologue concern regarding the pernicious effect of the construction of racial differences: "Les hommes s'accepteront-ils enfin sans mesurer la couleur de leur peau?" (111). In another crucial scene, Louverture speaks to God to justify his actions and legitimizes his sacrifice in the name of Saint-Domingue's population: "Toussaint: Je crie à la fraternité humaine. Elle tournera bientôt sur la terre. Seigneur, pardonnez-moi mes mauvaises actions, car je luttai pour mon peuple" (175). In exposing poetically the brighter as well as the darker sides of Louverture's life, Glissant offers different perspectives and

voices regarding Louverture's accomplishments and sacrifices, leaving it to his readers to make their own judgments about Louverture's exemplary and yet ambiguous trajectory.

3.3. Bernard Dadié's *Iles de Tempêtes* (1973)

Introduction

Césaire's historical analysis and Glissant and Dadié's plays are complementary as they focus on distinct aspects of Toussaint Louverture's legacy for the coming into being of new postcolonial states. These three books also emphasize the uniqueness of Haiti's history and how the lessons learned from this historical moment can relate to the present. Dadié's *Iles de Tempêtes* attempts to put into perspective the current situation of previously colonized African countries, such as the Ivory Coast, to analyze their current relation with the former colonizers. Divided into seven chronicles (or "Tableaux"), Dadié's historical drama was written in 1971 before being published by Présence Africaine in 1973 and adapted to the stage only recently in 2007 (Vincileoni, 7).³ Each *tableau* offers a different insight regarding the tense colonial interactions taking place between the French government and its wealthy colony, Saint-Domingue, as well as between its two representative figures, Napoléon Bonaparte and Toussaint Louverture. In his play, Dadié uses subtle irony and humor to unveil the comical aspect of the mimetism and rivalry taking place between "le Premier des Noirs" (Louverture) and "le Premier des Blancs" (Bonaparte).⁴ The tension between the two protagonists gradually becomes a parody exposing Louverture as the representative figure of the colonized country blindly trying to imitate the colonizers. In revealing the inferiority complex and the helpless desire to be approved and noticed by Bonaparte, it is argued that Louverture is not fully decolonized and still acting in order to draw attention from the

³ Dadié, Bernard. *Iles de Tempête: Pièce en Sept Tableaux*. Paris: Présence Africaine, 1973. Print. 7

⁴ *Ibid.* 103

mother country's key leaders. It is specifically this duality between the desire to become free and the desire to be accepted as an equal in the colonizer's gaze, that becomes the pivotal and dramatic turning point of this play. In attempting to gain the respect and appreciation of the previous colonizers, Louverture forgets the main objectives of his political vision. In making the argument that continuous resistance and radical rupture from the previous colonizers is inevitable, Dadié unveils the pernicious relationship deriving from (neo-) colonialism, *françafrique*, paternalism and racism. In this section, I analyze in detail Dadié's nuanced portrait of Louverture, before exploring the use of archival material in this play, and deconstructing the unhealthy ego relationship between Bonaparte and Louverture.

Toussaint Louverture's Nuanced Portrait

Providing a nuanced portrait of Toussaint Louverture, Dadié does an excellent job in providing a strong sense of his personality, strengths and weaknesses. Appearing for the first time in the middle of the play during the fourth chronicle titled "Toussaint Louverture bâtisseur," Louverture's naivety and blindness are demonstrated during his interactions with his general Dessalines and his nephew Moyse. Caught in a bovarystic attitude and mimetic relationship with Bonaparte, Louverture does not realize the need to establish a clear rupture between the French colonial system and the one put into practice after the abolition of slavery. The very fact that, although the enslavement of Saint-Domingue's population is officially abolished, a continuity regarding the system of exploitation remains, reveals the similarities between the slave-trade system and the dictatorial system under Louverture. In other words: "L'esclavage est aboli, mais le système demeure (76)", "Slavery is abolished, but the [colonial] system remains."

During a very tense conversation with Louverture, Moïse reveals the mistakes of his uncle, who is obsessed by the idea of receiving some acknowledgement and letter from Bonaparte rather than by focusing on giving dignity and a sense of honor to his people. This scene is crucial, and in juxtaposing Moïse's thoughts, who as a prophet warns Louverture of his mistakes, one can understand how Moïse's convictions resonate strongly with Dadié's universal message regarding the political situation of his own country, the Ivory Coast, and some African countries:

Moïse: Général Toussaint Louverture, cesserons-nous jamais de vivre les yeux braqués sur l'Europe? (...) Il faut proclamer l'indépendance (...) Général Toussaint, ce qui compte, ce qui est essentiel, c'est de redonner à chaque homme le goût de vivre, c'est-à-dire le sens de la dignité et de l'honneur, de remettre debout tous ces hommes accroupis (...) Notre révolte doit balayer le passé, tout le passé; il nous faut une société nouvelle, d'hommes travaillant dans la joie, et non une caricature de société occidentale (...) (96-7)

In accentuating the different types of pressure put on an island and on a specific race, Dadié depicts the situation of his own continent, where the political choices made by the government mostly reflect the political choices dictated by the previous colonizer (Vincileoni, 13).

Toussaint Louverture's Naivety

The naivety of Louverture is also highlighted throughout the play and especially during his arrest in the sixth tableau titled "Resistance". As the chief of the policemen officially claims that Louverture is under arrest following the order of the General Brunet, Louverture initially think it is a mere error. Even though his mistress Mme Debelleville warns him that the invitation from Brunet is a masquerade and an ambush, Louverture out of pride refuses to be considered as a coward and decides to go alone to see General Brunet. In front of Louverture's credulity the chief of the policemen

confirms that in making this arrest he is following the precise order of Brunet himself and laughs at Louverture's reaction when Louverture ultimately realizes that he has been betrayed (136-7).

Louverture offers a dual image: on the one hand there is the leader who started the revolt in Saint-Domingue, and who metaphorically represents *la tempête pour les puissances coloniales* ("the tempest for the colonial powers" 150) agitating the island, which refers explicitly to the title of the play *Iles de tempête* (*Islands of tempests*). On the other hand, Louverture also represents the one who, once he becomes the leader of the *Perle des Antilles*, tries to calm its tempests but focuses his energy in the wrong direction. This disconnect and rupture between who he was, a previous slave, who he is, the commandant in chief, and who he ultimately aspires to become, the respected equivalent of Napoleon Bonaparte in Saint-Domingue, conflicts with the interests and vision of Saint-Domingue's population. In protesting and joining the French troops, the farmers, soldiers and women of Saint-Domingue express their disapproval and discontent regarding the absence of real change, and the lack of progress regarding the goals for which they are ready to fight to the death, such as freedom for all and Saint-Domingue's independence. In a moment of lucidity after condemning Moyse to death, Louverture addresses to his hypocritical right arm man: "Grand'Ville, un fossé s'est-il creusé entre moi et mon peuple?" (100) This chiasm first appears in a discussion between Louverture and Dessalines when Louvertures asserts that he wants the revolution in Saint-Domingue to take place with order, discipline and silence:

Toussaint Louverture: (...) Ce que je veux? Redonner des souvenirs et de l'orgueil aux miens! Que le nègre se respecte! Mais partout la resquille, la

concussion! Déjà incompris! Produire! Produire pour exporter et démontrer que nous sommes majeurs (...)

Dessalines: Majeurs, nous l'avons toujours été. Sortons de leur histoire, Toussaint, de toutes leurs histoires (...)

Toussaint Louverture: Dessalines, c'est encore et partout la tempête sur l'île... Il nous faut unir les classes et les couleurs (...) Que serais-je si je proclamais l'indépendance? Incompris ici, incompris en métropole! Et toujours constant, le silence hautain et sinistre de Bonaparte. (77-81)

While Louverture wants to work beyond the questions of class and race when uniting everyone in Saint-Domingue, Dessalines is more grounded and confirms to Louverture that declaring officially Saint-Domingue's independence from its previous colony is the only way to help unite and solve the colonial, economic and racial issues. In this key scene, Louverture is torn between two aspirations, on the one hand his idealized vision of how Saint-Domingue should look, namely a diverse but united population across gender, racial and social lines, and on the other, the real and urgent situation of tension, violence and frustration in the population. Stuck between these two conflicting scenarios, Louverture believes that in proclaiming the independence of Saint-Domingue, he would thereby be even more misunderstood by Saint-Domingue's population and the French metropolis. His hesitation reflects his lack of confidence as well as his constant need for approval and respect from the colonizing mother country, France.

Toussaint Louverture's Vision for Saint-Domingue

Once imprisoned, Louverture realizes that it is precisely because of this vision, namely to see the black and white populations alongside people of color from Saint-Domingue working together toward the strength and unity of their country, that he was arrested. In deconstructing the strict separation between class, gender, and race, and in altering *le vieil ordre des choses* ("the old natural order of things" 143), Louverture

goes too far, and Napoleon reacts by asking for him to be put in the Fort de Joux in France:

Toussaint Louverture: A qui peut-on reprocher d'aimer son pays ? En outre, est-ce un crime que de briser ses chaînes? (...) Mon principal chef d'accusation: avoir uni les blancs, les noirs et les mulâtres de Saint-Domingue, brisé le vieil ordre des choses. (142-3)

Dadié's play refers constantly to this obsession, namely restoring the order of things or putting things back to the way they used to be. This notion, "l'ancien ordre des choses," however is ambiguous, as it conveys different meanings depending on the speaker, the interlocutor, and the context. For instance, in the fifth tableau titled "La reconquête", Bonaparte asserts that the previous order of things, which means that the old colonial and slave trade systems must be re-established:

Bonaparte (*à Fauché*): Il faut rétablir l'ordre

M. du Rocher: L'ancien ordre des choses (...)

Fouché: Des prêtres ont beaucoup et longtemps soufflé sur l'incendie qui a détruit Saint-Domingue.

M. du Rocher: Les prêches, les baptêmes, la notion dangereuse d'être tous, blancs et noirs, esclaves et maîtres, des enfants de Dieu.

Bonaparte: Il faut rétablir l'ordre.

M. du Rocher: L'ancien ordre des choses! Excellence, nous sommes accusés d'avoir édifié des fortunes sur le dos des nègres. Une certaine propagande s'ingénie à nous présenter comme des monstres. (110)

In this context, "l'ancien ordre des choses" means restoring the French supremacy, slavery, and colonial hegemony in Saint-Domingue. Later in this scene, Bonaparte confesses that economic inequality within a society cannot exist without the religious beliefs and certitudes spread within this society, and that this is the way things are supposed to be. The logic behind "the natural order of things" is encapsulated in the very fact that it justifies "pseudo-scientifically", thanks to religion, science and anthropology, the "natural" inequity among human races and consequently establishes

strict economic, racial and social distinctions among Saint-Domingue's population (111). Ironically, Louverture himself also refers to this notion of order, discipline and silence, which highlights the fact he has become without realizing it a parody of Bonaparte:

Toussaint Louverture: (...) Les paysans n'ont pas à manifester, mais à travailler. Dessalines, il faut remettre de l'ordre dans tout cela. Agis de telle sorte que l'envie ne revienne à personne de se croire en 89 (1789). Notre révolution à nous se fera dans l'ordre et la discipline, dans le travail et le silence. Le silence! Les agents provocateurs n'auront pas raison de ma politique. J'ai, du reste, le soutien de la métropole. (78)

It is this so-called natural distance among human beings to which Mme du Rocher refers as an argument for the "natural" differences among human beings in the third tableau of the play titled "Un soir au Cap". In this passage, she is speaking with her husband, Mr du Rocher, and the police chief about the notion of brotherhood: "Fraternité! Je ne me vois pas la sœur d'un nègre. Je me sentirais mal dans cette peau... O Dieu, merci de m'avoir donné la couleur que j'ai, d'avoir mis entre moi et les autres la distance raisonnable" (64). Ironically, Mr and Mme du Rocher later find out that their own son is a fervent reader of the Abbé Grégoire and an active member of the Society *Amis des Noirs*. As they try to convince him of his "mistake" using God and the established order ("l'ordre établi" 71) as arguments, he very quietly deconstructs the idea of the so-called divine and natural order of things, which reinforces inequalities, racism and oppression:

Le fils: Oh! Pour moi, maintenant, nègres ou blancs, ce sont des mots sans valeur absolue. Je ne vois partout que des hommes qui veulent se diviser, se classer.

Mme du Rocher: Voilà ce que nous avons récolté à le laisser trop longtemps se commettre avec les négroillons!

M. du Rocher: Savez-vous qu'en parlant de la sorte, vous vous élevez contre l'ordre établi?

Mme du Rocher: Contre Dieu? (...)

Le fils (*calme*): Nous nous battons pour le droit et la justice. (71-4)

Dadié is successful in providing strong and sharp insights into his characters' souls by distilling in a few sentences the essence of their philosophy and mindset. Capturing for instance a casual conversation between M. de Rocher and the chief of police, the reader gets a sense of the mentality, prejudices and racism of many white colonizers living in Saint-Domingue:

M. du Rocher: Que la métropole comprenne enfin qu'ici nous ne défendons que ses intérêts les plus vitaux. Quelque bombarde au cul d'un nègre, est-ce une raison valable pour qu'on mette le feu à Saint-Domingue?

Mme du Rocher: De la folie!

M. du Rocher: Chez nous, n'a-t-on pas longtemps tiré sur des paysans, au seuil de leur mesure? Le monde s'était-il écroulé? Nous ruiner? Jamais! Nous nous battons jusqu'à la dernière cartouche, les soldats ne nous manqueront pas. Nous remuerons ciel et terre pour ramener l'ancien ordre des choses. (68)

In a similar vein, Dadié refers to and uses brilliantly authentic archival documents and letters in his play to provide a genuine sense to his readers of what was at stake.

Dadié makes sure that *Iles de tempête* is a play strongly anchored in its historical time in order to resonate with contemporary times of his readers. In order to do so, Dadié directly includes correspondence and genuine historical documents written by Bonaparte, General Brunet, and Louverture. In the sixth tableau for instance titled "La Résistance," after having sent many letters to Bonaparte without receiving any acknowledgements, Louverture finally receives an answer from the Abbé Coisson as his sons return to Saint-Domingue from Paris. This letter creates an ultimatum, which for the first time convinces Louverture of the fact that the French government wants to replace him in order to re-establish the old order of things:

Toussaint Louverture: Un ultimatum que m'apportent mes propres enfants. Ainsi donc mes enfants sont devenus les enfants de Bonaparte et reviennent à la conquête de leur père ? (*il les regarde...*)

Placide: Bonaparte est très puissant (...)

Toussaint Louverture: Nous aussi nous sommes riches et forts, mon fils! Riches de foi, de courage, d'abnégation, de détermination, et forts de notre droits de vivre libres et respectés (...) Ainsi donc, c'est vrai que des Français reviennent rétablir l'ancien ordre des choses? (130-1)

The original letter is very similar to the one mentioned in this play and the response from Louverture symbolizes another turning point in this situation, where Louverture and Bonaparte are official rivals fighting for the power of Saint-Domingue. Another correspondence would also be critical in the unfolding and dramatization of this historical plot, namely, the insincere letter from General Brunet, who will ultimately trap Louverture.

The use of authentic archival documents as well as music throughout the play offers another way for Dadié to convey his message. Resistance from different sides (colonizers, colonized and free people of color) is omnipresent in *Iles de tempête* through the actions of Dessalines and Louverture, their conversations and writings, and the slaves' music. The play for instance opens with the sound of music in the background, one that the reader at first can notice but not really distinguish from the interactions of the protagonists. However, during key moments in the play such as when the Abbé Raybal asks, "Où est-il ce grand homme pour lever l'étendard sacré de la Li-ber-té?", the sounds of drums intensify, and alert the reader that the revolt is in preparation, and that the resistance is discreetly happening in the background of the play (38). Later in the play, when Louverture is arrested, this crucial scene ends with the sound of the policemen laughing alongside a song, softly played, called "Haïti chérie" (137). The

persistence of this form of musical resistance takes place as Louverture warns the policemen that in taking him away from Saint-Domingue, the resistance will only continue and intensify until it is ultimately successful: “En m’arrétant, vous avez seulement abattu le tronc de l’arbre de la Liberté de Saint-Domingue. Les racines repousseront car elles sont nombreuses et profondes” (137). The same song of resistance “Haïti chérie” will also come back and become stronger and stronger as Louverture collapses to death:

Toussaint Louverture (seul): Me traite-t-on ainsi parce que je suis noir? Qui, à sa naissance, choisit son pays, sa couleur? Pourquoi pourchasser les autres pour ce qu’ils sont? Exclusivité des droits et du bonheur! (...) A quel peuple appartient-il d’écrire l’histoire pour d’autres peuples? Haïti, Haïti, c’était le nom que prononçait ... (*en sourdine on entend “Haïti chérie!”*)... Moyse (*marchant les bras tendus comme s’il apercevait son île*) Haïti... Haïti... (149-50)

The combination of drums, music and songs during specific key moments in Dadié’s play, with the use of major archival materials contribute to strengthen the intensity of this historical drama.

Bonaparte and Louverture’s Unhealthy Ego Relationship

The unhealthy ego relationship between Bonaparte and Louverture reflects the master-slave dialectic, which is developed with humor and depth in *Iles de tempête*. The doubts and questions of Louverture regarding the situation taking place in Saint-Domingue strongly contrast with the contempt and indifference of Bonaparte. It is precisely this insulting silence of Bonaparte which persuades Louverture to write a Constitution for Saint-Domingue, which will later catch the attention of Bonaparte:

Toussaint Louverture: Rien! Pas un mot, pas une lettre. Quel sens faut-il donner à ce silence insultant? Bonaparte a tort de ne pas me répondre. Je lui tends la main et il la refuse. Ecrivez à tous nos amis en métropole. Grand’Ville, que penseriez-vous d’une Constitution (...) M’en voudrait-il, le Général

Bonaparte, d'être dans l'histoire, tout comme lui, un repère? N'est-ce pas l'identité de notre destin? Ici, je brise les chaînes et là-bas, il brise les trônes. (83-4 and 101)

In many ways, Bonaparte and Louverture symbolize two doubles and two different facets of the same person in the sense that they both are very ambitious, authoritative and egocentric. They want to be the center of attention giving orders for other to follow. Their power provides their pleasure, and they particularly desire to lead and play a significant role in times of war. Ironically enough, their similarities brought them apart, since they are too proud to realize that they are in the end exactly the same. Louverture is fascinated by the idea of becoming the black version of Bonaparte, of living in the same luxury and of having the same lifestyle as he does. Bonaparte in turn is too proud to consider that someone else might be as powerful as he, and therefore takes pleasure in ignoring Louverture's attempt to get his attention while ridiculing him with racist remarks in public:

Bonaparte: Je ne veux pas de généraux noirs dans cette partie du monde (...) La République n'est pas un jeu pour enfants et encore moins un jeu pour nègres. Nous ne serons pas deux à écrire l'histoire de l'époque (...) Pensez-vous qu'il est dans mes intentions de partager le monde avec quelqu'un d'autre? Je suis l'arbitre. J'ai sifflé. Toussaint Louverture est donc hors-jeu. (112-4)

This rivalry and passive aggressive interaction will result in the ultimate sacrifice of both Louverture and Leclerc, but by way of a twist in the play, Dadié draws a comical parallel in juxtaposing the end of their respective lives. Bonaparte and Louverture's outcomes are thus presented in the last and seventh tableau of the play titled "La détention" as if they were the two faces of the very same coin. Both of them are depicted alone, in exile, away from their beloved countries and families, feeling a sense of betrayal and injustice from France and Europe. They are prisoners, and as such they are

both of them ashamed and sad by the lack of prestige and the neglect in which they are obliged to live out their respective days. Ironically, their monologues are not addressed to each other, but they are nonetheless juxtaposed, creating a dialogue composed of two distinct monologues. In doing so, Dadié produces the effect of reproducing fictionally an ultimate dialogue between the two rivals. To the initial racist comments that Bonaparte publicly expresses about Louverture, the play's last scene ends with Bonaparte asking to liberate Louverture, his wife and children. But it is already too late, and all of them are already dead. At this point and after a long silence, Bonaparte for the first time lets go of his pride and finally admits their common similarities and acknowledges the final victory of Louverture over himself, in having been able to die on the French continent when Bonaparte is stuck in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean in the island of Saint-Hélène:

Napoléon (*après un long silence*): Nous étions tous deux des îles. Nous avons tous deux eu à lutter contre les mêmes puissances. Il est mort sur le continent.

Bertrand: Il aura lui aussi été tempête pour les puissances coloniales. (150)

In his last moment of lucidity and just before dying, Bonaparte describes the importance of staying young in any circumstances, and in knowing how to sing as a choir sings before his death: “Je mourrai ici, Bertrand, parce que les souverains d’Europe qui sont pour un monde figé, pétrifié dans les calculs et les intérêts de castes et de cours, le veulent (...) La force du monde, c’est de demeurer jeune en toutes les circonstance, c’est-à-dire de savoir chanter” (150-1). In this play the message for the readers and future generations translates as follows: the world is stronger in staying away from unhealthy calculations, ego relationships and personal interests, but at the same time in staying

firmly aware of the current and fragile situations at hand while being ready if necessary to fight for one's rights.

Afterword

Summarizing in an afterword, my experience working on this dissertation is an impossible task, which I am not going to attempt. Since the process of completing such a research project is a complex and very subjective experience, I have decided to answer in detail three questions, which will give the reader a sense of the unique experience embarking on this intellectual journey. First, how did I end up working on this topic? Second, what is the significance of this research project? Third, to what extent did this dissertation contribute to my intellectual and professional lives? To answer fully and honestly the first question, I must go back in time and mention a translation workshop I took at Mount Holyoke College with Christopher Rivers, where we worked among others on Claire de Duras' *Ourika* (1823). The ambiguity regarding gender and race that were located at the heart of this novel piqued my attention immediately, and when I studied this book again at Duke University with Deborah Jenson, I was eager to explore this ambivalence in more depth. Ourika is an enigmatic figure for many reasons: at the age of two, out of pity as she is about to embark on a slave ship, the governor of Senegal bought this Senegalese baby and brought her to France, where she was raised in an aristocratic French family by his aunt. Ourika learns by accident that her fate is doomed to be more complicated than she thought because of her skin color, and during this turning point and *prise de conscience* regarding her distinct condition as a black woman living in France, she opens her eyes to racism for the first time, as well as to the colonial and slave trade systems:

Il me serait impossible de vous peindre l'effet que produisit en moi ce peu de paroles; l'éclair n'est pas plus prompt: je vis tout, je me vis négresse, dépendante, méprisée, sans fortune, sans appui, sans un être de mon espèce à qui unir mon

sort, jusqu'ici un jouet, un amusement pour ma bienfaitrice, bientôt rejetée d'un monde où je n'étais pas faite pour être admise. (12)

In putting into dialogue her intimate experience with that of W.E.B. Du Bois that we find encapsulated in this dissertation's introduction, I started to explore in detail the question of racial difference and resistance in colonial and postcolonial francophone Caribbean and African writings, including Toussaint Louverture, Pompée-Valentin de Vastey, Juste Chanlatte, Emeric Bergaud, Joseph-Anténor Firmin, Marie-Vieux Chauvet, Aimé Césaire, Edouard Glissant and Bernard Dadié.

The questions of the Haitian revolution and racial resistance are strongly and yet subtly mentioned in Claire de Duras' novel, and once again Ourika feels ambivalent and divided regarding how to interpret this revolt in Saint-Domingue. While at first she appears full of hope at the idea of belonging to a group of unfortunate but good-hearted people, she becomes quickly disenchanted and deeply ashamed when she hears about the massacres taking place in the *perles des Antilles*, as these actions confirm to her the fact that she does belong to a race of barbarians and murderers:

On commençait à parler de la liberté des nègres : il était impossible que cette question ne me touchât pas vivement; c'était une illusion que j'aimais encore à me faire, qu'ailleurs, du moins, j'avais des semblables: comme ils étaient malheureux, je les croyais bons, et je m'intéressais à leur sort. Hélas! je fus promptement détrompée! Les massacres de Saint-Domingue me causèrent une douleur nouvelle et déchirante: jusqu'ici je m'étais affligée d'appartenir à une race proscrite; maintenant j'avais honte d'appartenir à une race de barbares et d'assassins. (20)

The internalization of such racial constructions and racist prejudices regarding the "black savages" (118) are also present in C.L.R. James's play *Toussaint Louverture: The Story of the Only Successful Slave Revolt in History* (1934). In one key scene, Louverture

unveils his perspective regarding his own race during a crucial discussion with Dessalines: “Of the half million Negroes in this country three hundred thousand were born in Africa. They can fight, but apart from that they are barbarous savages. We must stick with the French as long as possible” (94). This passage reveals the significance of my research project, namely to shed light on the ambiguity inherent in Louverture’s actions and ideals as a metaphor for the difficulty of fully decolonizing oneself from the pernicious colonial and slave trade systems. In deconstructing the extent to which Louverture becomes an archetype for Haiti’s fight for resistance while providing an excellent example and key for understanding the perversity of racial constructions of difference in the imaginations of colonizers and the colonized population. Yet at the same time, Louverture is a role model with a story that made a strong impression in the imagination and is a paragon of a black leader inspiring a rich literary legacy in Caribbean and African postcolonial resistance across languages, eras and continents. Another common point between Ourika and Louverture lies in the fact that they challenged and broke the natural order of things. Both of them are defying *l’ordre naturel* and exemplify the resistance to what society, religion and “nature” had already established as “the norm”. Louverture and Ourika both represent figures of exception to a rule that becomes challenged over time and deconstructed in the writings of many Caribbean and African writers analyzed in this dissertation.

Similarly to the colorful series of portraits of Toussaint Louverture painted by the Haitian artist Edouard Duval-Carrié, which provides distinct and complementary insights to Louverture, his life and vision, this research project offers different perspectives and stories about Louverture and the history of Saint-Domingue to give a

more complex and nuanced understanding of Haiti. In this dissertation, the authors, men and women, use the same medium to resist, challenge and debate Louverture's writings, actions and visions, and through their writings pave the way to new directions and understandings of the legacy of Louverture and the Haitian revolution. In a similar way, Edouard Duval-Carrié uses an identical format, a painting of Louverture framed in a médaillon; however the distinct colors, frames and details regarding his facial expression, clothes and hat reflects a new interpretation of the same image through different lenses. In paintings just as in writings, the new perceptions and visions of Louverture and the history of Saint-Domingue are infinite, and the more we juxtapose distinct voices and stories, the better we understand the significance of Louverture and his legacy in all its ambiguity.

Before embarking on this research project, I had never experienced conducting archival research, but also writing and presenting my findings in international conferences and workshops in both English and French. During this process, I have learned a lot, met a lot of colleagues and new friends, and discovered a lot about myself in a way I would not have imagined before. Finding my way at the Nationales Archives and the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris, as well as feeling at home at the Institut Mémoires de l'Édition Contemporaine (IMEC) in Caen, along with the Archives Nationales d'Outre-Mer (ANOM) in Aix-en-Provence, I became fully aware of the pleasures of stepping out of my comfort zone to take a calculated intellectual risk to conduct research. During the academic year I spent at the Ecole Normale Supérieure I had the chance to meet and connect with additional writers, researchers, and students whose perspectives were distinct and complementary with my

approach to conducting research individually and in teams, teaching to a specific audience, before writing and sharing knowledge to a larger audience. The direct connection between my research project and my experiences participating in cultural events during the “Année des Outre-Mer” in Paris in 2011, put into perspective in a concrete and direct way my research interest with the world around me. To the extent that on April 6, 2011 during a warm afternoon, we were standing for hours with a graduate student in literature from Yale next to the city hall of the 5th arrondissement in Paris to watch on a huge screen the inauguration of Aimé Césaire’s commemorative plaque within the Pantheon. Around us a large crowd of people also made the effort to witness during a sunny warm day the ceremony organized by Daniel Maximin and with the presence of then French president Nicolas Sarkozy. The Pantheon represents the ultimate place of collective memory to honor key French men and women who have profoundly shaped French history. Césaire’s body was not present within the Pantheon per se since it remains according to his wish in the island in which he was born, Martinique, however there was a formal ceremony to honor his legacy and political and literary accomplishments. A few days later, visiting the inside of the Pantheon I noticed that the plaque commemorating Césaire was located next to two key historical figures: Toussaint Louverture and Louis Delgrès. Written in gold letters on the wall, the visitor can read: “To the memory of Toussaint Louverture: fighter for freedom, architect of the abolition of slavery, Haitian hero, who passed away as he was deported in the Fort-de-Joux in 1803.” Even though I must confess that between the fact of standing up for hours, combined with the sun, the heat and the large number of people, I nearly fainted at the end of the ceremony, I must say that this experience reflects in a nutshell how

embarking on this dissertation profoundly shaped my intellectual and professional lives and put into perspective the importance of legacy among African and Caribbean writers regarding Louverture and the Haitian revolution. Ironically speaking, as I am completing this dissertation, it is now my turn to teach Claire de Duras' *Ourika*, Césaire's *Discourse on Colonialism* and *Discourse on Negritude*, as well as Louverture and Fanon's letters in my seminar titled "Black France: an Unveiled Story," and it is difficult to convey in words the pleasure and humbling experience to see these texts continuing to make a strong impact and profoundly shaping new generations.

Appendix

Key Quotations in French and English

A bord du héro le premier Thermidor an dix [20 Juillet 1802]

Le Général Toussaint Louverture
Au Général Bonaparte,
Premier Consul de la République Française
Citoyen Premier Consul,

Je ne vous dissimulerai point mes fautes, j'〔en〕 ai fait quelques-unes, quel homme en est exempt? Je suis tout prêt à les avouer -après la parole d'honneur du Capitaine général qui représente le gouvernement français [Général Leclerc], après une proclamation promulguée à la face de la colonie dans laquelle il promettait de jeter *le voile de l'oubli* sur les évènements qui ont eu lieu à Saint-Domingue, comme vous avez fait le 18 Brumaire; je me suis retiré sur mon habitation au sein de ma famille. ⁵

Toussaint Louverture's correspondence to Napoléon Bonaparte

Vous nous calomniez, vous nous dégradez, et vous osez même nous mettre au rang des animaux, en nous refusant des facultés intellectuelles; après avoir été nos bourreaux, vous calomniez encore vos victimes. Mais le temps approche où le flambeau de la vérité va dissiper les épaisses ténèbres dont l'avarice et le mensonge avaient enveloppés l'Afrique; *le voile de l'erreur* va se déchirer; les marchands de chair humaine et les odieux colons, leurs misérables argumens et leur infâme trafic vont rentrer dans le néant dont ils n'auraient jamais dû sortir. ⁶

Pompée-Valentin de Vastey's *Le Système Colonial Dévoilé* (1814)

C'en est fait, hommes blancs, qui nous avez si souvent trompés et si long-temps immolés! *le voile de la crédulité* est tombé; le règne d'une tyrannie étrangère a cessé pour nous! Le dernier Haïtien aura rendu le dernier soupir avant qu'on vous voie de nouveau arborer sur cette terre le drapeau de l'esclavage! Ce n'est qu'en nous traitant en homme libres, qu'en nous faisant oublier, à force de vertus, vos erreurs passées, que vous pourrez espérer de partager avec nous les trésors de cette île par des échanges réciproques. ⁷

Juste Chanlatte's *Histoire de la Catastrophe de Saint-Domingue* (1824)

⁵ Correspondance of Toussaint Louverture to the General Bonaparte on July 20, 1802. CARAN: Archives Nationales. Paris: France, AF IV 1213. My deepest thank to Deborah Jenson for sharing this quotation. Italics mine.

⁶ Vastey de, Pompée-Valentin. *Le Système Colonial Dévoilé* (1814). La Vergne: Nabu Press, 2010. 22. Italics mine.

⁷ Chanlatte, Juste. *Histoire de la Catastrophe de Saint- Domingue* (1824). Breinigsville: Nabu Press, 2010. 83-4. Italics mine.

Onboard the boat Hero on July 20, 1802
From General Toussaint Louverture
To General Bonaparte,
First Consul to the French Republic
Citizen First Consul,

I will not hide my faults from you, I have committed some, what man has not? I am ready to admit them -after the word of honor of the Captain General representing the French Government [General Leclerc], after a proclamation issued in the face of the colony in which he promised to cast a *veil of amnesia* over the events that had taken place in Saint-Domingue, as you had done on the 18 Brumaire; I retired to the bosom of my family on my plantation; barely a month had passed, when malicious intriguers cast me in a negative light to the general in chief, inspiring his distrust in me. I received a letter from him ordering me to consult with General Brunet for the public good; I obeyed, (...) ⁸

Toussaint Louverture's correspondence to Napoléon Bonaparte

You slander us, you degrade us, and even dare to put us on the same rank as animals in denying us any intellectual faculties. After being our torturers, you still slander your victims. But the time comes, when the torch of truth will dispel the thick darkness, whose greediness and lies had surrounded Africa. *The veil of error* will tear off; the merchants of human flesh and odious colonizers with their miserable arguments and their loathsome traffic will sink back into oblivion from where they should have never left.

Pompée-Valentin de Vastey's *The Colonial System Unveiled* (1814)

That is enough, white men, who have so often deceived us and for so long sacrificed us! *The veil of credulity* has fallen, the reign of a foreign tyranny has come to an end for us!

The last Haitian will have died before we would see you again display on this land the flag of slavery! It is only in considering us as free men, only in making us forget, thanks to many virtues, your past errors, that you could hope to share with us the treasures of this island thanks to reciprocal exchanges.

Juste Chanlatte's *History of the Catastrophe of Saint-Domingue* (1824)

⁸ All the translations into English are mine, unless indicated otherwise.

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Biography

Born in Paris, Aude Dieudé received her Master in 2010 and is currently completing her PhD in French and Francophone studies at Duke University, where she will also receive a Certificate in African and African American Studies. Prior to coming to the United States, she was awarded a Maîtrise in English and Anglophone Studies from the University Paul Valéry located in Montpellier, France. In addition, Aude spent two years studying and teaching at Mount Holyoke College, and one academic year at the Ecole Normale Supérieure to conduct research in Paris. Her dissertation explores the themes of race and resistance in nineteenth-century Haitian writings and highlights their impact on French-speaking nineteenth- and twentieth-century African and Caribbean literature. Aude Dieudé has published a book review in *Etudes Littéraires Africaines* on “Haiti Rising: Haitian History, Culture and the Earthquake of 2010”, a digital article on “The Pedagogy of Collaboration in the Digital Age,” and a book chapter on “Islands Without Borders, Teaching the Caribbean across Languages: The Case of Toussaint Louverture.” Aude has been the recipient of several distinctions at Duke University including the Julian Price, John T. Grigsby and Alice Blackmore Hicks fellowships, and has also received conference and dissertation travel grants from the Graduate School, the Romance Studies and Women’s Studies departments as well as the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies and the Franklin Humanities Institute. Thanks to this generous support, she has been able to present her work internationally at York University and the University of Toronto in Canada, the Ecole Normale Supérieure and the Sorbonne Nouvelle in Paris, as well as Duke, Emory, and the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill in the United States. Because she enjoys conducting research collaboratively and with broad applications, she has co-organized and participated in two seminars with Caribbean writers (Daniel Maximin and Louis-Philippe Dalembert) at the Ecole Normale Supérieure in Paris, and in conferences and talks with scholars and directors of nonprofit organizations and NGO’s with the Haiti Laboratory at Duke University. Aude Dieudé has also taken part in additional international conferences, programs and workshops including the Johannesburg Workshop in Theory and Criticism in South Africa in 2009. During the summer of 2013, she will join the Duke University Program in Global Policy and Governance, with a focus in humanitarian action while working with the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights based in Geneva, Switzerland.
