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Intersections of Race and Place in Short Fiction by New Orleans *Gens de Couleur Libres*

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Department of English
College of Arts and Sciences
University of South Florida

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DEDICATION

In memory of my father, Claire B. Vivian, who loved talking about books and passing time with me in New Orleans and France.

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Though I was a student of French literature through undergraduate studies and my first years of graduate school, I wasn't exposed to French language texts by New Orleans free people of color until I came across them years later as a Master's student in UCF's English department. I am thankful that almost two decades later, USF's English department has provided me an opportunity to pursue my interests in Francophone American literature. My sincerest gratitude to Dr. Ylce Irizarry for supporting my project. As one of my first professors at USF, she has been with me since my start in the doctoral program, and I am so thankful that she has stayed with me. She remained patient even as I lost patience with myself and is the very model of teacher and mentor. I value and respect the time she has invested in my work and all that I have learned through this process. I am enormously grateful to Dr. Gurleen Grewal, Dr. Kristin Allukian, and Dr. Kersuze Simeon-Jones for their feedback and encouragement through exams, proposal, and dissertation. As a part-time student, I recognize that this has been a long process and commitment for my dissertation committee, and I am truly grateful that they have seen me through it.

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ABSTRACT

Although New Orleans joined the United States following the Louisiana Purchase, the city's French colonial period continued to influence New Orleanians. The lives and writing of nineteenth century New Orleans *gens de couleur libres*, free people of color, document continued exchanges with France and the Caribbean despite the city's increasing Americanization. Drawing from Westphal's theoretical work on geocriticism, *Intersections of Race and Place in Short Fiction by New Orleans Gens de Couleur Libres* locates sites of transgressivity and their representations in writers Michel Séligny, Adolphe Duhart, and Victor Séjour's French language short stories. Chapter One examines New Orleans's historical and literary connections with France. After describing nineteenth century New Orleans's historical French influences, particularly a tripartite racial system, French language use and education, and continued movement between France and New Orleans, the chapter presents models of French Romantic fiction through analysis of two French novels set in the Americas: Victor Hugo's *Bug-Jargal* and Gustave de Beaumont's *Marie, ou L'esclavage aux États-Unis: Tableau de mœurs américaines*. This chapter then identifies representations of France and French Romanticism in Séligny's "Marie" and Duhart's "Trois Amours." New Orleans's *gens de couleur libres* population was also linked to Haiti through French colonial experience and immigration. The second chapter traces Haiti's colonial past and the shifts in population that followed the Haitian Revolution. Analysis of nineteenth century Haitian writers Ignace Nau's short stories and Émeric Bergeaud's novel *Stella* reveals a focus on Haiti's revolutionary past and the Haitian people. This dissertation then considers the role of Saint Domingue/Haiti and Haitian literary traits in Séjour's "Le Mulâtre" and Duhart's "Simple

Histoire.” Nineteenth century New Orleans short fiction by *gens de couleur libres* writers demonstrates transnational literary connections with France and Haiti that resist the newly American city’s changing culture, racial binary and English language.

INTRODUCTION

Short fiction by New Orleans *gens de couleur libres* writers reflects the complex histories and experiences of authors and their communities. Reasons to consider nineteenth century New Orleans's short fiction by *gens de couleur libres* are compelling. With few exceptions, the stories have not been translated into English and remain understudied within the American literature canon. The exclusion of non-English texts marginalizes French language Louisiana authors, suppresses their histories and cultures, and obscures the web of relationships connecting transatlantic writers. The short stories draw from French linguistic and literary traditions while portraying New Orleans, its history, and its inhabitants. They also link New Orleans to Haiti through shared French colonial history and later immigration patterns. *Gens de couleur libres* authors reveal transnational literary connections between France, Haiti, and New Orleans, which readers can trace in their history and short fiction. This dissertation focuses specifically on examples of short fiction by Michel Séligny, Adolphe Duhart, and Victor Séjour, all who participated in New Orleans's nineteenth century *gens de couleur libres* literary circles and schools.

Gens de couleur libres, free people of color, were a significant source of nineteenth century French language literary production in the United States. Nineteenth century New Orleans *gens de couleur libres* writers lived and wrote at an intersection of history, place, and race. The racial class of free people of color was specific to Louisiana within the United States and developed from its French colonial history and its tripartite racial categorizations. In *White by Definition: Social*

Classification in Creole Louisiana, Virginia R Domínguez explains, “Legally the population was divided into whites, free people of color, and slaves. From a strictly legal standpoint, the tripartite classification rested on the application of two different criteria of differentiation: possession or lack of descent from Africans...*Gens de couleur libre* [sic] became a near-synonym for offspring of mixed European and African unions” (24). In New Orleans, *gens de couleur libres* were particularly well educated and tended to be economically stable, working as artisans, tradespeople, and educators. Louisiana shared this tripartite racial structure with Saint Domingue and waves of immigration following the Haitian revolution significantly increased New Orleans’s *gens de couleur libres* population. This dissertation consistently uses the term *gens de couleur libres* in French instead of its English translation *free people of color*. *Gens de couleur libres*, or the gendered *hommes de couleur libres* and *femmes de couleur libres*, was the term used in nineteenth century New Orleans. Though this dissertation is in English and I offer English translations of cited French language texts, the use of *gens de couleur libres* foregrounds the New Orleans authors’ linguistic and cultural identity under study.

Though less known today, New Orleans’s *gens de couleur libres* were prolific writers. They made significant contributions to American literature over the span of a few decades during the nineteenth century. Dana Kress notes, “Over the course of the nineteenth century, Louisiana’s *Creoles de Couleur* scored numerous ‘firsts’ in the realm of American literature by persons of color... the creation of one of the first literary revues in the state, the first anthology of poetry, and the first black daily newspaper in the United States – offer ample proof of the sophistication of these Francophone writers” (42). *Gens de couleur libres* formed literary circles and founded journals; their literary output included theater, poetry, and short fiction. New Orleans is the site of

the “first free black literary circles of the New World” (*Africa to America to Paris* 3:50), perhaps some of the earliest beside those formed in Haiti.

One of the best-known works by New Orleans’s *gens de couleur libres* writers is *Les Cenelles: Choix de poésies indigènes*, an anthology of poetry edited by Armand Lanusse in 1845. The collection, recognized as the first African American anthology of poetry, compiled works by seventeen *gens de couleur libres* including its editor Armand Lanusse and Victor Séjour, whose short story “Le Mulâtre” I write about in chapter two. Analyses of *Les Cenelles* frequently link the poetry collection to French Romantic poets, and H. Carrington Lancaster, in his foreword to the 1945 edition of the anthology, writes of *Les Cenelles*’ poets: “Their chief guides seem to have been Lamartine and Béranger” (vi). In his reading of the poems, Lloyd Pratt acknowledges the text’s transnational associations through French identity and Romanticism and cites Henry Louis Gates’s recognition of the poems’ “political effect—that is, the end of racism” via “apolitical poems” (260). Pratt also locates sites of political positioning through the anthology’s title, dedication, and the poets’ use of apostrophe. He explains the significance of *les cenelles*, which he translates as mayhaw berries, as indigenous to the region and used in courting rituals among New Orleans’s *gens de couleur libres* population while noting Lanusse’s dedication of the anthology “au beau sexe louisianais” or “to Louisiana’s fairer sex [my translation]” (Coleman xli; Pratt 261). This explanation coupled with the collection’s subtitle, *Choix de poésies indigènes* [*Selection of Indigenous Poetry*] directs readers to a focus on New Orleans’s location and people. Pratt also highlights the frequent appearance of apostrophe within the collected poems: “To find apostrophe emerging from New Orleans’s community of free people of color is to discover, for example, a literature making broad claims for itself and its authors. These poems claim the right to address the inanimate and thereby to animate the world. Even more significantly, they engage in a process

of self-animation” (264). The poetry of *Les Cenelles* is simultaneously referential in its relationship to France and Romantic poetry as it asserts the unique racial and cultural identity of its New Orleans poets.

Gens de couleur libres writers published in France and New Orleans, both in white owned journals as well in those founded by people of color. Michel Fabre explains, “There was no great difference between white and colored Creole poetry in the antebellum press” (“The New Orleans Press” 33). He qualifies this by noting the white owned paper *La Louisiane* did not accept unrequested submissions, while *L’Abeille* published unsigned works by people of color and signed works by whites (33). *L’Album littéraire: Journal des jeunes gens amateurs de littérature*, a short-lived journal that released three issues in 1843, included signed works by well-known New Orleans *gens de couleur libres* such as Armand Lanusse, Camille Thierry, and others. Edward Larocque Tinker, who in 1932 penned an exhaustive list of Louisiana French language writers and their works, concludes that *L’Album littéraire*’s publisher, J. L. Marciacq, must have been French because of his association with *L’Album littéraire*, which included socially engaged works by mostly *gens de couleur libres* writers, and his printing of *Les Cenelles*, the first African American anthology of poetry. Tinker’s writing reflects the racial prejudices of his own time period and that of his subject as he writes, “no Creole would have wanted to be displayed in this way with *nègres*” (297).¹

Works by *gens de couleur libres* writers also appeared in black owned papers such as the *L’Union* begun by Dr. Louis Charles Roudanez in 1862. After *L’Union* ceased publication in 1864, Roudanez founded the bilingual French/English *La Tribune de la Nouvelle-Orléans*. Fabre notes,

¹ “Le nom de Marciacq mis en évidence dans une anthologie nègre, et la publication d’une revue dont la plupart des écrivains son nègres m’amènent à penser que Marciacq était Français : aucun Créole n’aurait voulu s’afficher ainsi avec des nègres” (297).

“For two years it was the most impressive press organ of the city, with regular correspondents from Paris, Boston, and Mexico City, and more abundant news from France than that provided by other papers” (“The New Orleans Press” 40). *La Tribune* not only reflected the transnational cultural interests of its contributors and audience but also took on radical and abolitionist subjects including stories about John Brown and Vincent Ogé (40). Adolphe Duhart’s short stories, published in *La Tribune*, also reflect this desire to explore provocative issues concerning race and society.

In an effort to discuss a range of texts, I have selected two French, two Haitian, and four New Orleans fictional texts to examine. Their publication dates span almost forty years across the nineteenth century. The two French texts, Hugo’s *Bug-Jargal* (1826) and Beaumont’s *Marie, ou L’esclavage aux États-Unis: Tableau de mœurs américaines* (1840), offer the perspective of French authors’ engagement with the Americas (Saint Domingue at the moment of the uprising and the United States, respectively). The two Haitian texts, Ignace Nau’s “Souvenirs historiques” (1838) and Émeric Bergeaud’s *Stella* (1859) recount Haitian history, the struggle for independence, and the resilience of the Haitian people. The four New Orleans short stories that I explore illustrate the relationships between New Orleans, France, and Haiti. Michel Séigny’s “Marie” (1853) and Adolphe Duhart’s “Trois amours” (1865) portray French characters and historical connections in New Orleans and evoke French literary influences. Victor Séjour’s “Le Mulâtre” (1837) and Duhart’s “Simple histoire” (1865) are set in colonial Saint Domingue and share traits of storytelling and history with the Haitian texts. The selection of New Orleans short stories is representative in that they appeared across generations and print sources. Séjour and Séigny wrote their texts during a period of strict censorship in Louisiana that prohibited the circulation of abolitionist texts or critiques of slavery. Séjour’s story, through its setting in Saint

Domingue, exposes the cruelty of slavery and the violent repercussions so feared by the American South. Séjour published “Le Mulâtre” in France. Séigny’s story appeared in *L’Abeille de la Nouvelle-Orléans*, a New Orleans French language daily paper. Duhart published his stories in *La Tribune* after the Federal occupation of New Orleans in 1862. Both the black daily paper’s abolitionist viewpoint and the easing of restrictions on content become obvious through Duhart’s progressive storylines and themes.

New Orleans *gens de couleur libres* writers situate themselves and their writing in relation to France as a former colonial power and the model offered by an independent Haiti. In *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said writes, “stories are at the heart of what explorers and novelists say about strange regions of the world; they also become the method colonized people use to assert their own identity and the existence of their own history” (xii). My focus is the crossroads where stories written by New Orleans *gens de couleur libres*, French Romantic novels written about the Americas, and Haitian writers’ accounts of their newly independent nation meet. Said argues, “The power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging, is very important to culture and imperialism, and constitutes one of the main connections between them. Most important, the grand narratives of emancipation and enlightenment mobilized people in the colonial world to rise up and throw off imperial subjection” (*Culture and Imperialism* xiii). French, Haitian, and New Orleans writers used narrative discourse to both align themselves with and subvert different forms of colonial power. New Orleans’s *gens de couleur libres* writers and the stories they construct exemplify the connection Said makes when he explains, “authors are...very much in the history of their societies, shaping and shaped by that history and their social experience in different measure” (*Culture and Imperialism* xxii).

Theoretical Approaches

My approach to New Orleans's short fiction is transnational and geocritical. By the mid-nineteenth century, New Orleans had experienced many cultural and linguistic changes; it shared connections with current and former Spanish and French colonies in the Caribbean. The linguistic, historical, and geographic relationships between the once colonized spaces and the European metropole warrant further exploration. A transnational approach to these short stories permits a reading that examines the texts beyond the limited scope of a comparison only within a nineteenth-century New Orleans context, acknowledging the shared experiences of authors writing within the black diaspora. A geocritical approach also requires study across multiple texts. I study the New Orleans stories with French and Haitian fiction of the same period. This dissertation draws connections between the regional histories and cultures depicted in the stories and the authors' relationships to place. Through transnational and geocritical approaches to short fiction by New Orleans's *gens de couleur libres* writers, I not only investigate the socio-political context in which they wrote but also identify the imagined fictional spaces they envisioned and their work portrays.

Transnational

Scholars have long studied the transatlantic literary connections of black writers and artists. Paul Gilroy considers twentieth-century British, English-speaking Caribbean, and African American connections; his work provides a useful foundation with which to examine *gens de couleur libres* in New Orleans and their contemporaries in France and the Caribbean. My dissertation explores this transnational perspective on diaspora. At the beginning of *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, Gilroy writes, "Striving to be both European and

black requires some specific forms of double consciousness... where racist, nationalist, or ethnically absolutist discourses orchestrate political relationships so that these identities appear to be mutually exclusive, occupying the space between them or trying to demonstrate their continuity has been viewed as a provocative and even oppositional act of political insubordination” (1). I explore how Michel Séligny, Adolphe Duhart, and Victor Séjour occupy the spaces between Europe and the Americas. They both define and are defined by shifting political and racial categorizations during the nineteenth century. Gilroy’s focus on movement across the Atlantic and the resulting connections that form across diaspora constructs a paradigm for envisioning how, through their fiction, *gens de couleur libres* writers challenge the prescriptive demarcations of race and place in nineteenth-century New Orleans.

I examine the socio-political, racial, and gendered hierarchies present within and between texts. Pramod Nayar writes, “European history and literature and even Europe’s political identity...were always multicultural and the result of cultural exchanges even as these exchanges were unequal and asymmetric like the economic transactions” (15). The nineteenth century French novels I present in the first chapter, the Haitian fiction I discuss in chapter two, and examples of short stories by New Orleans *gens de couleur libres* all emphasize the historical relationship between France and the Americas. Reading the texts transnationally, I note the literary exchanges taking place between metropole, former French colonies, and French language writers in the United States. Nayar argues, “[‘transnationalization’ in postcolonial studies] makes a strong case for seeing imperialism as not a unidirectional or center-periphery phenomenon but as a messy, mutual constitutive state of affairs where the periphery was very often located within the heart of imperial metropolises” (15). The Haitian and New Orleans writers this dissertation addresses lived and studied in France but also used French language and literature to document and challenge the

hierarchies born of French colonialism. A transnational examination of the texts offers a clearer understanding of the political and sociological contexts of the New Orleans's *gens de couleur libres* writers as well as the cultural exchanges in which they participated.

Geocriticism

Bertrand Westphal's *Geocriticism: Real and Fictional Spaces* introduces an approach to understanding how geographical spaces can be defined by their boundaries and politics yet can also be interrogated and redesigned through fictional representation. Westphal organizes geocriticism into three elements. The first is *spatiotemporality*, which he explains, "enables us to see how temporal metaphors tend to spatialize time" (6). He introduces the second element, *transgressivity*, by asking, "Is there now a permanent state of transgression, of boundary crossing – a *transgressivity* that would make space fundamentally fluid?" (6). Third, he identifies *referentiality*. Westphal concludes, "*Referentiality* refers to the relations between reality and fiction, between the spaces of the world and the spaces in the texts" (6). Spatiotemporality, transgressivity, and referentiality provide the framework I apply to the texts in this dissertation.

Geocriticism focuses on place and how it is mapped within texts; it demands reading across multiple texts. In the chapter "Elements of Geocriticism," Bertrand Westphal explains, "By taking a geocritical perspective, we opt for a plural point of view, which is located at the crossroads of distinct representations. In this way, we contribute to the process of determining a common space, born from and touching upon different points of view" (114). My intent in reading across different texts from France, Haiti, and New Orleans is to work through differing perspectives, both those of the authors and the narrators they create, to locate the intersections across their works. The authors' lives and their fictional texts overlap in time and place. Their work offers

representations of similar settings and events, which when read together, highlight the complex political, racial, and cultural positioning of *gens de couleur libres* writers. Westphal contrasts European literature to works by writers from outside the metropole. He explains, “the literary and spatial universes are relatively stable and distinct [in the Western literary canon], such that they can be clearly demarcated and separated. The split is relativized, however, as the distance from the center grows, as the field of postcolonial studies as demonstrated” (115). Nineteenth century French novels set in the Americas as well as Haitian and New Orleans fictions’ engagement with history and place reveal this rupture between metropole and former colony. Westphal concludes the final chapter of *Geocriticism: Real and Fictional Spaces* with how texts construct place, and what he describes as the “*legibility* of places” (6). I seek to identify loci of destabilization and redesigning of place depicted in New Orleans’s *gens de couleur libres*’ fiction.

Spatiotemporality in Geocriticism

In his chapter “Spatiotemporality,” Westphal contends, “texts have always looked at geography and at ways of representing human spaces. Trying to isolate the literary from other disciplinary points of view would only diminish literature and its role in the world” (32). Literary texts reveal a great deal about society, culture, and place. Citing Brosseau, Westphal explores geographers’ interest in literature: “literature provides a complement to the regional geography; it can translate the experience of places (via modes of perception, for instance); and it expresses a critique of reality or of the dominant ideology” (32). Study of literature enhances historians and geographers’ understanding of a place. Reciprocally, interdisciplinary research drawing from history, geography, and the social sciences deepens understanding of place in literary texts. A geocritical approach, then, is interdisciplinary; multidisciplinary research supports literary study

focusing on representations of place. To this end, I begin each chapter with an historical overview of New Orleans and its relationships to France and Saint Domingue. Spatiotemporality also establishes the mutability of space. Just as postmodern and post-colonial readings recognize fragmentation of linear time, space is likewise affected. In “Spatiotemporality,” Westphal examines Deleuzian rhizomatic territory’s “delinearization of time,” concluding that space can be equally destabilized (51). Representations of place across both fictional and nonfictional texts reveal sites of destabilization. This dissertation seeks to identify fluid perceptions of place, specifically in a mid-nineteenth century New Orleans literary context.

Transgressivity in Geocriticism

Westphal links transgressivity, the second component of geocriticism, to border crossing and mobility. He explains, “Transgression corresponds to the crossing of a boundary beyond which stretches a marginal space of freedom. When it becomes a permanent principle, it turns into transgressivity” (47). Westphal describes Gloria Anzaldúa’s *frontera* and a “site of radical possibility, a space of resistance” and bell hooks’s “space of radical openness” as examples of third space that are formed at margins and boundary crossings (70). He also connects third space to Homi Bhabha’s “decentered subject” and “a perpetually mobile space, which is subject to a fluid temporality, a ‘borderline culture of hybridity’” (71). Westphal concludes, “Third space is the spatial formulation of transgressivity, which is itself a movement, transition, or crossing in defiance of established norms” (72).

The complexities of nineteenth century New Orleans provide a glimpse into this spatial transgressivity. *Gens de couleur libres* writers were living within and across the intersections of racial, political, cultural, and linguistic borders as New Orleans became increasingly

Americanized, English speaking, and racially segregated. The *gens de couleur libres* population was also mobile as waves of refugees left Saint Domingue to eventually arrive in New Orleans, young people traveled to France for education, sometimes stayed or would continue to return throughout their lives, and members of subsequent generations moved to an independent Haiti. Westphal contrasts the obligatory assimilationist practices of France to unrepresented categories of the United States (67). This suggests another intermediate space that *gens de couleur libres* occupied as they traversed continents and cultures, received French educations, and practiced French literary traditions.

Gens de couleur libres formed communities within and across borders which demonstrate transgressivity in their daily lives. Different racial and literary communities illustrate the ways that New Orleans's *gens de couleur libres* population navigated complex social boundaries. The focus of Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* is the rise of nationalism. His explanation of nations as imagined political communities and the different factors helping shape them also provides a strong approach to understanding how communities form through literature. Anderson argues increased literacy rates, vernacular language use, and growing print culture shaped communities and formed nations in nineteenth century Europe (77). These components furthered community building for New Orleans's nineteenth century *gens de couleur libres* writers. The writers' continued French language use, despite the growing prevalence of English language in Louisiana, helped them reinforce community ties within New Orleans but also transcend borders. Crossing racial lines, *gens de couleur libres* found their political and economic interests aligned with those of white French speaking Creoles at times. They also maintained ties with Haiti through Saint Domingue ancestry and family relationships across the Gulf. New Orleans *gens de couleur*

traveled, lived, and formed personal and professional relationships in France, which implies a linguistic community beyond United States borders.

Gens de couleur libres writers formed literary communities linked to place through New Orleans yet demonstrate connections exceeding New Orleans's borders in different ways, revealing transgressivity within their everyday experiences. *Gens de couleur libres* were highly educated and actively established schools for New Orleans's children of color. The *gens de couleur libres* writers whose work I address are no exception. After studying in France, Michel Séligny, for example, returned to New Orleans to open the Académie Sainte-Barbe, where Victor Séjour became a student before himself moving to Paris to study. Similarly, Adolphe Duhart taught at New Orleans's Institute Catholique after his own studies in France. New Orleans's *gens de couleur libres* established literary circles and mutual aid societies such as the *Société d'Economie*, the *Francs Amis*, the *Jeunes Amis*, and the *Association des Artisans* (Fabre "The New Orleans Press" 40). They formed communities across racial and national boundaries as consumers and producers of print culture. In Paris, Victor Séjour published his first short story in *La Revue des Colonies*, an abolitionist journal founded in France by exiled Martinican Cyrille Bissette. Haitian writer Ignace Nau also published his work in *La Revue*. P. Dalcour, as a student, in Paris met Victor Hugo and Alexandre Dumas (Perkins 163). His poetry would appear in *Les Cenelles*, the first known anthology of African American poetry. New Orleans's monolingual French and later bilingual French/English print culture attracted writers and readers across the Atlantic. Victor Hugo penned letters to the editor in *La Tribune de la Nouvelle-Orléans* (Fabre "The New Orleans Press" 40), the same paper in which Adolphe Duhart published short stories and poems.

Referentiality in Geocriticism

Westphal's third and final component of geocriticism, referentiality, considers how real space is represented in fiction: "In sum, representation fictionalizes the source from which it emanates. Representation, which is re-presentation, amounts to a staggered updating of this source in a new context. But it does not modify only the temporality of the world; it also affects spatiality" (76). He distinguishes referentiality into three possibilities offering a spectrum of fictional representation. The first, *homotopic consensus*, Westphal explains, "implies a compossibility between referential space and its fictional representation" (109). This is when a named place in fiction most closely aligns with its real-world counterpart. *Heterotopic interference* begins to distort place through fictional representation. Westphal contends, "When such interference or blurring occurs, the connection between reality and fiction becomes precarious. The referent becomes a springboard from which the fiction launches itself" (104). Lastly, Westphal presents *utopian excursus*: "utopia activates an impossibility, one that does not involve contradiction but rather vice-diction: the narrative unfolds at the margins of the referent or around a projected referent in a derealized future" (109).

Short fiction by New Orleans's *gens de couleur libres* represents transgressivity and place in different ways. New Orleans is, of course, an actual place and some short stories by *gens de couleur libres* writers depict it in detail, referencing specific locations and expressing the authors' familiarity with its history and people. French language use, literary style, and references within stories' content also imply an emphasis on connections to France and French colonial history, in effect sustaining French aspects of New Orleans's identity. New Orleans's *gens de couleur libres* writers also maintained ties to Haiti and its colonial history even if they had never been there. By setting stories in colonial Saint Domingue, writers highlight their familial ties and New Orleans's

connections to the region. Writing about colonial Saint Domingue decades after Haiti's independence offered an indirect way of critiquing ongoing slavery and racial oppression in the United States and French colonies. Stories with idealized outcomes that run counter to prevailing nineteenth century New Orleans's legal and cultural codes concerning race and gender interrogate the time in which they were written and present a vision of future potential.

Chapter Summaries

The intersections of race and place represented in short fiction by *gens de couleur libres* writers of nineteenth-century New Orleans is the focus of my dissertation. Even though the writers I consider were born in the United States, their interests and work are closely aligned with France and the Francophone Caribbean, particularly Haiti. I begin each chapter with historical background about New Orleans and its relationships with France or Haiti. Then, close readings of representative fictional texts follow. The individual short stories reveal a great deal about everyday life in New Orleans for people of color, their connections to France and the Caribbean, specifically Haiti, and race and gender within a nineteenth-century context.

Louisiana shared many socio-cultural, linguistic, and legal characteristics with France, which continued beyond the 1803 Louisiana Purchase. The first chapter of this dissertation introduces New Orleans's French historical and literary context. It then discusses the influence of French Romanticism on New Orleans writers and their close cultural ties to France. I introduce French Romanticism and identify components of literary structure and content such as elevated language, narrative subjectivity, history, lyricism, characters, and nature that reflect this period. The chapter presents examples through analyses of Victor Hugo's *Bug-Jargal* and Gustave de Beaumont's *Marie, ou L'esclavage aux États-Unis : Tableau de mœurs américaines*, two French

Romantic texts that are set in the Americas. I then turn to Michel Séligny's "Marie" and Adolphe Duhart's "Trois amours."

The chapter then offers close readings of the New Orleans short stories, which trace Romanticism in the style and content of the works. I explore links to France and the complicated relationships these writers had with the metropole. Séligny originally published the story "Marie" in *L'Abeille de La Nouvelle Orléans* in 1853. The first-person narrator describes places both in Louisiana and France as he tells the story of an exiled French general, mourning his fallen comrades, the end of the first empire, and his daughter Marie. Under the pen name Léila D...t, Adolphe Duhart's published "Trois amours" serially in *La Tribune de la Nouvelle-Orléans* in 1865. Set in Mandeville, on the north shore of Lake Ponchartrain, the story recounts the tale of young lovers, a mother's love for her dying daughter, and long kept secrets revealed through letters. These stories document the ways that the authors express their connections to France while also firmly anchoring their stories to New Orleans.

In the second chapter, I explore the connections between Haiti and New Orleans and the ways they informed the literary spaces New Orleans's writers constructed. I first present historical background on Saint Domingue and its relationship to New Orleans. In addition to personal links to France, *gens de couleur libres* authors also had ties to the Francophone Caribbean. As a former French colony, Louisiana shared many connections with the French islands that continued even during periods of Spanish and later American governance. During the revolutionary period leading to Haiti's Independence, waves of Caribbean immigrants settled in New Orleans. Works by *gens de couleur libres* authors reveal these exchanges of people, experiences, and ideas. Secondly, I consider early Haitian short fiction by Ignace Nau and Émeric Bergeaud's *Stella*, identifying the

specific traits of storytelling, representations of history, and detailed descriptions of place and people. Then, I turn to New Orleans stories by *gens de couleur libres* writers.

The stories told by New Orleans's authors reflect both their real connections with Haiti and its role as an imagined and constructed setting. Set in colonial Saint Domingue, the New Orleans' stories describe and critique the horrors of slavery and plantation life while also envisioning a different future, particularly through the lens of the Haitian revolution and independence. Though published almost thirty years apart, each of the New Orleans stories I examine in chapter two revisits colonial Saint Domingue, which had become independent Haiti decades earlier. The stories draw strong parallels critiquing ongoing slavery and racial discrimination in the United States and French colonies. Victor Séjour's "Le Mulâtre" ("The Mulatto") is the most widely known of the New Orleans short stories. "Le Mulâtre" is Séjour's first published work and the earliest known example of African American fiction. Séjour published the story in 1837 in *La Revue des Colonies* after his move to France as a student. "Le Mulâtre" begins with the narrator asking an old man to tell him a story. The text drops the reader into a slave auction where a young woman from Senegal is touched, bargained over, and sold. As the years pass, readers follow her son, growing into adulthood amid the violence on the plantation. The story ends with irony and revenge, as the once enslaved protagonist turns on his enslaver.

Adolphe Duhart's "Simple histoire," published in 1865 in *La Tribune de la Nouvelle-Orléans*, is also set in pre-independence Haiti and describes two children, the plantation owner's daughter and the son of an enslaved woman, who grow up together as friends on a plantation. As they mature, the two fall in love. When Mlle de Sauillac becomes pregnant, her mother and her former nursemaid, her lover's mother, help hide the pregnancy from her father, but find a way for the baby to still be near. The story underscores the hypocrisy of colonial era society as it examines

relationships that traverse class and racial boundaries. The story also implies a link between the characters' biracial offspring and uprisings that occurred generations later in the pursuit of Haitian independence.

French language short fiction by *gens de couleur libres* reveals the complexities of nineteenth-century New Orleans society. As the political landscape shifted towards an American and English-speaking future, New Orleans's *gens de couleurs* writers maintained strong ties to both France and the French speaking Caribbean. Their texts demonstrate the fluidity of place and identity, both politically and racially, as they constructed settings and characters navigating between France, the Caribbean, and the United States. Short fiction by New Orleans's *gens de couleur libres* writers simultaneously recorded and challenged the existing landscape's geographical, social, racial, and linguistic boundaries and provided alternative literary spaces that envisioned broader connections across diaspora.

All translations, unless otherwise noted, are my own. During the translation process, I have made extensive use of resources including *WordReference*, *Dictionnaire Larousse*, and *Google Translate*. I provide English translations of quotations from French language sources within the dissertation. For clarity and for readers who prefer to read the quotations as they were written, I have included quotations from sources in their original language in the footnotes.

CHAPTER 1:

FRENCH INFLUENCE ON NEW ORLEANS *GENS DE COULEUR LIBRES* WRITERS

Short stories by *gens de couleur libres*, free people of color, markedly reflect the connection between New Orleans and France. This relationship to France appears in fiction by *gens de couleur libres* writers in multiple ways: historical references and direct references to France via events, language, and culture, and reflections of French society and its mores, particularly those related to class and race. New Orleans's *gens de couleur* writers also embraced French literary Romanticism and its implications for revolution. France influenced New Orleans politically, linguistically, and socially. This influence extended through political changes in France and Louisiana. Well after the Louisiana Purchase and after Louisiana became a state, French culture remained in New Orleans. French influence appeared in language use, legal structures, and social practice.

This chapter examines first the historical context of New Orleans's relationship to France. The section "Historical Connections" tracks the transnational movement between France and New Orleans that shaped the city's inhabitants well into the nineteenth century. The historical context demonstrates that New Orleans's *gens de couleur libres* population traversed racial, linguistic, and cultural boundaries, continuing to live and work in French, and at times in France, despite New Orleans's increasing Americanization. This section previews, as well, the social, economic, and racial classes *gens de couleur libres* writers depict in their stories. The chapter then turns to French Romantic fiction. The section "French Romanticism" examines, through close readings and

literary analysis of Victor Hugo's *Bug-Jargal* and Gustave de Beaumont's *Marie*, the role of narration, history, lyricism, characters, and nature. Having established New Orleans's historical connections to France and clarified French Romantic literary features, the chapter's final section locates referentiality to France in nineteenth century *gens de couleur libres* writers Michel Séligny's "Marie" and Adolphe Duhart's "Trois amours" through historical context and French Romanticism.

Historical Connections: France and New Orleans

Jean Baptiste Le Moyne, Sieur de Bienville, a Canadian born to French aristocrats, founded the city of New Orleans under Bourbon rule in 1718 on behalf of the French Mississippi Company. According to Christopher G. Bates, "During the French period, New Orleans remained a small city and operated primarily as a trading and military post for France's operations in the Mississippi Valley" (897). While a strategic location, New Orleans was a remote outpost to the French who came to live there. Livingstone de Lancey writes, "Many [of the city's early inhabitants] were nobles or representatives of the merchant class, and finding themselves in a somewhat terrifying wilderness, they concerned themselves with shutting from their minds thoughts of this wilderness by making the city as much as imitation of Paris as conditions made possible," noting even more specifically that the governor, Marquis de Vaudreuil, "modeled the social life of the town after Versailles" (484). This modeling of French aristocracy shaped New Orleans's culture throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The early days of the colony also reflected its multicultural population; according to Bates, "In contrast to British practice, French colonial policy sought to assimilate the different groups living in New Orleans. As a result, Africans and Native Americans were incorporated into New

Orleans society” (897-98). At the end of the Seven Years War (1756-1763), France lost many of its colonies and was left with enormous debt. Canada went to England, and France ceded the Louisiana colony west of the Mississippi to Spain as repayment for its support. Lancey explains, “Spanish rule from 1762 to 1803 brought little change in the life of the city and did not materially affect the essentially French character of New Orleans” (484). Although the French monarchy supported the American revolution, revolutions occurred in France (1789), then Saint Domingue (1791). Refugees from France and what became Haiti arrived in New Orleans, increasing the city’s French population. Immigrants from Saint Domingue included enslavers who sought not only to find a culturally familiar refuge but one in which they could protect their economic interests within the American South’s ongoing system of slavery. The continued influx of French and French Creole populations sustained their language use and culture despite more than forty years of Spanish governance and brought French and Haitian revolutionary ideas. Bell and Logsdon note, “As early as 1793 the French revolutionary government had dispatched Jacobin agents to the Americas in order to spread the ideals of the revolution” (144). After Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette were executed, the Directorate governed France from 1795 until Napoleon Bonaparte seized power in 1799. Increasing concerns that Louisiana could follow the unrest in other colonies and its own declining empire prompted Spain to cede Louisiana to France in 1800. Faced with increasing expenses in Europe and the continued revolt in Saint Domingue, Napoleon sold the territory of Louisiana including New Orleans to the United States in 1803.

French culture maintained a strong presence in New Orleans through the nineteenth century. Continued immigration of French speakers reinforced the city’s French identity. Campanella notes, “In 1809, over nine thousand refugees from Saint Domingue doubled New Orleans’s population, revived its Francophone and Afro-Caribbean culture, and reinforced its

intermixed settlement patterns” (705). The city’s social and political composition remained French influenced. Lachance attributes this to a “lack of assimilation of Anglo-Americans into Gallic community and the rivalry of Anglo and Latin cultures for several decades after the Louisiana Purchase” (“The Formation of a Three-Caste Society” 232). French and Creole people in the city sought to maintain their economic and social positions, while resisting American influence and governance. According to Bates, “Americans adopted a Parisian model of municipal government, dividing New Orleans into three separate municipalities, each with its own school system, police department, and so forth” (899).

As Louisiana approached statehood, it developed its first legal code with the Digest of 1808 and then with the Civil Code of 1825. Despite now being a part of the United States, “The character and content of these codes, enacted at a time when Louisiana was still intensely French in culture and language were closely based upon the *Code Napoléon*, the *Projet* of 1800 and writings of early French commentators” (V. Palmer 1072). Vernon Palmer notes that the Louisiana juridical codes followed the French and “the English version was a poor translation that fell far below the French standard of drafting and even contained substantive errors. Not surprisingly the French original was quickly recognized as the controlling version in case of doubtful or conflicting meaning” (1074). New Orleans’s reliance on French legal codes continued into the twentieth century.

By 1830, unrest and economic depression in France caused the monarch to abdicate in favor of his grandson, the Duke of Orleans. The citizen king, Louis-Philippe, reigned until the revolution of 1848, and France underwent many social and economic changes. The aristocracy grew weaker in the face of growing industrialization and, Stovall notes, “new elites whose social position was based on achievement and, increasingly, wealth rather than inherited privilege” (75). Under Napoleon, public education, particularly secondary education, had undergone significant

reforms, making it increasingly accessible to the growing bourgeois and working classes, even while it increased wealth disparity and divided the population. Stovall explains, “To be bourgeois meant above all to look to the future rather than the past (the classic characteristic of the aristocracy). Among other things, this entailed a heavy investment in childhood” (75-76). New Orleanians of this period felt the changes in France’s markers of wealth and class alongside tripartite racial categorizations. New Orleans’s *gens de couleur libres* focused on education as they established schools, became educators, and developed literary communities. French writing about the former colonies and texts produced by New Orleans *gens de couleur libres* writers explore hierarchies of wealth, class, and race through references to historical events and by presenting characters who challenge society’s expectations.

Racial and Social Identity in Nineteenth Century New Orleans

French identity in New Orleans emerged through a complex structure of class, cultural, and racial distinctions. A distinguishing marker of social identity in New Orleans was where one is born. To be Creole, meant a person identified as having been born in the Americas.² Initially the term “Creole was recognized as a class demarcation that held little racial connotation” and could include those born in the colony who also had African ancestry; however, “[t]raditionally, Creole referred to the ancestrally ‘white’ population (predominantly French), while the phrase ‘Creole of Color’ or *gens de couleur* demarked those of racially mixed parentage” (Platt 16). Throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, both white and biracial members of the population asserted Creole identity, and birthplace, race, and ethnic origin determined social standing in New

² Tregle, Jr. explains, “early Louisiana officials such as the founder of New Orleans, Jean-Baptiste le Moyne, Sieur de Bienville, used the term Creole in reference to ‘new world’ offspring of families claiming French or Spanish descent” (qtd. in Platt 15).

Orleans. French and African ancestry and New Orleans as birthplace shaped *gens de couleurs libres* writers. Creole identity informed their daily lives and their writing. The act of publishing declared their presence and their fiction documented and interrogated the complexities of cultural and racial boundaries in New Orleans.

Laws concerning race in French colonial New Orleans followed the *Code Noir*, an edict first issued in 1685 under Louis XIV to codify the treatment of enslaved Africans. Although enslaved people were considered property, an updated edict in 1716 determined that the trading of enslaved people could not take place, nor could enslaved persons be seized by creditors in France; nonetheless “[m]asters in the colonies were allowed to bring or send their slaves to France for education in religion or in a trade” (Riddell 326). The 1724 updated *Code Noir* addressed the colony of Louisiana, organizing all aspects of colonial daily life including the treatment of free and enslaved Black people. It mandated that all enslaved persons be baptized in the Catholic faith and prohibited from observance of other religions. The *Code* detailed the rations of food and clothing enslavers were required to provide enslaved people, the roles enslaved could not perform, and the punishments for an enslaved person’s escape and assaults against free persons. The *Code* also detailed the circumstances through which enslaved persons could be freed or purchase their own freedom, as well as the laws governing marriage between enslaved persons, enslaved and free persons, and the status of resulting children.

While the *Code*’s manumission laws allowed more opportunities for freedom than were possible in the British colonies, it also increased the delineation between races. The 1724 *Code Noir* for the colony of Louisiana specifically indicated that “[w]hites of either sex were not to intermarry with blacks, or priests to marry them. Whites or freeborn or freed blacks were not to live in concubinage with slaves. The white master, father of a child by his own slave, lost slave

and child. But a freeborn or freed black might marry the woman and so make her and her child free and the child legitimate” (Riddell 327-28). The Spanish colonial system continued French policies on race but offered increased potential for emancipation and fluidity between races. The impact of the *Code Noir*’s regulations concerning race, marriage, and freedom contributed to the formation of a population consisting of whites, free people of color, and enslaved persons.

At the top of early New Orleans’s class system were the *ancienne population* whose ancestry traced to the original colonial founders; members of this group, generally of the wealthy planter class, emulated pre-revolutionary France. According to Brasseaux, “Creole planters, descendants of European settlers in Louisiana, generally sought to recreate in Louisiana a romanticized vision of feudalistic France, with themselves as the New World aristocracy” (qtd. in Platt 19). Louisiana’s Creole class, keeping with Old World ideas of nobility even as Europe experienced sweeping social changes, became associated with the ostentatious presentation of wealth: “[i]nspired by the French nobility’s belief that a person was only as rich or powerful as he appeared to be, ambitious Creoles mimicked the Old World aristocracy and sustained their social pretensions by building grand homes and purchasing carriages, fine furnishings, and domestics” (Brasseaux qtd. in Platt 19). White Creoles benefitted from the slave economy, deriving wealth from the growth of sugar, cotton, and indigo. By maintaining residences both on plantations in Southern Louisiana and in the traditionally French sections of New Orleans, the *ancienne population* maintained strong ties to France. They also created alliances with French emigrés and refugees from the colonies to protect their cultural, political, and economic dominance in the face of increasing Americanization. Social hierarchies continued to privilege whiteness and French origin yet afforded a niche for social and economic mobility among the free Creoles of color population.

The *gens de couleur libres* population of New Orleans, the class of Creoles of color, was distinct in the United States. *Gens de couleur libres* was a recognized and legal class designation, and the New Orleans population grew until the second half of the nineteenth century when Americanization of the city caused its decline. Sumpter suggests between 1813 and 1830 the “influx of Americans and non-Gallic immigrants caused white and Black Creoles... to unite in defense of French/Spanish (or Creole) culture and language” giving “the free people of color in New Orleans a measure of social and political power” (22). Another feature that mitigated the increasing racial segregation accompanying the Americanization of New Orleans was the role of the Catholic Church. According to Haddox, “Even after New Orleans became a U.S. city in 1803, Catholic influence on the treatment and status of blacks and mixed-race individuals persisted; Catholic worship, for example, remained racially integrated, in sharp contrast to nearly everywhere else in the South” (763). Thus, New Orleans’s *gens de couleur libres* population enjoyed economic stability and increased access to education and culture during this period.

According to Bruce and Gipson, “The French Colonial population of Louisiana ignored the *Code Noir*, which explicitly forbade all marriages or households between races” (6).³ In New Orleans, biracial identity was intertwined with economic advantage. Prohibitions by the *Code Noir* and subsequent Louisiana codes prevented inheritance by children born outside of marriage. These unions did, of course, take place, as in other French colonies. In his research on Atlantic Creole culture, Pierre Force suggests that patterns of multi-race unions in New Orleans follow those of early French trading posts of Gorée and Saint-Louis, as well as the colony of Saint Domingue, drawing comparisons between Senegalese *signares*, *ménagères* in Saint Domingue, and New Orleans *placées*. He writes, “A *placée* would enter a long-term relationship with a wealthy white

³ “La population de la colonie française de la Louisiane fait la sourde oreille au Code Noir, qui interdit explicitement tout mariage ou ménage entre les races” (6).

man. In exchange for companionship and sexual favors, the *placée* was usually given the ownership of a house and funds for the education of her children, who were often also recognized in their father's will" (Force 33). Inheritance could be challenged though, creating a barrier to the transference of assets from a white father to a *placée* or children of color, particularly if the father also had white children.

Paul F. Lachance, in "The Formation of a Three-Caste Society: Evidence from Wills in Antebellum New Orleans," explains how interracial unions became less frequent as the biracial population grew and endogamy became more entrenched. Lachance examined wills to identify and track the frequency of interracial unions and methods for transferring inheritances to natural children, a term recognized in the Civil Code. He explains, "all a white male needed to do was ignore relations of color in his will or allow himself to die intestate. Their [children resulting from an interracial relationship] rights to an inheritance was virtually nonexistent without specific testamentary instructions to the contrary" (216). Louisiana Civil code severely limited the amount of money or goods children could inherit. Even though women and children of interracial unions who were not provided for had little recourse, such unions did offer a means of economic advancement. The *gens de couleur libres* community of New Orleans prospered, especially through property acquisition: "[A]s intermediaries between groups, their own status was fragile and subject to constant renegotiation. This made ownership of land and slaves the single most important marker of their social status and identity, and their desire for land ownership often resulted in extreme geographic stability" (Force 36). Identity and economic prosperity anchored the *gens de couleur libres* to place.

Like the growing nineteenth century Parisian bourgeois, New Orleans families sought to secure their position by providing their children with education, culture, and economic stability.

Instruction in New Orleans came from different sources. The wealthy *ancienne population* would hire private tutors for their sons, often “French immigrants [who] were notoriously well educated and more than a few had served as instructors at Parisian academies and universities” (Platt 27). Wealthy families also sent their sons to France for education. Poorer families could educate their sons via apprenticeships. Laura Ewen Blokker acknowledges, “It is notable that apprenticeships were not limited to free persons, but could also be engaged in by slaves” (State of Louisiana 5). The Catholic Church also built schools and, just as the churches themselves were integrated, so were the early schools until 1830, although they were not co-educational.

Alongside gains in population and prosperity, the *gens de couleur libres* population focused on education; the sons of wealthy families went to study in France. *Gens de couleur libres* were particularly well educated; Jennifer Gipson notes, “Louisiana’s free black Creoles, eighty percent of whom could read and write in 1850, boasted a higher literacy rate than the white population” (Cowen, qtd. in Gipson). Free people of color began plans to build a school when schools in Louisiana became increasingly segregated, blocking education for Black children. Marie Justine Cirnaire Couvent, a free woman of color born in Africa and brought to slavery in Saint Domingue as a child, bequeathed land in New Orleans to build a school for children of color. Couvent died in 1837, and the *Institution Catholique des Orphelins Indigents* opened in its permanent location in 1852. Blokker highlights the school’s significance to New Orleans’s community of color and its emphasis on education and intellectualism: “The *Institution Catholique des Orphelins Indigents* became the intellectual center of the Afro-Creole community and is a rare example of a school controlled completely from its funding, to its building, to its teaching by African Americans” (State of Louisiana 13). Armand Lanusse, poet and editor of *Les Cenelles*, was headmaster for a period

and other prominent members of New Orleans's *gens de couleur libres* literati, including Adolphe Duhart, taught at the school.

Intellectuals, writers, poets, and instructors of color taught boys and girls in English and French, and donations by wealthy New Orleanians of color and periodic funding from the state of Louisiana supported the school. As French and Creole refugees, white and of color, arrived in New Orleans they would continually reinfuse the city with French language, culture, and politics, even in the face of encroaching Americanization. Identification with French language and literature offered an anchor to a political and cultural identity that could be expressed through poetry and fiction even as limits were being imposed on speech about race.

French Romanticism

The two short stories “Marie” and “Trois amours,” by Séligny and Duhart respectively, are set in New Orleans yet clearly demonstrate a relationship to France via language, history, and Romanticism. New Orleans *gens de couleur libres* writers’ link to France via Romanticism is multifaceted. French Romanticism spans the first half of the nineteenth century, crossing genres and resisting literary conventions.⁴ Just as Hugo writes in his preface to *Cromwell* (1827) of the “slaves to convention” (308) whose “wings have been clipped with the scissors of the unities” (310), revolution is a feature of Romanticism. Political and social resistance may appear within the content of a literary text but can also appear in form and style as a response to the very tightly

⁴ George R. Havens argues, “In France, romanticism is first of all a revolt against a firmly entrenched classicism... It is significant too that in France, romanticism established itself first in prose with Rousseau and his successors, then in poetry with Lamartine, and only at last in drama with the final triumph of Hugo’s *Hernani* in 1830. This sequence corresponds to the degree of resistance in these three literary forms” (10). Olin H. Moore, in “The Romanticism of Guy de Maupassant,” identifies challenges in “the perplexing problem of finding a definition for Romanticism” (99), noting literary connections to classicist works, which would remain influential in France on later writers such as Maupassant (98), and suggestions of naturalism in Hugo (101).

controlled neoclassical literature of the Enlightenment. For many *gens de couleur libres* authors, Romanticism offered a means to express resistance, often very subtly, within the constraints under which they wrote. The connection to French Romanticism also emphasizes language, not simply through the use of standard French but also a formal literary French, demonstrating an identification with France through education, cultural currency, and familiarity. To illustrate the presentation of specific French Romantic traits in fictional texts written about the Americas, I will first analyze novels by Victor Hugo and Gustave de Beaumont before turning to short fiction by New Orleans's writers Michel Séligny and Adolphe Duhart.

French Romantic prose utilizes specific features including narrative subjectivity, history, revolution, lyricism, distinct character types, and depictions of nature. These features may overlap, and not all are present in every text. Narrative subjectivity through a first-person point of view can suggest historicity and veracity of the story because the narrator is bearing witness to and documenting the events and their role in history. Stories told in the past tense may refer to actual events, people, and locations, including sites of revolution. History also may appear via references to time and place within the story or could be embedded through documentation including other texts, letters, etc. Lyricism and the expression of emotion over the reason and science of the Enlightenment occur through figurative language, plot, and dialogue that engage audiences through feelings. Nostalgia for past times and places or horror and revulsion may reflect an emotional response to injustice. Romantic characters such as the tragic hero, the noble savage, the tragic mulatta, and others can express colonial representations of race and may suggest resistance to these representations and social injustice. Depictions of nature in Romantic texts range from idyllic and paradisiacal, remote and secluded, offering refuge from the bustle and constraints of society, to exotic, uncontrolled, and savage. Nature appears through sensory details, is expressed

through connections to the characters that navigate or inhabit the spaces, and reflects the emotional qualities that are connected to the landscape.

Two examples of French Romantic prose set in the Americas are Victor Hugo's *Bug-Jargal* (1826) and Gustave de Beaumont's *Marie, or Slavery in the United States (Marie ou l'esclavage aux États-Unis: Tableau de mœurs américaines)* (1835). Analysis of *Bug-Jargal* and *Marie* helps identify, trace, and explore the Romantic traits I have listed, especially in French nineteenth century fiction focused on capturing a specific place at a specific time. Each of these novels feature French narrators who interpret the "New World" for French audiences. Scholars often cite Victor Hugo's play *Hernani* as an example of French Romanticism, but I discuss his early novel *Bug-Jargal* because it is prose and because it is set at the beginning of the slave uprisings in Haiti, reflecting French writing about the colonies. Finally, the novel is useful because it previews Saint Domingue's history, which will be addressed in the next chapter.

French Romanticism and Hugo's *Bug-Jargal*

Originally written as a novella in 1818, Hugo published *Bug-Jargal* as a novel in 1826. The novel follows the experiences of a young Frenchman, Léopold D'Auvernay, who arrives in Saint-Domingue on the eve of the slave uprisings of 1791 to marry the daughter of his wealthy planter uncle, Marie. As revolt breaks out, D'Auvernay's path becomes intertwined with that of Pierrot / Bug-Jargal, an enslaved African from his uncle's plantation. In *Orientalism*, Said writes of the Orientalist discourse of nineteenth century British and French writers, including Victor Hugo, which draws inspiration from travel narratives and imaginative sources (99). When writing *Bug-Jargal*, a very young Victor Hugo relied heavily on source material having no direct knowledge of Haiti or the events he described. He, in turn, interprets events in Saint Domingue for

his French audience, fulfilling the didactic role that Said ascribes to Orientalist works (*Orientalism* 66). Hugo exoticizes the setting and characters. Saint Domingue is beautiful, wild, and full of terrors. He flattens Black and biracial characters into tropes across a spectrum that ranges from extreme heroism and generosity to violence and cruelty.

D'Auvernay narrates most of the novel but his narration is framed by a third person omniscient narrator who sets the scene of Capitan D'Auvernay, now in France, telling his story to his troops. This framing narrator returns at the end of the text not just to bring readers back to the soldiers' camp and to relay the soldiers' commentary about the story D'Auvernay has recounted but also to reveal that D'Auvernay has ironically died in battle for France, just as he is to be detained and executed as an aristocrat and enemy of the state by the Convention. The effect of the layering of a third framing narrator and a first-person participant narrator permits D'Auvernay to simultaneously be subjective while portraying him as an authoritative and reliable witness to history. Another element of the narrator's credibility is his French identity. In her analysis of language and identity in the novel, Kathrine M. Bonin highlights the exchange between D'Auvernay and his captor Biassou, who agrees to temporarily free his captive on his *honneur français*. Bonin notes, "to be French in *Bug-Jargal* means not only that one's words may be taken at their full face value, but also that this truthfulness itself is an authentic sign of the speaker or writer's origin—frank speech being a universally recognized emblem of the French native" (202). Thus, the narrator is trustworthy because he is French, he has witnessed and participated in history, and his captor, the historical figure Biassou, acknowledges it.

Historicity in the novel is also entwined with the revolution itself through place, events, and people. *Bug-Jargal* is set in Saint-Domingue. From the beginning of his first-person narrative, D'Auvernay clearly defines place as he describes his uncle's dwelling near Fort Galifet with

plantations that covered most of the plains of Acul (383).⁵ D'Auverney and Marie's planned wedding for August 22 is a date that portends danger for their future as the enslaved Bug-Jargal warns D'Auverney to "go to Cap and marry before August 22," alluding to the date that the uprisings are set to begin (409).⁶ When the fires start in surrounding areas, D'Auverney reports to M. de Blanchelande, Governor General of Saint-Domingue, where other prominent figures and members of the Provincial Assembly have gathered. The storyline continues against a backdrop of Haitian revolutionary history while drawing parallels to France's revolutionary government. The respect and friendship that D'Auverney comes to have for Bug-Jargal and the ways that Bug-Jargal seeks to protect the narrator and his bride, even though he firmly aligns himself with the revolt against the French colonizers, are also revolutionary in their defiance of society and politics.

Hugo threads lyricism within the novel as love contrasts with hatred accompanied by violence and fear. D'Auverney is so overcome by his love for his fiancée Marie that he fails to recognize the growing tensions all around him, the "frightening cloud that already covered almost every point on our political horizon, and that, upon bursting, was bound to uproot every soul" (387-88).⁷ The narrator's love for his ill-fated bride, Marie, evokes a range of feelings for Bug-Jargal/Pierrot. Bug-Jargal's love for Marie, expressed through garden serenades, at first threatens and outrages D'Auverney, but his emotions turn to admiration for the enslaved man as he repeatedly rescues her. Bug-Jargal also stands up to D'Auverney's hardened, enslaver uncle on behalf of his fellow enslaved. Horror appears throughout the text as the narrator recounts the extreme cruelty of the slave economy. He reveals both his sensitivity and perhaps hypocrisy in

⁵ "Les habitations de mon oncle étaient voisines du fort Galifet, et ses plantations occupaient la majeure partie des plaines de l'Acul" (383).

⁶ "-- Frère, je te dois tant qu'il faut que ma bouche te donne un avis. Crois-moi, va au Cap, et marie-toi avant le 22 août" (409).

⁷ "le nuage effrayant qui déjà couvrait presque tous les points de notre horizon politique, et qui devait, en éclatant, déraciner toutes les existences" (387-88).

declaring “his spirit’s natural disposition kept him far from the plantations where the blacks worked. It was too painful to see the suffering of beings that I couldn’t ease” (399).⁸

Many of the characters in *Bug-Jargal* are Romantic archetypes. The tragic narrator becomes increasingly aware of injustices and hypocrisy through his experiences but loses all and returns to France to die in battle. D’Auverney describes his beloved Marie, raised by a nursemaid after losing her mother at birth, as sweet and angelic. She is repeatedly saved from dramatic circumstances but will also die tragically in the fires at Cap Français. Titular Bug-Jargal is an enslaved African, also known as Pierrot on D’Auverney’s uncle’s plantation. Hugo portrays him as a “noble savage” figure who sings to Marie about his regal origins, “Of my homeland, where I was king, of my homeland where I was free!” while also claiming that he would forget it all for her (392).⁹ D’Auverney describes Bug-Jargal as “of almost gigantic size, of prodigious strength... the air of roughness and majesty imprinted on his face amid the characteristic signs of the African race, the sparkle of his eyes, the whiteness of his teeth against the shiny black of his skin,” contrasting the naked enslaved man before him to the nobility of his bearing (397).¹⁰ He becomes an honorable friend and brother to D’Auverney, heroically rescuing him and Marie even while being a leader in the slave uprising.

The villains in *Bug-Jargal* are almost exclusively biracial in portrayals that sharply contrast with the biracial characters in the other texts examined in this chapter.¹¹ The dwarf Habibrah was

⁸ “la disposition naturelle de mon esprit m’avait tenu éloigné des plantations où les noirs travaillaient. Il m’était trop pénible de voir souffrir des êtres que je ne pouvais soulager” (399).

⁹ “De ma patrie où j’étais roi, de ma patrie où j’étais libre ! Libre et roi, jeune fille ! J’oublierais tout cela pour toi” (392).

¹⁰ “Ce nègre, d’une taille presque gigantesque, d’une force prodigieuse... l’air de rudesse et de majesté empreint sur son visage au milieu des signes caractéristiques de la race africaine, l’éclat de ses yeux, la blancheur de ses dents sur le noir éclatant de sa peau” (397).

¹¹ See Chris Bongie’s “Victor Hugo and the Melancholy Novel: Reading the Haitian Revolution in *Bug-Jargal*” for a thorough examination of Hugo’s use of sources for the novel and race, particularly the negative associations with multiracial identity and its connections to linguistic hybridity in the text.

given to Marie's father by Lord Effingham, governor of Jamaica. Because the plantation owner has pretenses of being a feudal prince, he dresses Habirah as his jester. The narrator describes Habirah as *griffe*, which is footnoted in the novel and cited to Moreau de Saint-Méry as being one of nine categories of biracial identity in use at the time; he is "one of those beings whose physique is so strange that they would appear to be monsters, if they did not make one laugh... His enormous head, heavily pushed onto his shoulders, bristled with red, frizzy wool, was accompanied by two ears so large that his friends were in the habit of saying that Habirah used them to wipe his eyes when he cried" (384).¹² The text compares him to animals and his master treats him as such; despite his mistreatment, he is not portrayed sympathetically. He murders D'Auvernay's uncle, joins Biassou's camp as an *obi*, and tricks the narrator with intent to attack, only to fall to his own death.

The novel portrays other prominent biracial characters as threatening and cruel, while also being laughable. Georges, later Jorge, Biassou was an actual figure in the slave uprising. While an early account of Biassou describes him as "fiery, rash, wrathful, and vindictive. Always in action, always on horseback, very suspicious, and very aspiring" (Beard 53), Marlene Daut notes, "Hugo's novel paints Biassou as degenerate, revengeful, and evil precisely because he is a *sacatra* [one Black and one *griffe* parent], and therefore not of 'pure' black or white race" ("Sons of White Fathers" 6). The narrator appears to invite readers to mock Biassou and his camp, but he also makes it clear that Biassou is to be feared. He specifically addresses those of biracial and multiracial identity within in his camp by appealing to them "to not be cooled by the white devils' seduction," reminding them, "Your fathers are in their rank, but your mothers are in ours. Furthermore, o brothers of my soul, they never treated you as fathers, but as masters; you were

¹² "Le griffe Habirah (c'était son nom) était un de ces êtres dont la conformation physique est si étrange qu'ils paraîtraient des monstres, s'ils ne faisaient rire... Sa tête énorme, lourdement enfoncée entre ses épaules, hérissée d'une laine rousse et crépue, était accompagnée de deux oreilles si larges, que ses camarades avaient coutume de dire qu'Habirah s'en servait pour essuyer ses yeux quand il pleurait" (384).

enslaved like blacks” (448).¹³ Biassou speaks across languages and racial differences within his camp to rally the enslaved people born both on the island and in Africa to join, rise up, and defeat the white colonizers. D’Aubernay, as his captive, both fears and critiques Biassou but as a narrator, acknowledges to his listeners that Biassou’s “sermon soldatesque” would seem ridiculous (449).

Nature in *Bug-Jargal* mirrors the narrator’s feelings and impressions and aligns with his vision of his bride Marie. Bug-Jargal leads him through “a virgin forest” until they reach “a pretty green savannah, watered by a source, and edged by a fresh, deep border of tall centuries old trees” (497).¹⁴ Here D’Aubernay meets up with the bride he thought he had lost, recalling: “She was dressed in a white dress like on our marriage day, and still wore in her hair a crown of orange blossoms, the last virginal finery of a newlywed that my hands hadn’t removed from her forehead” (497).¹⁵ Later, when viewing what he imagines will be his last sunset, D’Aubernay gazes over a lake, recalling through sensory details the happier times when he had dreamed at the edge of a lake at sunset and how “the azure surface changed to silver reflecting the first evening stars strewn with gold glitter” (Hugo, *Bug-Jargal*, 512).¹⁶ This same space makes the narrator imagine a primordial garden as he muses, “There arose from every point of this virgin soil a primitive odor like that the

¹³ “Noirs creoles et congos, ajouta Biassou, vengeance et liberté ! Sang-mêlés, ne vous laissez pas attiédir par les séductions de *los diabolos blancos*. Vos pères sont dans leurs rangs, mais vos mères sont dans les nôtres. Au reste, *o hermanos de mi alma*, ils ne vous ont jamais traités en pères, mais bien en maîtres ; vous étiez esclaves comme les noirs... Mais, comme les saints commandements du *bon Giu* le défendent, ne frappez pas vous-même votre propre père. Si vous le rencontrez dans les rangs ennemis, qui vous empêche, *amigos*, de vous dire l’un à l’autre : *Touyé papa moé, ma touyé quena toué ?*” (Hugo, *Bug-Jargal*, 448).

¹⁴ “Nous nous enfonçâmes dans une forêt vierge. Au bout d’une demi-heure environ, nos débouchâmes sur une jolie savane verte, arrosée d’une eau de roche, et bordée par la lisière fraîche et profonde des grands arbres centenaires de la forêt” (497).

¹⁵ “Elle était vêtue d’une robe blanche comme le jour de notre union, et portait encore dans ses cheveux la couronne de fleurs d’oranger, dernière parure virginal de la jeune épouse, que mes mains n’avaient pas détaché de son front” (497).

¹⁶ “Que de fois, dans des temps plus heureux, je m’étais assis pour rêver sur le bord de ces beaux lacs, à l’heure du crépuscule, quand leur azur se change en une nappe d’argent où le reflet des premières étoiles du soir sème des paillettes d’or” (512).

first man must have breathed from the first roses of Eden” (512).¹⁷ In each case, the narrator views the ancient forest as intact and unspoiled.

The novel’s setting in Saint-Domingue is tropical and exoticized. This contrast between the restrained colonized space and the wilderness beyond it extends into the tropical forests and the larger island away from the plantations and towns. Paravisini-Gebert explains, “As one of the most salient casualties of colonial expansion, [the forests of the Caribbean] emerge in the literatures of the Caribbean as both tangible presences and multivalent protean symbols – as new Edens, as alternatives to the sugar plantations, as vital elements in environmental sustainability, as sites of indigeneity, or as ghostly remnants of ancestral presences” (100-101). Wild nature offers potential threat but also, at times, security. Danger lurks close by as a crocodile leaps out from the river near the cabin, first threatening Marie, then her rescuer Bug-Jargal. When soldiers march across the heavy forest wilderness in pursuit of Bug-Jargal and make camp along the Grande-Rivière, the water cannot be seen in places because of the impenetrable flora and canopy of tangled vines (Hugo, *Bug-Jargal*, 428).¹⁸ Thus, the dense forest makes the soldiers vulnerable, but also provides them cover.

Providing details about Biassou’s camp, the narrator notes that the *obi*’s prayer beads were made of seeds from the *adrézarach* (chinaberry), huts were made from banana and palm leaves, and “their black or copper colored wives, helped by black children, prepared the fighters’ food” (441).¹⁹ Local flora also connects to indigenous culture as the narrator explains that to build a

¹⁷ “Il s’élevait de tous les points de ce sol vierge un parfum primitif comme celui que devait respirer le premier homme sur les premières roses de l’Éden” (512).

¹⁸ “La Grande-Rivière coulait derrière le camp ; resserrée entre deux côtes, elle était dans cet endroit étroite et profonde. Ses bords, brusquement inclinés, se hérissaient de touffes de buissons impénétrables à la vue. Souvent même ses eaux étaient cachées par des guirlandes de lianes, qui, s’accrochant aux branches des érables, à fleurs rouges semés parmi les buissons, mariaient leurs jets d’une rive à l’autre, et se croisant de mille manières, formaient sur le fleuve de larges tentes de verdure” (428).

¹⁹ “Leurs femmes noirs ou cuivrées, aidées des négrellons, préparaient la nourriture des combattants” (441).

bridge “we cut down... several trunks from those enormous wild cotton trees from which the island’s first inhabitants made enormous one hundred rower dugout canoes” (433).²⁰ In *Bug-Jargal*, the wild but resource rich and waiting to be harvested forests of Saint-Domingue contrast sharply with the controlled setting of the narrator’s uncle’s plantation and villa. Descriptions of forests express a space that is simultaneously savage and an undeveloped Eden, ripe for exploitation.

Nature anchors firmly to place through specific types of flora and fauna, offering details that lend authenticity to the narrator’s story, local color, and potential for economic benefit. As the characters navigate the landscape, D’Auverney names the various plants and insects they encounter, clearly situating the novel in Saint-Domingue. The narrator generically mentions “les moustiques et les bigailles” (mosquitos and flying insects) as well as the *cocotiers* (coconut trees) along the river, but also names very specific types of plants and trees that are found on the island (Hugo, *Bug-Jargal*, 384, 392). Nature represents a commodity to be exploited. Captive Citizen C***, self-proclaimed negrophile who was also guilty of placing the heads of fifty enslaved people on spikes along his plantation to ward off revolt, now expediently assumes the role of economist. In an effort to show his value to Biassou and spare his life, he explains, “I have other specialized knowledge that can be very useful to you. I will show you how to make pitch and mine coal,” to which Biassou responds, “When I need charcoal, I burn three leagues of forest” (466).²¹ Still pressing his case, the would be economist continues, “I will teach you the use of each species of wood... *le chicaron* and *le sabiecca* for boat keels, *les yabas* for ships knees, medlar trees for the

²⁰ “Alors nous abattîmes... plusieurs troncs de ces énormes cotonniers sauvages dont les premiers habitants de l’île faisaient des pirogues de cent rameurs” (433).

²¹ “J’ai d’autres connaissances spéciales qui peuvent vous être fort utiles. Je vous indiquerai les moyens d’exploiter la raie et les mines de charbon de terre. – Que m’importe ! dit Biassou. Quand j’ai besoin de charbon, je brûle trois lieues de forêt” (466).

framework, *les hacamas*, guaiacum, cedars, false mastic...” (466).²² Citizen C***’s litany on native trees is not only an attempt to demonstrate his worth to Biassou, but is also an illustration of how trees and other natural resources are a commodity for exploitation.

French Romanticism and Beaumont’s *Marie*

Gustave de Beaumont’s *Marie, ou l’esclavage aux États-Unis: Tableau de mœurs américaines* (*Marie, or Slavery in the United States*) shares many of the Romantic traits of Hugo’s *Bug-Jargal*. Beaumont wrote *Marie* after his well-documented travels through the United States with Alexis de Tocqueville. While Tocqueville focused on U.S government and politics, Beaumont explored American society with a particular focus on race. Like *Bug-Jargal*, Beaumont’s *Marie* is set in the Americas. Beaumont explicitly describes and criticizes American society and its government’s treatment of Black, both enslaved and free, and indigenous peoples. Beaumont addresses this focus in the foreword to the novel when he notes, “the condition of the black race in America, and its influence over the future of the United States, are the true object of this work” (5).²³ Gerard Fergerson, in his 1999 introduction to the English translation of the novel, explains, “*Marie*’s romantic plot not only confronts whiteness as a sign and marker of privilege in America, but also exposes how the cultural, social, and political positions for antebellum blacks, whites, and Native Americans were sharply demarcated” (xiii). The next section of the chapter analyzes how narrative subjectivity, the role of history, revolution, lyricism, Romantic character types, and

²² “Je vous enseignerai à quel emploi est propre chaque espèce de bois, poursuit le prisonnier ; le chicaron et le sabiecca pour les quilles de navire ; les yabas pour les courbes ; les tocumas pour les membrures ; les hacamas, les gaiacs, les cèdres, les accomas...” (466).

²³ “la condition de la race noire en Amérique, son influence sur l’avenir des États-Unis, sont le véritable objet de cet ouvrage” (Beaumont 5).

depictions of nature illustrate the novel's themes. The chapter will then explore how French influence and Romanticism appear in New Orleans's short fiction.

Subjective narration in *Marie* appears through Beaumont's use of shifting first and third person points of view. These shifts offer readers different first-person accounts via the author himself, the Frenchman Ludovic, and briefly the American Nelson that are balanced by an objective third person. Beaumont's foreword and appendixes of notes on American life frame the novel. He explains his rationale for the book's form and makes it clear that he is offering an account of what he has witnessed and learned. The prologue then shifts to third person and introduces the story of a French traveler in the United States who, while traversing the wilderness of Michigan, encounters a secluded lake side cottage. At the end of the prologue, the traveler discovers that the cottage's owner, a hermit, is also a Frenchman. After sharing their differing impressions of America and whether it truly is the land of liberty, the conversation turns to American women, and the hermit begins to share his opinions. Narration then transfers primarily to Ludovic the hermit in the first person. Chapter 8 includes a first-person narration by Nelson, father of George and Marie and friend and potential future father-in-law to Ludovic, expanding the perspectives to include an American voice. Chapters are also interspliced by third person accounts of dialogue between characters and meditations on America. Shifts in narration occur in the novel's epilogue from Ludovic's first person, to third person reporting between the traveler and the hermit, then finally to a first-person narrator whose voice suggests it is the author himself offering a brief account of the traveler's return to France. The text concludes with Beaumont's extensive appendixes.

The novel's framing and first-person subjective narration lend authenticity to the fictional text while the use of fiction attracts readers and protects Beaumont's sources. His stated intent

with the narrative structure is to share his observations and conclusions about the United States, particularly about race, with a wider audience who includes those more attracted to the novel's fictional format. In response to the question of "truth under the veil of fiction," Beaumont declares in the foreword, "All I can say is that my first goal was to present a series of serious observations; that, in the work, the foundation of things is true, and that nothing is fictitious but the characters; that finally, I tried to wrap my work in a less serious covering, in order to attract that portion of the public who seeks both ideas for the mind and emotions for the heart" (2).²⁴ The first person participant narrators and other fictional characters in his novel also permit Beaumont to shield his sources. Fergerson suggests, "Indeed, the choice to expose the cruelties of slavery in the form of a novel probably stemmed from what was a common strategy to protect the lives of those whose experiences were revealed and told without changing basic elements of a story" (x-xi). He further explains, "A lack of protection for those who shared their stories and experiences could expose individuals and have severe implications, for example, for fugitive slaves who could be sold back into slavery and others who might have been 'passing' as white in American society" (Fergerson xi). The use of alternating first persons that are at times interrupted by an objective third person implies the veracity of the novel's observations on American society and impressions of events as it allows different voices (albeit male, white, and primarily French) while simultaneously protecting Beaumont's sources for the stories he is telling.

While Hugo sets *Bug-Jargal* at the outbreak of the Haitian revolution, the prologue of *Marie* begins after the July revolution in France. The novel also explores the revolutionary promise and failures of the United States. Beaumont writes, "around the year 1831" a twenty-five-year-old

²⁴ "Tout ce que je puis dire, c'est que mon premier but a été de présenter une suite d'observations graves ; que, dans l'ouvrage, le fond des choses est vrai, et qu'il n'y a de fictif que les personnages ; qu'enfin j'ai tenté de recouvrir mon œuvre d'une surface moins sévère, afin d'attirer à moi cette portion du public qui cherche tout à la fois dans un livre des idées pour l'esprit et des émotions pour le cœur" (2).

unnamed Frenchman, having become disillusioned with politics and failed at business, arrives in America (9). The young traveler's encounter with the hermit Ludovic challenges his optimistic impressions of the United States. Through Ludovic's story, Beaumont explores the irony and hypocrisy of a nation founded upon revolutionary ideals of freedom imposing tyranny through slavery and racial oppression. Holding the public responsible, the hermit explains to the traveler, "in a land of equality, all citizens are accountable for inequality as each one is complicit," concluding that "in the United States, for each act of tyranny there are ten million tyrants" (86).²⁵ Making his case that prejudice exists not only in the South, Ludovic recounts first hand observations of segregated public spaces in northern cities offering specific institutions including theatres, hospitals, schools, churches, voting, and courtrooms as examples.

Through its detailed accounting of places and institutions in the United States where people of color, free and enslaved, were deprived of freedom and equality, *Marie* invites readers to respond intellectually and emotionally to the injustices it will describe. Ludovic's examples of prejudice in the United States are also personal. When Ludovic expresses his desire to marry Marie, her father explains that in most of the United States interracial marriages are forbidden by law, adding that "an even greater obstacle than the law is tradition" (73).²⁶ Discussing New Orleans specifically, birthplace of his children George and Marie, Nelson continues by describing *plaçage* and the legal arrangements that are made between white men and young women of color, with their mothers acting on their behalf. He notes with shame that in all of Louisiana, "the highest rank for free women of color is to be prostituted to white men," reflecting stereotypes of women of

²⁵ "Mais, dans un pays d'égalité, tous les citoyens répondent des injustices sociales, chacun d'eux en est complice. ... aux États-Unis, il y a pour chaque fait de tyrannie dix millions de tyrans" (86).

²⁶ "Il est un obstacle plus grave que la loi même: ce sont les mœurs" (73).

color using sexuality as a means of social and economic advancement (73).²⁷ The traveler, Ludovic, and Beaumont himself are all Frenchmen learning about the United States' laws and customs as outsiders. Even Nelson, who was born in New England, speaks about his young adulthood, experiencing New Orleans, and the contrast between North and South through the eyes of a newcomer.

The novel expresses lyricism through the characters and nature. The characters' emotional responses to events in the story parallel their archetypal models. Ludovic himself begins as a naïve French traveler; after his arrival in Baltimore, he falls in love with Marie. Hearing her play music, he feels "in his heart existed a spring of sweet joy and strong emotions that he hadn't known until then" (Beaumont 43).²⁸ He explains to the other young traveler, "I felt violently take root in me the sweetest passion to ever rule my soul" (43-44).²⁹ His joy and optimism will shift to horror and grief as he learns more about racism in the United States in general and the specific ways it will impact him and Marie. By the end of the story, he has become a hermit, isolated from a cruel society and grieving the death of his beloved Marie. Mirroring Ludovic's transition from naively idealistic about the United States' promise of liberty for all to disillusioned and world weary, the young traveler is optimistic until he hears Ludovic's tale. The young traveler ultimately sees the U.S. through different eyes, feels pity for the hermit, and returns to France, weeping with joy upon his arrival.

²⁷ "dans toute la Louisiane, la plus haute condition des femmes de couleur libres, c'est d'être prostituées aux blancs" (73).

²⁸ "En écoutant Marie, je sentis qu'il existait encore dans mon cœur une source de douces jouissances et de vives impressions qui jusqu'alors m'étaient inconnues" (43).

²⁹ "où je sentis naître en moi le germe de la plus violente comme de la plus douce passion qui jamais ait régné sur mon âme ?" (43-44).

Marie, a tragic mulatta figure, also experiences a range of extreme feelings that the narrator witnesses and describes.³⁰ When Ludovic first expresses his love for her, “a ray of joy shone in her beautiful eyes, covered almost at once by a cloud of sadness” (52).³¹ Ludovic soon learns the cause of this sadness as Nelson, Marie’s father, divulges their mother Theresa “was noticeably and dazzlingly white; nothing in her face or her features revealed her origin’s flaw” (63).³² Although she had been orphaned as a child and had not known her family history, she blamed herself and died of grief in her husband’s arms. Nelson moved his children north to Baltimore, keeping their background secret, but they lived in fear of discovery and Marie grew up to be “defeated by her destiny and resigned, [seeking] shadow and isolation” (64).³³ Marie’s emotions pass through extremes: joy when she learns that she and Ludovic will be able to marry; terror and fainting when white mobs attack the church during their wedding; foreboding as they traveled into exile in the wilderness; then grieving but bravely hiding her pain as she succumbs to her illness. Ludovic and Marie’s ill-fated, interrupted wedding ends tragically not unlike D’Avernay and Marie’s wedding and brief marriage in *Bug-Jargal*.

Nature in *Marie* appears primarily as wilderness. The novel begins and ends in the forests of Michigan, which reflect the characters’ emotions and imagination, and offer a contrast to encroaching civilization. In the prologue, “the beautiful lakes, the beautiful forests, and the beautiful prairies” that he has just traversed charm the unnamed traveler (13).³⁴ He claims,

³⁰ Marie’s portrayal as tragic mulatta whose family bears the shame and the secret of their racial origins aligns Beaumont’s novel with representations of the tragic mulatta in abolitionist fiction. Marie’s family history also connects her to New Orleans and *plaçage* through her maternal great great grandmother. See Kimberly Manganelli’s Chapter 2 “Fascinating Allurements of Gold’: New Orleans’s ‘Copper-Colored Nymphs’ and the Tragic Mulatta” for a detailed discussion of the tragic mulatta figure coming from New Orleans, travel literature, and fiction including references to Beaumont’s *Marie*.

³¹ “Un rayon de joie brillait dans ses beaux yeux, qu’un nuage de tristesse voilait presque aussitôt” (52).

³² “Théresa était remarquable par une éclatante blancheur ; et rien dans son visage, ni dans ses traits, ne décelait le vice de son origine ; mais la tradition la condamnait” (63).

³³ “soumise à son destin et résignée, Marie cherche l’ombre et l’isolement” (64).

³⁴ “Oh ! j’ai vu de beaux lacs, de belles forêts, de belles prairies !..” (13).

“solitude fills me with emotions,” and he expresses a desire to live on “the edge between wilderness and society; [to have] on one side the village, on the other the forest; [to be] close enough to the wilderness to peacefully enjoy the charms of deep solitude” (13, 14).³⁵ As Ludovic begins to reveal what has brought him to his life of solitude, he also begins to attach his emotional state to the woods. He recalls walking through the forest near the Washington monument, explaining, “I felt my thoughts more free, my soul unshackled, my imagination surging” (54).³⁶ Soon after, in these same woods, he expresses his love for Marie; they later flee to the forests of Michigan to escape the racial prejudice and violence of American society. When Marie questions whether or not the sacrifice of leaving civilization is too great for him, Ludovic links the wilderness to his emotions when he exclaims, “not only my heart, my reason also approves this retreat to the lonely forest where we will enjoy such sweet happiness” (155).³⁷ As they go deeper into the dense forest, nature also mirrors their fears and Marie’s increasingly apparent illness. The natural world even assumes a supernatural role: the moon appears blood red. When Marie prepares Ludovic for her impending death, she reminds him that the night of their arrival to their refuge in the woods was “the instant when the moon was afire and appeared to me as a bloody phantom, I was seized by a pain that has never left” (194).³⁸ Nature parallels the arc of their relationship, emotions, and lives as the growing crescendo of a storm accompanies Marie’s death and the cottage in the woods Ludovic has built for them becomes Marie’s tomb that he stays to watch over.

³⁵ “Le voyageur : Cette solitude me remplit d’émotions... je n’en ai point encore vu qui me séduise autant” (13). “Le voyageur : ...Voici quel est mon projet : je me placerais sur la limite qui sépare le monde sauvage de la société civilisée ; j’aurai d’un côté le village, de l’autre la forêt ; je serai assez près du désert pour jouir en paix des charmes d’une solitude profonde...” (14).

³⁶ “je sentais ma pensée plus libre, mon âme plus dégagée des ses entraves, mon imagination plus hardie dans ses élans” (54).

³⁷ “Cette retraite vers la forêt solitaire où nous jouirons d’une si douce félicité, n’est pas seulement selon mon cœur ; ma raison elle-même l’approuve” (155).

³⁸ “À l’instant où l’astre des nuits tout en feu m’apparut comme un sanglant fantôme, je fus saisie d’une douleur qui ne m’a plus quittée” (194).

In addition to the intimate connection between the characters' emotions and nature, wilderness represents a broader contrast to and refuge from an increasingly encroaching American population. Greg Garrard explains, "If pastoral is the distinctive Old World construction of nature, suited to long-settled and domesticated landscapes, wilderness fits the settler experience in the New Worlds – particularly the United States, Canada and Australia – with their apparently untamed landscapes and the sharp distinction between the forces of culture and nature" (59-60). The narrator of *Marie* consistently describes the forests as primeval and untamed. He also recognizes and documents the plight of indigenous peoples as they are unjustly displaced from their homelands, falling victim to white Americans and their government. Ludovic learns from George about the Cherokee tribe in Georgia, who had been promised they could remain on their lands by the U.S. government. Of the Cherokees, Ludovic explains, "these poor savages, in their enormous simplicity, believed they were assured of their rights" (94-95).³⁹ He quotes the Cherokees as saying, "We want to die on our savannas because we were born there; all of America belonged to our fathers, we only have a fragment of it: leave us it... to your cities and countryside we prefer our uncultivated forests that give us game to live, verdant arches for shelter, and moreover we can't leave them because they contain the bones of our fathers" (Beaumont 94-95).⁴⁰ He also describes how they will then fall prey to greed and violence.

Aligning the indigenous tribes he learns about and encounters through his travels with the unspoiled and wild forests, Ludovic condemns the voracity and industry of white Americans, both in their unfair treatment of Native Americans and their corruption of the wilderness. Drescher

³⁹ "ces pauvres sauvages, dans leurs grossière simplicité, croyaient avoir assuré le succès de leur bon droit" (94-95).

⁴⁰ "Nous voulons mourir dans nos savanes parce que nous y sommes nés; tout l'Amérique était à nos pères, nous n'en avons plus qu'une parcelle: laissez-nous-la... Nous préférons à vos cités, à vos campagnes, nos forêts incultes qui nous donnent du gibier pour vivre et des voûtes de verdure pour nous abriter, et puis nous ne pouvons les quitter parce qu'elles contiennent les ossements de nos pères" (94-95).

recognizes this focus on the loss of forests when he observes, “Beaumont in *Marie* gave expression to this new picture of America and brought down the curtain on New World exoticism in the old sense – its tie with the natural world of God and the noble savage. He mourned the passing of nature and its displacement by a people who had no feeling for what they were destroying” (10). American greed and industry are a focus of Beaumont’s critique. Drescher acknowledges this when he asserts, “The wilderness was not appreciated by the white American because it was his enemy, standing in the way of his prime interest, material prosperity” (10). As he, Marie, and their guide Ovasco traveled from Detroit to Pontiac on their journey into the Michigan forests, Ludovic recalls being surprised to find well developed roads through the woods. Of the development he concludes, “Caring little for wild nature, these industrial land clearers don’t come seeking a tranquil and secluded life in the silence of these places; they arrive in the wilderness to seize outposts, serving as innkeepers for new arrivals, cultivating land they resell at a profit; then they go still further, and further on into the West, where they restart the same way of life and the same businesses” (Beaumont 168).⁴¹ Continuing into the deep forest permits Ludovic to flee the extremes of America’s destructive racist and capitalist society, first in an attempt to shield Marie, then later to mourn her.

France in New Orleans Short Stories by *Gens de Couleur Libres*

Long after Louisiana ceased to be a colony, France figured prominently in nineteenth century Louisiana fiction through language, history, and culture. Catherine Savage Brosman suggests that Francophone Louisiana literature of the early decades of the century could be viewed

⁴¹ “Peu soucieux de la nature sauvage, ces défricheurs industriels ne viennent point chercher dans le silence de ces lieux une vie tranquille et retirée ; ils arrivent au désert pour en saisir les avant-postes, servent d’aubergistes aux nouveaux arrivants, mettent en culture des terres qu’ils revendent avec profit ; ensuite ils vont au-delà, plus avant encore dans l’Ouest, où ils recommencent le même train d’existence et les mêmes industries” (168).

as “‘hypernational,’ because of its devotion to traditions considered to be identifying characteristics of the French national image; and the enduring presence of French Romanticism in Louisiana while it waned in France constituted a *romantisme attardé*, a kind of colonial postscript” (“Nature Untamed” 83). While French Romanticism as a literary style may be delayed, in the sense that it continues later through the nineteenth century in Louisiana than in France, it does not mean Louisiana authors were simply mimicking French writers. French literary tradition, particularly Romanticism, was embraced by the Louisiana francophone writers of this period even as they produced literature very much engaged with the concerns of life in the Americas. Nineteenth century *gens de couleur libres* writers had strong personal connections to France and French culture through language, education, and time spent in France.

The authors of the two short stories I address in this chapter, Michel Séligny and Adolphe Duhart, both have educational links to France. Séligny attended the Collège Sainte-Barbe in Paris. After his return to New Orleans, he founded the Académie Sainte-Barbe, a school for free children of color. Duhart, also educated in France, became a principal at the *Institution Catholique des Orphelins Indigents* in New Orleans. Their writing reflects their formal education and affinity for French language and literature: “Their literary style, marked by elevated language, beautiful crafting of sentences, and routine use of the *passé simple* and imperfect subjunctive, illustrated their education and abilities. The Romantic and sentimental features of their writing, founded in nineteenth-century French literary practice, were also suited to their semialienation and their need to excel” (Brosman, *Louisiana Creole Literature* 69).⁴²

New Orleans’s *gens de couleur libres* authors published in newspapers and journals in New Orleans and in France, navigating the complexities of writing for audiences of different races,

⁴² For examples of *français soutenu*, the literary French register used by *gens de couleur libres* writers, refer to the footnotes where I have included the quoted passages in their original language.

sympathies, and geographies. In addition to the short stories' formal, literary French and French Romantic style, France becomes a feature of *gens de couleur libres* writers' literary depictions of New Orleans through the social and cultural markers embedded in their texts. Amelinckx describes Michel Séligny's writings as "a perfect example of the relationship between the metropole and Louisiana because it synthesizes from a cultural and historical point of view the Louisiana francophone community's diverse elements of literary production and reading during this period" (39).⁴³ Michel Séligny's earliest short story, "Souvenirs de 1815," published in *L'Abeille de La Nouvelle Orléans* in 1839, explicitly contains references to "dear France, my forefathers' other homeland" (43)⁴⁴ as the first-person narrator revisits memories of heroes and sites of the Battle of New Orleans against the British on January 8, 1815. In the later short story "Marie," also published in *L'Abeille* but in April of 1853, the first-person narrator clearly anchors his story to locations and events in both Louisiana and France as he tells the story of an exiled general and his only child Marie.

Michel Séligny's "Marie"

"Marie" begins with the narrator both reminiscing and foreshadowing the story's conclusion as he notes the flowers on the grave of "sweet and good Marie" (53). The use of a first-person narrator offers a means to authenticate the places and events described in the story, and he names sites that take readers to New Orleans's past and connect its history to France. The narrator acknowledges changes to his surroundings by noting, "the centuries old trees of Gentilly, collapsed under the weight of years, mutilated and felled by a stranger's ax, like all the rest, disappeared,

⁴³ "son écriture est un parfait exemple des rapports entre la métropole et la Louisiane, car elle fait la synthèse du point de vue culturel et historique entre les divers éléments de la production littéraire et de la lecture de la communauté francophone louisianaise de l'époque" (39).

⁴⁴ "cette France chérie, autre patrie de mes pères" (43)

disappeared” (54).⁴⁵ Gentilly, a section of New Orleans bordered on the north by Lake Ponchartrain, has a connection to its counterpart in France. Originally called Bayou Sauvage, the area “was renamed Bayou Gentilly around 1718 to commemorate the Paris home of the Dreux brothers, early settlers along the waterway” (Garvey and Widmer 18). The narrator also identifies local landmarks. He exclaims, “Even you, silent confidant of my regrets, my old Clark house who has not said goodbye to me either; sitting, for so long a time, dreary and abandoned at your lonely crossroads, showing everyone your cracked roof, your wide gaping doors, your ruined and overgrown enclosure” before acknowledging that the house too had seen happier times with great parties and guests (Séligny, “Marie” 54-55).⁴⁶ Daniel Clark’s house, built on land from the Vidal and Blanc plantations, was located at the intersection of St John (now Bell St), Washington (now Desoto St), and Gentilly Road. After Clark’s death in 1813, his house fell into ruin (Toledano and Christovich 56). Noting Clark’s house, now crumbling, creates a morose atmosphere while it affirms the narrator’s familiarity with the setting and its history.

Séligny also demonstrates New Orleans and France’s shared history through the movement of people. The narrator explains, “the empire had just succumbed,” a reference to Napoleon’s defeat in Europe (Séligny, “Marie” 55)⁴⁷ and acknowledges the warm welcome Louisiana has always generously given its guests, both “the outcasts and the heroes” (55).⁴⁸ Further anchoring the story to history, the narrator remembers General H** L**, wounded at the attack of Quatre-Bas (June 16, 1815), a battle just preceding Napoleon’s defeat at Waterloo (June 18, 1815) and his

⁴⁵ “arbres centenaires de Gentilly, affaîssés sous le poids des ans, mutilés, abattus par la hache de l’étranger, comme tout le reste, disparus, disparus” (54).

⁴⁶ “Il n’est pas jusqu’à toi, muette confidente de mes regrets, ma vieille maison Clark qui ne m’aies dit aussi adieu ; toi si longtemps assise, morne et délaissée, dans ton carrefour solitaire, montrant à tous ta toiture crevassée, tes portes larges béantes, ton enceinte envahie, dévastée” (54-55).

⁴⁷ “L’empire venait de succomber” (55).

⁴⁸ “La Louisiane a gardé le souvenir des nobles hôtes qui alors vinrent s’asseoir à son foyer hospitalier, et elle aura toujours à s’enorgueillir du généreux accueil qu’elle leur fit à tous. Terre de liberté et de patriotisme, elle accueillit, elle dut accueillir en sœur des proscrits et des héros” (55).

young and motherless daughter Marie. While General H** L** shares the initials and some characteristics with the actual General Henri-Dominique Lallemand who served under Napoleon and was wounded at Waterloo, the story's character is fictionalized.⁴⁹ General Henri-Dominique Lallemand went to New Orleans in 1818 to seek recruits and supplies for his brother, Charles-François-Antoine Lallemand's Champs D'Asile project, a French military colony in Galveston, Texas. He did not remain there long, returning to his wife Henriette and daughter Caroline in Bordentown, New Jersey before his death in 1823.⁵⁰ Séligny creates another link between New Orleans and the metropole's common history, through the implied historical figure.

"Marie" presents familiar Romantic characters that correspond to the archetypes presented in the earlier examples of French Romantic novels, and the story expresses lyricism through the characters' circumstances and the narrator's expression of his feelings for them. The narrator takes readers back to his first encounter with the general and his daughter Marie after stumbling across their modest home and finding refuge from the sudden nightfall in the forest of Gentilly. He describes the battle scarred and imposing general as having the "soul of a noble soldier, softened" by the "angel that the Lord had put at his side" (Séligny, "Marie" 58).⁵¹ Marginalized through his isolation from his men and life in the remote woods of France's former colony, the general has fallen in stature. Amelinckx notes, "in [Séligny's] Louisiana stories, marginalization is not limited to the poor, members of every social class can be society's victim and very quickly find themselves outsiders because living conditions are random and it takes very little to fall outside the norm and

⁴⁹ Amelinckx, in his footnote to the story, notes that the general's initials refer to General Henri-Dominique Lallemand (56).

⁵⁰ See "Biographical Sketches of Selected Members of the Association of French Emigrants." *Alabama Review*, vol. 56, no. 2, Apr. 2003, p. 121 and Rafe Blaufarb's *Bonapartists in the Borderlands: French Exiles and Refugees on the Gulf Coast, 1815–1835*. University Alabama Press, 2005 for further information about the Lallemand brothers.

⁵¹ "l'âme du noble soldat, tout attendrie, passant dans son regard humide, quand il s'attachait sur l'ange que le Seigneur avait mis à ses côtés" (58).

land in misery” (36).⁵² They become friends, and during the narrator’s subsequent visits, Marie spends evenings reading aloud about European military campaigns. The narrator recalls, “sometimes a silent tear would dampen [the general’s] eye, a stifled sigh would escape his chest” as he remembered battles and lost friends (Séligny, “Marie” 59).⁵³ Living in exile, the general mourns France, yet always believes he will return one day. He lives as a hermit with his daughter who is his only solace.

The narrator portrays Marie as a sympathetic character who is vulnerable and unblemished. Noting “her blond hair of an angel,” he compares her to “the pale image of her patron saint, that other Marie, mother of the holy child who rests in her arms, carefully watching over all that is fragile, poor, innocent and pure like him” (Séligny, “Marie” 57).⁵⁴ He uses similes to describe Marie and her weakness in the face of larger events when he observes, “[she is] like a bird having been pushed far away by a storm from a Europe that had been overwhelmed by war and soaked in blood” (54).⁵⁵ Recalling her initial fear upon his first visit to their cabin, he again compares her to a bird: “Marie, who had fled trembling from the presence of a stranger, who, at the first sound of my steps, flew away like a frightened dove” (58).⁵⁶ Marie, although delicate and frightened, follows her father’s lead and as the general warms to the visitor, Marie does as well. Her vulnerability is doubled as a child who has lost both her mother and her motherland. Like her

⁵² “Dans le cycle louisianais, la marginalité n’est pas restreinte aux classes pauvres, toutes les classes sociales peuvent être victimes de la société et se retrouver très rapidement en marge de celle-ci, car les conditions de vie sont aléatoires et il suffit de peu pour basculer en dehors de la norme et tomber dans la misère” (36).

⁵³ “Parfois une larme silencieuse mouillait sa paupière, un soupir étouffé sortait de sa poitrine ; c’est que là, à cette bataille meurtrière, au pied de ce ravin profond, à la crête de cette redoute mitraillée, un ami, un compagnon d’armes, un frère était tombé en lui serrant la main, aux derniers chants d’une éclatante victoire” (59).

⁵⁴ “sa blonde tête d’ange, et la blanche image de sa patronne, de cette autre Marie, mère du bel enfant-Dieu qui repose dans ses bras, et qui veille si attentivement sur tout ce qui est frêle, pauvre, innocent et pur comme lui !” (57)

⁵⁵ “[elle est] comme l’oiseau poussé par l’orage, de là-bas, de bien loin, de cette terre d’Europe bouleversée par la guerre, arrosé par le sang” (54)

⁵⁶ “Marie, qui avait fui toute tremblante la présence de l’étranger, qui, au premier bruit de mes pas, s’envolait comme une colombe effarouchée” (58).

father, Marie is at times seized by melancholy and longing to return to France. The narrator acknowledges her sadness and describes “her beautiful blue eyes covered in tears; it’s that she also dreamed of her absent sky, it’s that she also secretly sighed for France, sweet homeland that one never forgets, tender mother that one continues to love despite her ungratefulness!” (60).⁵⁷ Marie is an unwitting victim to larger historical forces but still holds steadfast in her attachment to France. Marie’s nostalgia for France would resonate with a New Orleans Francophone audience experiencing its own cultural displacement as the city became increasingly Americanized. Although she provides solace to her father’s exile, her own homesickness and isolation elicit sympathy from the narrator and readers.

The narrator’s visit to Marie’s tomb in the story’s exposition foreshadows her death. Already weakened by melancholy and homesickness, Marie and her father become exposed to yellow fever. Marie’s health begins to decline, and the narrator reveals she demonstrates symptoms of “the illness by which one often dies, that kills the little bird snatched from its paternal woods” (Séigny, “Marie” 60).⁵⁸ The appearance of this particular disease performs three functions: first, it brings pathos to the story as Marie and her father succumb to the illness; invoking yellow fever illustrates how Séigny connects the story to time; and, ultimately, it links New Orleans to France. By stating that the disease kills those taken from their homeland, “the little bird snatched from its paternal woods,” he emphasizes that those who are not Creole are particularly vulnerable in the face of the disease. Yellow fever presented a reoccurring threat to the New Orleans’s area during the first decades of the nineteenth century, particularly to those who were not born there. The narrator explains, “the epidemic of 181*, so fatal to poor foreigners, found the general and his

⁵⁷ “ses beaux yeux bleus se voilaient de larmes ; c’est qu’elle aussi rêvait [à] son ciel absent, c’est qu’elle aussi soupirait secrètement pour la France, douce patrie que l’on n’oublie jamais, tendre mère que l’on aime toujours malgré ses ingratitude !” (60).

⁵⁸ “mal dont on meurt souvent, qui tue le petit oiseau enlevé de ses bois paternels” (60).

daughter” (60).⁵⁹ Séligny’s narrative is historically accurate in its assessment of yellow fever’s impact on the region: “Yellow fever, that summer, struck with unheard of violence, and those who were spared previous years, those whose fairly long stays in New Orleans seemed to have sheltered them from the disease’s terrible blows, fell by the thousands, cut down almost instantly by death, which for two long months, slaughtered without tiring, without resting a single instant” (60).⁶⁰

In “Immunity, Capital, and Power in Antebellum New Orleans,” historian Kathryn Olivarius explores the vulnerability of newcomers in the face of yellow fever, explaining that French migrants succumbed at ten times the rate of Creoles (434). Repeated outbreaks of the fever killed thousands in the city through the nineteenth century. Amelinckx records there were five yellow fever outbreaks between 1804 and 1820. The one in 1819, likely the outbreak referred to in the story, “lasted from August to December, killing 1500-2000 victims, most of whom were newly migrated European families” (60).⁶¹ Séligny reflects the significant rate of death as narrator and doctor react to the sounds of the many carts carrying the dead to burial suggesting the enormity of the disease’s human cost and linking the characters to New Orleans’s history.

Aside from Doctor Du***, a friend of the narrator’s family who kept watch at Marie’s bedside, the only other characters in the story are two enslaved men. The narrator explains that they led the General and his daughter to the secluded location where they would live. The narrator introduces them as “two good and simple servants, acquired for a few pennies, relics of a former

⁵⁹ “l’épidémie de 181*, si fatale aux pauvres étrangers, trouva le général et sa fille” (60).

⁶⁰ “La fièvre jaune, cet été-là, sévit avec une violence inouïe, et ceux qui avaient été épargnés les précédentes années, ceux qu’un assez long séjour à la Nouvelle-Orléans semblait mettre à l’abri des coups terribles de la maladie, tombèrent par milliers, moissonnés presque instantanément par la mort qui, depuis deux longs mois, abattait, sans se lasser, sans se reposer un seul instant” (60).

⁶¹ Amelinckx cites Carrigan when he notes, “Entre 1804 et 1820, il y eut cinq épidémies de fièvre jaune, en 1804, en 1809, en 1811, en 1817 et en 1819. Celle de 1819 s’étendit du mois d’aout à la fin décembre et fit entre 1 500 et 2 000 victimes, la plupart dans les familles européennes récemment immigrées” (60).

opulence, who directed the steps of their masters outside the town” (Séligny, “Marie” 56).⁶² As the narrator describes the cabin in the woods, he minimizes the labor involved in its construction and gives the setting a fairytale quality. He explains, “The little cabin, placed like a nest in the dense forest, but with a few delightful openings, had been built as if by magic by the hard working and clever hands of the two good Blacks” (57).⁶³ When they let the narrator in to where Marie suffers from fever, he recounts, “the two good slaves, scared, signaling me with alarm” (61).⁶⁴ Amelinckx notes, “In Séligny’s writing we only find stereotyped images of slaves following the norms of a slave society, hence an ‘acceptable’ representation: slaves are always loyal, devout, and hardworking” (37).⁶⁵ Amelinckx’s explanation of an “‘acceptable’ representation” accurately depicts Séligny’s portrayal of the enslaved characters in this story. As Marie lies dying, the narrator describes their great sorrow: “they tenderly loved their young mistress who had only had for the miseries of their condition pious calls for good, honest feelings, and innumerable soothing which are always at the bottom of an excellent heart” (63).⁶⁶ Readers learn that the oldest of the enslaved men, “faithful Ben,” has been buried not far from his masters because he died soon after Marie and her father: “when he no longer had his young mistress to love and his good master to care for” (64).⁶⁷

⁶² “Deux serviteurs, simples et bonnes créatures, acquis de quelques deniers, reste d’une ancienne opulence, dirigèrent les pas de leurs maîtres hors de la ville” (56).

⁶³ “La petite cabane, placée comme un nid dans l’épaisseur de la forêt, mais avec quelques percées ravissantes s’édifia comme par enchantement sous les mains laborieuses et intelligents des deux bons Noirs” (57).

⁶⁴ “les deux bons esclaves, tout effrayés, me firent des signes d’alarmes” (61).

⁶⁵ “Nous ne pouvons retrouver dans les écrits de Séligny que des images stéréotypées d’esclaves suivant les normes d’une société esclavagiste, donc un représentation ‘acceptable’ ” les esclaves sont toujours fidèles, dévoués, travailleurs” (37).

⁶⁶ “elles aimaient tendrement leur jeune maîtresse qui n’avait eu pour les misères de leur condition que pieuses exhortations au bien, aux sentiments honnêtes, et tous ces adoucissements sans nombre qui sont toujours au fond d’un excellent cœur” (63)

⁶⁷ “Non loin d’eux repose aussi le plus vieux de leurs serviteurs, le fidèle Ben, qui mourut quand il n’eut plus sa jeune maîtresse à aimer, son bon maître à soigner” (64).

The happy and devoted elderly enslaved man was a common trope in antebellum texts⁶⁸ and similar representations of the *bon nègre* are found in French colonial texts. Other factors may also have influenced Séligny's choice to include them. Amelinckx attributes the lack of Creoles of color in Séligny's work to a question of audience, noting that he wrote for journals owned by whites and for a majority white audience (33). This could also account for the appearance of "happy slaves" or, as in the short story, enslaved people who are excessively devoted to their owners. Louisiana statutes passed in 1830 would have also had a stifling effect on challenges to expected representations of race. Statute 152, Section I threatened: "whosoever shall write, print, publish or distribute anything having a tendency to produce discontent among the free colored population of the State, or insubordination among the slaves therein... be sentenced to imprisonment at hard labor for life or suffer death at the discretion of the court" (Bullard and Curry 271).

The natural world in "Marie" mirrors aspects of the French Romantic texts examined earlier in this chapter but applies them to a New Orleans setting. Natural forces impact the plot, foreshadow what is to come, and emphasize the characters' feelings and traits. The narrator first encounters the general and his daughter when he seeks shelter during a heavy storm. He recounts, "after a long, very long excursion in the woods, one of these great August rains that fall from the sky like torrents, a sudden storm rushing with all of its wrath from old Lake Pontchartrain, a deep night enveloping the earth like a funeral crepe" (57).⁶⁹ Natural phenomena set the story in motion

⁶⁸ See Sarah N. Roth's chapter "The Old Child and the Young One": The Infantilization of Male Slaves in 1820s Juvenile Literature" in her book *Gender and Race in Antebellum Popular Culture*, Cambridge UP, 2014 for an explanation of early portrayals of the devoted black male slave in antebellum fiction. See also Lydia Ferguson's "Pro-Slavery Appropriations and Inadvertent Agencies: The Elder(ly) 'Uncle' in Plantation Fiction." *American Studies*, vol. 58, no. 1, Apr. 2019, pp. 49-72 for analysis of representations of elderly enslaved men in pro-slavery nineteenth century texts.

⁶⁹ "après une longue, une bien longue excursion dans les bois, une de ces grandes pluies d'août qui descendent du ciel comme des cataractes, un soudain orage accourant avec toutes ses colères du vieux lac Pontchartrain, une profonde nuit enveloppant la terre comme d'un crêpe funèbre" (57).

and foreshadow the tragic ending as the natural world suggests Marie's approaching death. Just as the blood red moon in Beaumont's *Marie* portends that the escape into the forest will not end well for the lovers, nature takes on a supernatural aspect in "Marie." Fear strikes the narrator: "On the high branches of the old tree a white-tailed eagle descended, and from there, in short intervals, in the absolute silence of everything nearby, reverberating echoes of its long funereal screams which resounded in my ears like a death knell: alarmed, I ran to Marie; I needed to reassure my heart, at least for a moment, against that sinister forecast!" (62).⁷⁰ The eagle's cry both alarms the narrator and forecasts subsequent events.

Just as Ludovic in Beaumont's *Marie* seeks refuge in the woods, so does the General in Séligny's short story. Nature becomes a sanctuary to General H** L** and his daughter, and the cabin in the Gentilly woods offers safety from the social and political upheaval that they experienced before arriving in Louisiana. The characters, whom the narrator refers to as refugees (57), would have left France after Napoleon's final defeat, a period known as the Second White Terror. During this period there was violent social unrest, arrests, and reprisals against those who had supported Napoleon. General H** L** and Marie find security in the isolation of their small cabin and garden: "[i]mpenetrable asylum at the threshold of which came to exhale all the world's noise, all of society's unrest, incessantly stirred up troubled ambitions, unrelenting passions, newly emerging systems, impious doctrines that fall and crumble?" (57).⁷¹

⁷⁰ "Sur les hautes branches du vieil arbre, l'orfraie s'était abattue, et de là, à courts intervalles, dans le silence absolu de tous les objets avoisinants, répercutés d'échos en échos, elle poussait ses longs cris funèbres qui retentissaient à mon oreille comme un glas de mort : je courus tout effaré près de Marie ; j'avais tant besoin de rassurer mon cœur, au moins un moment, contre ce sinistre pronostic !" (62). It also should be noted here that the expression "pousser des cris d'orfraie" can be translated as "to scream bloody murder," adding a secondary meaning in French that enhances the urgency and the death portend understood by the narrator as he hears the eagle's screams.

⁷¹ "Asile mystérieux au seuil duquel venaient expirer tous les bruits du monde, toutes les agitations de la société, et qu'y soulèvent incessamment l'ambition inquiète, les passions déchainées, les systèmes nouveaux qui surgissent, les doctrines impies qui tombent et croulent ?" (57).

Expressing the locality of the refuge not only through place names and history, the narrator also names trees and plants native to the area. He identifies the sweet gum (57, 59), pines and oaks (58-59), and a cypress covered in moss (62), all of which are indigenous to Louisiana. Brosman argues, “Creole writers were mostly from the city or plantation-bred, but they knew the riverscapes, Lake Ponchartrain, Bayou Lacombe, Mandeville, the forests farther north, and the Grand Isle area – especially after these areas become popular resorts following the yellow fever epidemics of 1837 and 1853-55 (along with cholera)” (“Nature Untamed” 84). Séligny sets “Marie” in what were dense woods, though the narrator implies they are no longer, in one of the areas listed by Brosman, Gentilly bordering Lake Ponchartrain. Interestingly, the narrator refers to sweet gum as *compalmes* (57), which corresponds to the southern Louisiana Acadian name for the tree “copal” adapted from the Aztec term for resin (“Plants of Louisiana”). He will later call the tree *liquidambars* (Séligny, “Marie” 59), the scientific genus name, depicting nature as a site for local color by integrating regional names and standard. “Marie” preserves the natural landscape through text even after it has succumbed to development.

Adolphe Duhart’s “Trois amours”

Appearing twelve years later than Séligny’s “Marie,” Adolphe Duhart also sets “Trois amours” (“Three Loves”) along the shores of Lake Ponchartrain. The story first appeared serially in *La Tribune de la Nouvelle-Orléans* between August 15 and September 3 of 1865 under the pen name Léila D...t. The difference in publication dates of the stories becomes compelling when one considers the enormous changes occurring in the American South during the Civil War. Though the war and surrounding events are not referenced in the story, the plot of “Trois amours” discusses race more provocatively than Séligny’s “Marie.” Duhart would have been freer to challenge New

Orleans's racial codes in his stories by publishing in *La Tribune*. Chris Michaelides notes the significance of *La Tribune* for *gens de couleur libres* writers, explaining, "the new newspaper included a series that featured poems and short stories by Creole writers and became the official voice of the radical party during Reconstruction" (24).⁷²

Consisting of ten brief chapters and an epilogue, "Trois amours" recounts a tale of young love ended too soon, the jealous and desperate love of a mother for her dying child, and long kept secrets revealed through letters concerning an adopted daughter. The story shares traits with the two novels and short story analyzed earlier in this chapter. Duhart sets the story in a recognizable locale that is anchored to a specific time and place through geographical, cultural, and historical references that link the characters and events to both France and Louisiana. The life experiences and relationships of characters across two generations convey the lyrical qualities of the story. Instead of the untamed forests of the previous texts, "Trois amours" presents a garden where nature aligns with the story's mood and the characters' emotional states.

"Trois amours" is set in Mandeville on the north shore of Lake Ponchartrain. Mandeville was founded by Bernard Xavier de Marigny de Mandeville in 1834 and by design offered summer residences for wealthy New Orleanians as well as steamship service from New Orleans. In his notes accompanying "Trois amours," Michaelides acknowledges the significance of the area: "known for its pleasant and healthy climate, this region served as a retreat for the creole elite wanting to avoid the summer heat and sometimes illnesses of New Orleans" (226).⁷³ It is exactly these Creole elite, with their displays of wealth and connections to France who Duhart depicts in

⁷² "À l'instar de la guerre de Sécession, Louis Charles Roudanez fonde le journal radical bilingue, *L'Union*, qui prend des positions abolitionnistes et révolutionnaires. Acheté en 1863 par Paul Trévigne et rebaptisé *La Tribune*, le nouveau journal comprend un feuilleton où figurent poésies et nouvelles d'écrivains créoles, et deviendra l'organe officiel du parti radical pendant la Reconstruction" (24). For further information about Roudanez and Trévigne and the origins of their newspapers see Rodolphe Desdunes's *Nos Hommes et Notre Histoire*, Arbour & Dupont, 1911.

⁷³ "Connue pour son climat agréable et salubre, cette région servait de retraite pour l'élite créole voulant éviter la chaleur d'été et parfois les maladies de la Nouvelle-Orléans" (226).

“Trois amours.” The story begins in “a luxurious sitting room of one of the most elegant villas alongside the edge of the lake” and is entirely set within this estate (Duhart 101).⁷⁴ In addition to a locale that links New Orleans to its *ancienne population* and its connections to France, the story also uses cultural references as comparisons to reveal the wealth and status of the villa’s inhabitants and to bridge Europe and the Americas.

The third person narrator uses European cultural references to describe the characters. He deems a scene of the two girls seated together, working on embroidery worthy of Watteau’s brush (Duhart 102). He compares Valentine’s neck to marble of Paros (102) and determines only Rubens could accurately reproduce Lydia (102). While listening to Lydia play the salon’s piano, the narrator recognizes, “finally it was Weber’s ‘Dernière Pensée Musicale’ that she played perhaps without even being aware of it” (103).⁷⁵ The cultural references are also implied within the text. Michaelides identifies echoes of French Romantic poet Lamartine’s poem “Le Lac” in the language describing Beaufort remembering his lost love: “he still seemed to hear Valentine’s childlike voice. The scent that he breathed, the breeze that passed over his head, the clusters of wisteria that fell around him, the lapping of the lake’s waters, the birds’ song, all reminded him of her” (Michaelides 227; Duhart 127).⁷⁶

Local cultural references highlight a composer and a cabinet maker who were both men of color. The narrator explains that during the fateful ball that Madame Duménil hosts for her daughter Valentine’s engagement to Beaufort, musicians play “a charming Creole waltz, composed by a Louisiana musician full of originality and taste who disguises his creations with a

⁷⁴ “Dans un riche salon d’une des plus élégantes villas flanquées sur les bords du lac” (101).

⁷⁵ “c’était enfin la dernière pensée de Weber qu’elle jouait peut-être sans le savoir” (103).

⁷⁶ “il lui sembla entendre encore la voix enfantine de Valentine. Les senteurs qu’il respirait, la brise qui passait sur sa tête, les grappes de glycines qui tombaient autour de lui, le clapotement des eaux du lac, le chant des oiseaux, tout enfin la lui rappelait” (127).

bit too much seriousness: we named S. Snaer” (118).⁷⁷ Francois-Michel-Samuel Snaer was a conductor and composer who was born a free Creole of color in New Orleans between 1832 and 1834. His family had emigrated to New Orleans from Saint Domingue and was of mixed African, French, and German ancestry (Sullivan 63). Similarly, the narrator notes Valentine’s bedroom has exquisite furnishings: “let’s just say in passing, even if its restraint may startle some, that the furnishings, true jewel of cabinetry, true bird’s nest, came out of the workshops of our compatriot and friend D. Barjon, an artist full of taste and charm” (120).⁷⁸ Dutreuil Barjon, free man of color born in St. Domingue in 1799, came to New Orleans with his mother in 1813 where he apprenticed as a furniture maker (Moscou 149). Barjon had a workshop at 9 Saint Anne Street and a shop on Bourbon Street; his son would follow him in the trade (Michaelides 227). Within “Trois amours” Duhart embeds cultural markers that connect Europe and New Orleans, present free men of color alongside European artists, and reflect the wealth and refinement of the Creole class depicted in the story. The European and local cultural references anchor the story to a particular time and place while including artistry by free men of color in the world of the *ancienne population*.

Written primarily in the third person with a few interjections by a plural first-person narrator, “Trois amours” shares many of the Romantic traits of lyricism and character archetypes with the fictional texts already explored in this chapter. The narrator, describing teenaged Valentine, recounts, “[she is] blonde like a virgin from Norway. Her long curly hair falls softly on her white neck, diaphanous and veined like Parian marble; her eyes blue and limpid, one could read in them to the depths of her soul; her lips are fresh as the first rose of May” (Duhart 102).⁷⁹

⁷⁷ “C’était une délicieuse valse créole, composée par un Louisianais, musicien plein d’originalité et de gout qui cache ses productions avec un peu trop de sévérité : nous avons nommé S. Snaer” (118).

⁷⁸ “disons encore en passant, dût sa modestie s’en alarmer, que cet ameublement, vrai bijou d’ébénisterie, vrai nid d’oiseau, sortait des ateliers de notre compatriote et ami D. Barjon, artiste plein de gout et de suavité” (120).

⁷⁹ “blonde comme une vierge de la Norvège. Ses longs cheveux bouclés lui tombent mollement sur son cou blanc, diaphane et veine comme du marbre de Paros; ses yeux sont bleus et limpides, on y pourrait lire jusqu’au fond de son âme; ses lèvres sont fraîches comme la première rose de mai” (102).

Like the female characters of Beaumont's *Marie* and Séligny's "Marie," Valentine suffers from declining health. Her diagnosis with consumption foreshadows her death: "[w]hen [the disease] reveals itself, it is always too late, its prey is already sacrificed!" (105).⁸⁰ Valentine's diminishing health causes her mother, widowed Madame Duménil, to become increasingly obsessed with her care, using her enormous wealth to "consult with the most celebrated doctors from the Crescent City" (106).⁸¹ Madame Duménil's preoccupation with her daughter's wellbeing extends to attempts to prevent young Valentine's growing relationship with Beaufort, but the narrator warns, "alas! The poor mother must not ignore that one can't manage feelings, they go where God leads them" (107).⁸² Despite the implied threat to her well-being, Valentine follows her emotions and her love for Beaufort.

Twenty-five-year-old Charles Beaufort is handsome, wealthy, and French: "He belonged to a good family originally from Bordeaux. Of medium build, he did not wear a beard, but a thin black mustache outlined his serious lips and contrasted admirably with his olive complexion, his walk was simple and distinguished" (104).⁸³ Beaufort grows from childhood companion to suitor. Valentine's mother perceives Beaufort as a threat to her daughter's wellbeing and tries to keep them apart. Against Madame Duménil's wishes, Beaufort and Valentine declare their love for each other, and he continues to court her. Madame Duménil discovers the forbidden love between them, and she attempts to deter him: "Rich, young, and handsome, you shouldn't waste your time with young girls: what was tolerable in your childhood has become ridiculous at your age. You

⁸⁰ "Quand il se révèle, il est toujours trop tard, sa proie est sacrifiée d'avance" (105).

⁸¹ "Possédant une fortune immense, M^{me} Duménil consulta les plus célèbres médecins de la ville du Croissant" (106).

⁸² "Mais, hélas ! la pauvre mère ne devait pas ignorer qu'on ne dispose pas des sentiments, ils vont où Dieu les guide" (107).

⁸³ "Il appartenait à une bonne famille originaire de Bordeaux. De taille moyenne, il ne portait pas de barbe, mais de fines moustaches noires se dessinaient sur ses lèvres sérieuses et tranchaient admirablement sur son teint mat, sa démarche était simple et distinguée" (104).

jeopardize my daughter's happiness" (109).⁸⁴ She fears the risks the budding romance and strong emotions pose to Valentine's health and jealously wishes to keep Valentine to herself. Instead of being dissuaded, Beaufort's love for Valentine intensifies.

Madame Duménil eventually allows the two to marry after Valentine's health begins to decline from her enforced separation from Beaufort. Madame Duménil even hosts a ball to celebrate their engagement, but Valentine's doctor warns that she must not waltz as he "feared the emotion that always ensues from this passionate dance" (115).⁸⁵ The foreshadowing of Madame Duménil's fears and the doctor's warnings come to fruition. Madame Duménil, her resolve weakened by her daughter's obvious suffering from being excluded from dancing, grants Valentine permission to waltz with Beaufort. Valentine collapses at the ball. Several weeks after the ball, sixteen-year-old Valentine succumbs to her illness, leaving behind a household deep in mourning.

The emotional intensity of his experiences changes Beaufort's character from dashing young lover to melancholy, grieving wanderer. During Valentine's protracted decline, his appearance transforms: "Beaufort was no longer the same. Paled by insomnia, an uninterrupted fever acted as strength; his eyes reddened by tears, his disheveled grooming, finally everything about him testified to his despair" (121).⁸⁶ After her death, Beaufort is inconsolable: "He avoided everyone, keeping a mournful silence, and seeming to listen to an interior voice" (123).⁸⁷ Like the young male protagonists D'Auvernay from *Bug-Jargal* and Ludovic from *Marie* who voyaged to the Americas, Beaufort will travel to escape his sorrow. He travels in the reverse direction, moving toward France: "[f]or two years he visited all of the regions of old Europe, leaving at each stop

⁸⁴ "Riche, jeune, et beau, vous ne devez pas perdre ainsi votre temps auprès de jeunes filles : ce qui était tolérable dans votre enfance devient ridicule à votre âge. Vous compromettez l'avenir et le bonheur de ma fille" (109).

⁸⁵ "Le docteur craignait l'émotion qui résulte toujours de cette danse passionnée" (115).

⁸⁶ "Beaufort n'était plus le même. Palie par l'insomnie, une fièvre continue lui tenait lieu de force ; ses yeux rougis par les larmes, le désordre de sa toilette, tout en lui enfin témoignait d'un grand désespoir" (121).

⁸⁷ "Il fuyait le monde, gardant toujours un morne silence, et semblait d'écouter une voix intérieure" (123).

some tatter of his sadness” (123).⁸⁸ As he slowly recovers from his loss, he continues to try to distract himself from his emotions. Lydia periodically sends him news from Mandeville. The narrator notes how the letters affect him: “far from reopening his barely healed wounds, [her occasional letter] was a beneficial balm to him and always brought him, if not happiness, at least a sweet consolation” (124).⁸⁹ Clearly, even in his prolonged absence, he is still drawn to the villa back in Mandeville.

Lydia’s character introduces race as a theme of “Trois amours.” From the very first pages of the story, the narrator contrasts Lydia and Valentine. While Valentine is pale and blond, Lydia “is brunette with black hair so richly planted that its weight caused her head to tilt slightly, giving her an additional grace” (102).⁹⁰ She also frequently has an air of sadness about her, though it doesn’t seem to detract from her beauty or her pleasant demeanor: “her eyes are beautiful and velvety, and their radiance is tempered under long lashes, her mouth is red, damp, and serious” (102).⁹¹ Readers must piece together the source of her sadness. Initially, the cause seems to be that Beaufort’s attention is primarily focused on Valentine even though he declares, “but rest assured, good Lydia, of my steadfast friendship. If Valentine occupies first place in my heart, you, you have the second” (103).⁹² Duhart alludes to her mysterious past by revealing that Monsieur Duménil divulged a secret to his wife from his deathbed. When Lydia overheard Monsieur Duménil say her name through an open door, she “stopped, astonished, worried, leaning on the doorframe, lost,

⁸⁸ “Pendant deux ans, il visita toutes les contrées de la vieille Europe, en laissant à chaque étape quelque lambeau de sa tristesse” (123).

⁸⁹ “loin de lui rouvrir ses plaies à peine cicatrisées, [une lettre de Lydia] lui était un baume bienfaisant et lui apportait toujours sinon du bonheur du moins une douce consolation” (124).

⁹⁰ “L’autre est brune avec des cheveux noirs, si richement plantés, que leur poids en lui faisant pencher légèrement la tête lui donne une grâce de plus” (102).

⁹¹ “ses yeux sont beaux et veloutés, et leur éclat est tempéré sous de long cils, sa bouche est rouge, humide et sérieuse” (102).

⁹² “mais croyez bien, bonne Lydia, à mon amitié inaltérable. Si Valentine occupe la première place dans mon cœur, vous, vous avez la seconde” (103).

devastated, and despite herself, she had listened! She did not miss a word of that terrible confession, and there was not a single one that did not strike at her heart” (105).⁹³ What Lydia overhears leads her to collapse in tears, but Monsieur Duménil’s last words are kept secret from readers for most of the story. Madame Duménil kept her promise to her dying husband and “loved Lydia with all of the affection of a mother and that affection had never deteriorated for an instant” (105).⁹⁴ The secret is put aside in the story as the focus shifts to Valentine and Beaufort. Lydia is an integral part of the household and remains Valentine’s friend, insuring she has time with Beaufort and intervening on Valentine and Beaufort’s behalf when Madame Duménil refuses to let them be together.

After Valentine’s death, Lydia assumes a more prominent role in the story, prompting revelations about her origin. She remains at the villa as caregiver for Madame Duménil who has become white haired and physically weakened. The arrival of a steamship at the wharf announces Beaufort’s return from his two years of wandering, and he rejoins the villa’s inhabitants in their mourning. Beaufort, who had thought he could never love another, begins to see Lydia in a new light: “Each day he was surprised to discover a new quality in her. Each of her actions was inspired by virtue, and as he grew accustomed to her beauty, he found in her divine charms. In fact, her devotion, her good and modest demeanor, a bit languid, no longer reminded him of blonde Valentine” (Duhart 129).⁹⁵ After much reflection and self-doubt over whether Lydia could possibly love him, Beaufort finally declares his love to her. He discovers that she loves him too, but Lydia

⁹³ “La porte de la chambre était restée ouverte et Lydia, qui venait comme d’habitude auprès de M. Duménil, en entendant prononcer son nom, s’était arrêtée, étonnée, inquiétée, appuyée au chambranle de la porte, et là abimée, anéantie et comme malgré elle, elle avait écouté ! Elle ne perdit pas un mot de cette terrible confession, et pas un seul qui ne l’eut frappé au cœur” (105).

⁹⁴ “M^{me} Duménil tint la promesse qu’elle avait faite à son mari mourant, elle aima Lydia avec toute l’affection d’une mère et jamais cette affection ne fut altérée un instant” (105).

⁹⁵ “Chaque jour il s’étonnait de découvrir en elle une qualité nouvelle. Chacune de ses actions était inspirée par quelques vertus, et à mesure qu’il s’habitua à sa beauté, il lui trouvait des charmes divins. En effet, son dévouement, son air modeste et bon, un peu langoureux, ne lui rappelait plus la blonde Valentin” (129).

insists she would only bring him misfortune. Expressing her willingness to sacrifice her own happiness to protect him, she explains, “Neither you nor I have the right to irrevocably commit ourselves... your laws forbid it... and I would never agree to unite my destiny with yours” (135).⁹⁶ She apologizes to Madame Duménil, who has been present through the exchange; Madame Duménil gathers Lydia and Beaufort to her and, at last, reveals the secret from Monsieur Duménil’s deathbed confession through a packet of letters.

The epistolary revelations in the final pages link the story to a historical moment. Nineteen years earlier, Monsieur Duménil, already engaged to Madame Duménil, had volunteered to serve in the Mexican American War. The story is accurate in portraying that many Louisiana residents had volunteered to serve.⁹⁷ Monsieur Duménil returned home after being wounded at the Battle of Cerro Gordo. He told his fiancée that a dying friend had entrusted him with her daughter, and he asked if she would agree to care for the child, Lydia. The letters Monsieur Duménil confided to his wife years later at his death were written by Lydia’s birth mother and reveal he was actually Lydia’s father. The letters also reveal another secret about Lydia’s identity. Sequentially, three letters signed by Carmen Rillon at times pleading with Monsieur Duménil and at other times cursing him, divulge her seduction, then rejection. She writes, “Arthur, will you return the honor you took from me? oh my God! no, never! the cowardly prejudice that governs your society protects you... would make it a crime... because I am only a mixed blood girl... and against your more horrible crime, I have no recourse” (Duhart 140).⁹⁸ Her final and dying plea is to care for the

⁹⁶ “Ni vous, ni moi n'avons le droit de nous engager irrévocablement... vos lois le défendent... et je ne consentirais jamais à unir ma destinée à la vôtre !” (135).

⁹⁷ See Ken Barnett Germany’s “Patriotism and Protest: Louisiana and General Edmund Pendleton Gaine’s Army of Mexican-American War Volunteers, 1845-1847.” *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association*, vol. 37, no. 3, 1996, pp. 325-35 for details about Louisiana’s military volunteers during this period.

⁹⁸ “Arthur, me rendez-vous l'honneur que vous m'avez ravi? ô mon Dieu! non, jamais!... le lâche préjuge qui régite votre société vous le défend... on vous en ferait un crime... car je ne suis, moi, qu'une fille de sang mêlé... et contre votre crime plus horrible encore, je n'ai aucun recours” (140).

infant she will leave behind as a result of their union. Monsieur Duménil arrived too late to right his wrong to her mother, but he returned with infant Lydia.

The revelation of Lydia's multiracial identity is not the conclusion's only plot twist. After a shocked silence, Lydia finally asks, "Have I suffered enough, my God? Has the cup of bitterness been drained to the dregs?" (Duhart 143).⁹⁹ Beaufort comes out of his daze and responds, "Yes, you have suffered enough... dear Lydia, but your destiny is not always to bemoan... Listen to me" (143).¹⁰⁰ Beaufort does not seek only to console Lydia. He acknowledges the wrong that has been committed and proposes a solution: "In the name of what our hearts revere most in the world, in the name of your mother, even in the name of your pain, to repair the heinous crime of my adoptive father, who approves of me from his grave, Lydia, I beg you again, give me your hand. Let me devote the rest of my days to making you forget your cruel sufferings. Atonement is mine!" (143).¹⁰¹ With Madame Duménil's blessing and encouragement, the two will be together.

The unexpected conclusion of this story is not Lydia's identity, but Beaufort and Madame Duménil's response to it. Beaufort still wishes to marry Lydia, and the story presents Monsieur Duménil's actions as a wrong that the characters must correct. Although the story describes Beaufort as having black hair and an olive complexion, his French heritage and previous engagement to Valentine suggest that he is white or is perceived as white. Thus, marriage between Beaufort and Lydia would be against Louisiana's Civil Code and the cultural practices of New Orleans's white Creole elite. The representation of Lydia as a multiracial character who both deserves and receives a happy resolution contrasts with the negative portrayals of the male biracial

⁹⁹ "Ai-je assez souffert, mon Dieu? Le calice est-il épuisé jusqu'à la lie?" (143).

¹⁰⁰ "Oui, vous avez assez souffert... chère Lydia, mais votre destinée n'est pas de toujours gémir... Écoutez-moi" (143)

¹⁰¹ "Au nom de ce que notre cœur vénère le plus au monde, au nom de votre mère, au nom de vos douleurs même, pour réparer le crime odieux de mon père adoptif, qui m'approuve dans sa tombe, Lydia, je vous en conjure encore, accordez-moi votre main. Laissez-moi vous consacrer le reste de mes jours pour vous faire oublier vos cruelles souffrances. À moi l'expiation!" (143).

characters from Hugo's *Bug-Jargal* as well as the tragic mulatta Marie in Beaumont's novel. Earlier short stories by *gens de couleur libres* writers, such as Armand Lanusse's "Un mariage de conscience" (1843) and the anonymously penned "Marie" (1843), feature tragic mulattas who are sympathetic characters wronged by white men and their own mothers through *plaçage*. The texts imply the female characters' race when it is not explicitly described and end with suicide, critiquing the cruelty and injustice of the practice. The depiction of Lydia's mother Carmen through her own words also reveals her to be a tragic mulatta who was misled, betrayed, and left to die alone in childbirth by the white Monsieur Duménil. Though portraying Lydia as quietly despondent through most of the ten chapters, Duhart's narrative subverts the predicted outcome by insisting that Lydia should be accorded the same treatment and respect as her half-sister Valentine. Thus, the text condones interracial marriage and actively rejects Monsieur Duménil's treatment of Lydia's birthmother.

The serial form of "Trois amours" is complicit in the rejection of social and legal restrictions against Lydia and Beaufort's marriage. Following the story across installments permitted readers to be drawn in over time, creating emotional attachments to the characters. Chris Michaelides explains, "'Trois amours' ... stages by means of extended dialogues and an epistolary narrative (embedded drama) of declarations of love, cries of mourning, confessions, devastation, and the revelation of a secret origin. Witness to the tears shed and the shudders of young lovers and their mother, the reader-spectator is inevitably led to wish against the Civil Code's prohibitions" (39).¹⁰² Duhart's use of pathos persuades readers to side with the story's resolution even as it challenges social and legal restrictions on race. Michaelides acknowledges the story's

¹⁰² "'Trois Amours' ... met en scène par le biais de dialogues étendus et d'un récit épistolaire (drame enchâssé) des déclarations d'amour, des cris de deuil, des aveux, des anéantissements, et la révélation d'une origine secrète. Témoin des larmes versées et des tressaillements des jeunes amoureux et de leur mère, le lecteur-spectateur est mené inéluctablement à souhaiter contre les prohibitions du Code civil" (39).

revolutionary proposition: “Tackling prejudices by way of emotion, the drama presented in ‘Trois amours’ targets the public’s attitudes and conventions; what [Duhart] dares to present to us is the dream of social equality” (39).¹⁰³

The story’s final moments align the characters with nature, peace, and potential. The epilogue, set three months later, brings readers to an idyllic scene of rebirth as nature awakens: “The sky had all the bright tones and splendor. The buds, bustling with intense life, covered the black branches with young and quivering greenery, the warm air hastened summer’s awakening, the sap that bubbled under the bark, all were singing, all buzzed, all trembled, the insect, the twig, the bird, the flower” (144-45).¹⁰⁴ Spring time gardens and young love reflect the bright future that awaits. Madame Duménil travels one last time to Valentine’s grave. She praises God for sending an angel at the last hour, righting the wrongs against Carmen, and giving love to Beaufort and Lydia.

Nineteenth century *gens de couleur libres* writers transgressed New Orleans’s American and Anglophone political boundaries by maintaining connections to France and French identity. Their writing uses referentiality to French history, social and racial categories, literary French, and Romantic style to express this continued relationship with the former metropole long after New Orleans became part of the United States. France remains part of the New Orleans geography they construct in their short stories through these historical, cultural, and literary markers. Hugo’s *Bug-Jargal* and Beaumont’s *Marie* are examples of French Romantic fiction that are set in the Americas. Analysis of subjective narration, history, lyricism, characters, and nature in the two

¹⁰³ “ S'attaquant aux préjugés par la voie de l'émotion, le drame présenté dans ‘Trois Amours’ vise les attitudes et les conventions du public ; ce qu[e Duhart] ose nous présenter, c'est le rêve de l'égalité sociale" (39).

¹⁰⁴ “Le ciel avait tous les tons lumineux et les splendeurs. Les bourgeons, animés d'une vie intense, couvraient les noirs rameaux d'une verdure jeune et frissonnante, l'air chaud hâtait le réveil de l'été, la sève qui bouillonnait sous l'écorce, tout chantait, tout bourdonnait, tout frémissait, l'insecte, le rameau, l'oiseau, la fleur” (144-45).

French novels provides a defined approach to identifying and understanding French Romanticism in New Orleans short fiction by *gens de couleur* authors.

Séigny's "Marie" presents similarities to the French texts, including historical references and sympathetic characterization of a hermit and his young daughter, while transposing French identity onto a local New Orleans's setting. Duhart's "Trois amours" interrogates New Orleans French identity by subverting positionings on race, particularly biracial identity, and inserting cultural productions by creoles of color alongside those by European artists in his text. New Orleans's *gens de couleur libres* authors also demonstrate strong links to another former French colony, Saint Domingue. The next chapter explores the role of Saint Domingue and, post revolution, Haiti in nineteenth century New Orleans and fiction by *gens de couleur libres* writers. I will first present short fiction by nineteenth century Haitian writer Ignace Nau and Haiti's first novel by Émeric Bergeaud before turning to short stories set in Saint Domingue by New Orleans writers Victor Séjour and Adolphe Duhart.

CHAPTER 2:

HAITIAN INFLUENCE IN NEW ORLEANS *GENS DE COULEUR LIBRES*' WRITING

Saint Domingue figured in the lives and writing of New Orleans's *gens de couleur libres* authors through shared French colonial history. This influence continued long after Saint Domingue became Haiti when thousands of refugees converged in Louisiana due to the Haitian Revolution. Later in the nineteenth century, small waves of free people of color made the reverse trip, leaving the restrictions of an increasingly American and English-speaking Louisiana for the potential offered by independent Haiti. New Orleans and Haitian writers also met as exiles in Paris, seeking to escape the censorship constricting them at home. The repercussions and influence of the Haitian revolution were felt across the Caribbean, the United States, and Europe through the movement of peoples and ideas. The literary production of Haitian writers and New Orleans's *gens de couleur* writers reveals the transnational exchanges taking place during this era. Like those by New Orleans writers of this period, Haitian writers' texts reflected their French education and literary influences through French language and Romanticism. Haitian writers and New Orleans writers drew inspiration from Haiti as a setting because of its historical significance and as a subject to critique slavery in the United States and French colonies.

This chapter first briefly explores Haiti's colonial past and the immigration patterns the revolution created. The historical section notes social and political similarities and differences between the two former colonies and considers how and why many *saint-dominguais* eventually chose New Orleans as their destination. I follow the historical context by introducing fiction by

Haitian writers Ignace Nau and Émeric Bergeaud. Nau's short fiction and Bergeaud's novel *Stella* both demonstrate a developing Haitian literature that emphasizes orality, revolutionary history, and depictions of Saint Domingue/Haiti and its people. New Orleans's *gens de couleur libres* families and community sustained relationships across the Caribbean and the Atlantic. Many of New Orleans's *gens de couleur libres* writers, including Victor Séjour and Adolphe Duhart, whose stories are presented in this chapter, were second generation immigrants, having at least one parent from Saint Domingue. Though born in New Orleans, these writers were intimately familiar with Saint Domingue, and later Haitian, culture and history. After analyzing the examples of Haitian fiction, this chapter introduces two short stories by New Orleans writers: "Le Mulâtre" by Victor Séjour and "Simple histoire" by Adolphe Duhart. I examine the role of Saint Domingue in the New Orleans writers' stories through place, history, and characters. Representations of Haiti and its history in New Orleans *gens de couleur libres*' texts document this intersection between the two locales.

Historical Connections: Saint Domingue and New Orleans

The French settlement of Hispaniola began with the island of Tortuga in the first half of the seventeenth century. By the end of the seventeenth century, France officially gained control of western Hispaniola, Saint Domingue. The patterns of labor exploitation began in the seventeenth century as the colony transitioned to a plantation economy. Through the next century, Saint Domingue became France's most profitable colony, bringing enormous wealth through trade to the rest of Europe. Saint Domingue's plantation economy affected industry across the Atlantic: "It led the world in sugar and coffee production (annual crops of 80,000 tons and 40,000 tons respectively), enabling sugar refining industries to spring up along the Loire river from Nantes to

Orleans, creating the product for a vast re-export trade which blanketed European markets” (Munford and Zeuske 13). The enormous wealth for France generated by Saint Domingue came at a terrible human cost as the growth in exports increasingly depended upon enslaved labor.

The earliest labor in Saint Domingue was performed by *engagés*, French indentured servants; however, Fick explains, “[i]t was the conversion to indigo... that accelerated the utilization of Africans plantation laborers” (15). After the introduction of indigo in the seventeenth century, cocoa, coffee, and sugar soon followed.¹⁰⁵ Sugar expanded rapidly, overtaking other crops: “[b]y mid-century, the number of sugar plantations had increased fivefold to six hundred and reached its peak at nearly eight hundred on the eve of the revolution making the colony by far the single most important sugar colony of the Caribbean” (22). The growth of labor-intensive sugar considerably increased the importation of enslaved Africans to the island. Conditions on sugar plantations were particularly brutal to maximize sugar production and profit. Fick notes, “an average workday could easily average eighteen to twenty hours” (28). Enslaved men, women, and children were subjected to horrific punishments, housed in crowded and unsanitary conditions, and were required to grow their own provisions on small, allotted plots of land to limit the planters’ expenses. As a result, enslaved Africans who managed to survive their first years in Saint Domingue would still have working lives of only about fifteen years (27).¹⁰⁶ To meet the ever-increasing demand for sugar and other crops, a continuous flow of enslaved Africans were brought to Saint Domingue throughout the eighteenth century.

¹⁰⁵ Munford and Zeuske list an eventual 50 cocoa, 3,117 coffee, more than 3,000 indigo, and 793 sugar farms by the late eighteenth-century (12).

¹⁰⁶ According to Munford and Zeuske, 15 to 20 percent of newly arrived Africans would die during the “notorious ‘seasoning’ of new slaves, a cruel period of inculcation of labor routine and spirit-breaking psyche pulverization” (16). They add that epidemics could raise this number to a third (16). This figure matches estimates by Hilliard d’Auberteuil that “over one third of the Africans brought to the colony died off the first few years” (Fick 26). Fluehr-Lobban supports, “The average life span of a slave in the French plantation colonies was less than forty years” (196).

Despite high mortality rates, the enslaved population made up the vast majority of Saint Domingue's inhabitants. Nearly 500,000 of late eighteenth-century Saint Domingue's population of almost 600,000 were enslaved (Coupeau 21).¹⁰⁷ The remaining free population was divided by hierarchies of class and race consisting of *grands blancs*, *petits blancs*, and free people of color, or *affranchis*. At the top were the *grands blancs*, which included wealthy plantation owners and slave holders, as well as French bureaucrats. The *grands blancs* plantation owners often resided in France while remaining politically and economically powerful in Haiti: "[b]y 1789, nobles, including some of the highest ranking court aristocrats in the realm, owned the lion's share of slaveholding plantations" (Munford and Zeuske 14). *Petits blancs* were plantation overseers, lawyers, clerks, artisans, shopkeepers, and tradesmen. Fick notes, many of the "*petits blancs* were descendants of the former seventeenth-century *engagés*" (17) and James explains, "Included among the small whites was a crowd of city vagabonds, fugitives from justice, escaped galley slaves, debtors unable to pay their bills, adventurers-seeking adventure or quick fortunes, men of all crimes and all nationalities" (33). For whites, both large and small, Saint Domingue beckoned as a land of opportunity and prosperity.

The remaining segment of Saint Domingue's free population was the *affranchis*, or free people of color who made up about half of the free population of Saint Domingue by the late eighteenth century.¹⁰⁸ This group included people who were biracial or fully of African descent who were born free or were formerly enslaved. In her study of women of color in colonial Saint

¹⁰⁷ Munford and Zeuske detail, "Most of the 800,000 to 1,000,000 Africans imported into Saint Domingue between the peace of Utrecht in 1713 and 1790, had soon perished. Nevertheless, transatlantic delivery was so brisk in the final stage from 1774 to 1790 that the living slave population jumped from 240,000 to somewhere between 465,000 and 485,000" (14). Foner marks the enslaved population in 1753 to be 164,859 (417), but it increases dramatically over the following decades. Reinhardt, citing Bénot, lists the enslaved population of Saint Domingue in 1789 to be 509,642 (121).

¹⁰⁸ King uses census data to calculate that in 1788 "there were at least 21,813 free persons of color in the colony, compared with 27,724 whites" but notes that the numbers of free people of color is probably undercounted (xv-xvi). Reinhardt cites Bénot that in 1789 there were 26,666 free people of color compared to 35,440 whites (121).

Domingue, Jennifer L. Palmer observes, “[women] comprised between 50 and 70% of the enslaved who were legally emancipated through formal channels” (19). Socially and economically diverse, Saint Domingue’s *gens de couleur libres* population worked as merchants, artisans, and tradespeople. They also served in the military and the *maréchaussée*, local police who also hunted runaway enslaved persons. Because of restrictions on establishing residence in the metropole, *affranchis* remained in Saint Domingue where they built wealth and invested in real estate through the eighteenth century. Fick claims, “By 1789, the *affranchis* owned one-third of the plantation property, one-quarter of the slaves, and one quarter of the real estate property in Saint Domingue” (19).

The tensions between the different hierarchies of free people in Saint Domingue regarding *affranchis* became more pronounced in the period leading up to the revolution. According to Foner, “The policy of the French government toward the free people of color was flexible and had a very definite purpose. At times the free people of color were protected and granted special privileges. At other times they were degraded with discriminatory regulations” (419). She concludes that the government’s fluctuating treatment of *affranchis* and its resulting social divisions served to reinforce the systems of power on the island: “no one group would be strong enough to challenge French colonial rule” (419). By occupying an intermediary space, the *affranchis* created a buffer between whites and the enslaved while their economic strength challenged the position of *petits blancs*. *Petits blancs* asserted superiority through racial identity, connecting free people of color to slave origins and supporting discriminations based on race. The *affranchis* depended on relationships with *grands blancs* and their own economic stability to protect their interests.

Colonial Louisiana did not experience the same rapid economic and population growth as Saint Domingue. Of the region, Dessens explains, “[the colony of Louisiana] had to be heavily

subsidized by the colonial powers for much of its first century” (8). While both colonies were slave economies, the ratios of free to enslaved persons differed. By the late eighteenth century, Louisiana’s enslaved population was only marginally larger than the free while Saint Domingue’s free inhabitants were dramatically outnumbered.¹⁰⁹ The two colonies also differed in the expectations of the French for their stay in the Americas and their relationship with the metropole. Many of the French who came to Saint Domingue intended to make their fortune and return to France, or, in the case of some plantation owners, extract wealth from afar. Those who came to Louisiana showed a greater tendency to stay, bringing their families or establishing them in the colony.¹¹⁰ Dessens notes, “While the exercise of government was always strongly centralized in Louisiana under French and Spanish rule, Saint-Domingue enjoyed greater self-government which gave residents both the taste for political power and the notion of its limitations” (10). Colonials in Saint Domingue also had greater political autonomy, which impacted later events.

The *gens de couleur libres* populations occupied a comparable status in the two colonies. As in Saint Domingue, free people of color in Louisiana were a buffer between the white population and enslaved Blacks. Despite their economic strength and limited social privileges, *gens de couleur libres* in both colonies experienced increasing restrictions on their movement and civil rights. In response, *gens de couleur libres* in Saint Domingue began to mobilize. Julien Raimond, a wealthy and slave owning free man of color from Saint Domingue, was already in France appealing on their behalf when revolution erupted. Vincent Ogé, who was also in Paris by 1789, and others formed the *Société des Colons Américains* and worked with the abolitionist group

¹⁰⁹ Nathalie Dessens offers the Saint Domingue census numbers from 1789 with 30,831 whites, 24,848 free people of color, and 434,429 enslaved as contrast to 1788 census for lower Louisiana numbers of 20,673 enslaved and 18,737 free, white and Black (8).

¹¹⁰ See Laura Foner’s comparison of immigration to French West Indies and the United States with Jordan’s examination of immigration to the British West Indies (414-15).

the *Société des Amis des Noirs*. They unsuccessfully appealed to the Club Massiac, a group representing the interests of white colonial planters, for support to their cause, then brought their demands for equal rights and representation before the *Assemblée Nationale*.¹¹¹ These claims were suppressed through the efforts of white planters who feared that expanding rights for free people of color would lead to calls for abolition.

Instability in Saint Domingue increased, and people began to flee the island, continuing to do so over the next decade. While people were leaving throughout this period, there were specific waves of larger migration beginning with the uprisings following the 1791 *Cérémonie de Bois Caïman*.¹¹² Nathalie Dessens notes, “The first slave revolt of 1791 in the northern part of the island provoked a first wave of displacements, either within the colony (toward the southern and western provinces and toward Cap Français) or elsewhere in the Americas, essentially to Jamaica, Cuba (Santiago de Cuba and Baracoa), and the seaport cities along the Atlantic coast of the United States” (16). Subsequent waves destined for the United States Atlantic and Gulf coasts, Jamaica, and Cuba would leave in 1793 and 1798. Finally in 1803-1804, as Dessalines proclaimed Haitian independence, the French troops left the former colony, and violence against remaining whites escalated (16).¹¹³

¹¹¹ See Reinhardt as well as Debien, Gabriel. “Gens de couleur libres et colons de Saint-Domingue devant la Constituante (2^e partie).” *Revue d’histoire de l’Amérique française*, vol. 4, no. 3, 1950. Doi.org./10.7202/801655ar for a more detailed discussion and the specific articles brought to the Assembly. Also see Julius S Scott’s *The Common Wind: Afro-American Currents in the Age of the Haitian Revolution*, Verso, 2018, particularly Chapter 3 “‘The Suspense is Dangerous in a Thousand Shapes’ News, Rumor, and Politics on the Eve of the Haitian Revolution” for explanation of the connections between events in France and Saint Domingue and discussion of Ogé’s rebellion in Saint Domingue.

¹¹² See Chapter 6 “The Bois Caïman Ceremony” in David Patrick Geggus’s *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, Indiana UP, 2002, for discussion of scholarship detailing the gatherings at the Lenormand de Mézy plantation and Bois Caïman in August of 1791.

¹¹³ See Kersuze Simeon-Jones’s Chapter 3 “The Words of J.J. Dessalines and H. Christophe: An Appeal to the Nations and Citizens of the World” *The Intellectual Roots of Contemporary Black Thought: Nascent Political Philosophies*, Taylor & Francis Group, 2020 for analysis of primary texts by Dessalines, Christophe, and others, and detailed explanation of Napoleon’s call to reestablish slavery in the colonies, the enslavers’ “war of extermination” (66), and Rochambeau’s atrocities during this period.

Many factors influenced the choice of destinations for those fleeing Saint Domingue. As *grands* and *petits blancs* and *gens de couleur libres* exited, sometimes with enslaved persons, their direction was determined by distance, finances, culture, politics, and whether or not they would be received. Of those who could afford to and still had connections to France, many returned to the metropole. Under the *Ancienne Régime*, colonial slave owners could gain permission to bring enslaved Africans into France, contradicting earlier statutes that those who set foot on French soil were freed, but by 1794 the French National Assembly had abolished slavery in the colonies.¹¹⁴ Many imagined they would soon return to Saint Domingue. Dessens explains, “the first obvious destination, also the easiest and cheapest in terms of transportation, was the Spanish part of the island, Santo Domingo” where many would go, at least temporarily (16). Refugees also left for Cuba. The Spanish crown had been watching events in both France and Saint Domingue, wanting to keep unrest from spilling across borders, but also seeking an outcome to its own advantage.¹¹⁵ After Napoleon’s attempted invasion of Spain, many French refugees remaining in Cuba were forced to leave (27). Some refugees fled Saint Domingue for the British colony Jamaica and the United States. Like Cuba, Jamaica proved to be a temporary refuge: “the resumption of hostilities between France and England led the Jamaican authorities to expel the French refugees who had not been naturalized” (25). The historical relationship between the American revolutionaries and Saint Domingue, climate, slave laws, and economic assistance by federal and local governments all contributed to the United States being a strong choice for those fleeing the French colony (19). The United States did present challenges for refugees. Although slavery was legal in the United

¹¹⁴ See Samuel L. Chatman’s “‘There are no Slaves in France’: A Re-Examination of Slave Laws in Eighteenth Century France.” *The Journal of Negro History*, vol. 85, no. 3, 2000, pp. 144-53 for a detailed history of French laws on slavery and the *Code Noir* prior to the revolutionary period.

¹¹⁵ See Munford and Zeuske for a history of Spain’s efforts to prevent the Saint Domingue slave uprising from spreading to nearby Spanish colonies, the tension between Cuba’s growing sugar economy’s labor needs and fears of a potentially rebellious enslaved population, and regulation of French refugees to Cuba.

States, the arrival of enslaver refugees from Saint Domingue who brought with them enslaved persons who had been exposed to revolutionary ideas presented risks. However, some localities did tolerate immigrants accompanied by enslaved persons whose labor could be hired out, providing economic support for newly arrived refugees. This practice lessened the financial burden of states welcoming refugees. In the United States, free people of color faced greater scrutiny and increased burdens of proof of their free status.

New Orleans became a landing point for thousands as those who had arrived elsewhere were subsequently displaced. The influxes of refugees overlapped Louisiana's transition from Spanish to French colony and then to US territory and eventual statehood. Dessens notes that Louisiana was attractive to refugees from Saint Domingue, even indirectly from earlier asylums, because of the potential for opportunity in the region after the Louisiana Purchase and particularly, she observes, "as an oasis of French colonial culture in the United States" (31-32). Thus, refugees continued to make their way to New Orleans, dramatically increasing the population and influencing the region's language and culture into the nineteenth century.¹¹⁶ The next section of this chapter analyzes two examples of nineteenth century Haitian fiction before illustrating how Saint Domingue/Haitian historical and literary influence appears in short fiction by New Orleans's *gens de couleur libres* authors.

Nineteenth-Century Haitian Fiction

Haiti developed a national literature as it became a new nation. French educations and texts shaped nineteenth-century Haitian writers as they had writers in New Orleans. Despite the heavy

¹¹⁶ Dessens puts the total population of the Territory of Orleans in 1810 at 76,476 (half enslaved), having doubled with the last wave from Cuba (35). Lachance also notes the doubling of the population with the final wave of immigration directly to the city from Cuba. He notes that the numbers of whites, free persons of color, and enslaved were about equal ("The 1809 Immigration of Saint-Domingue Refugees" 111-12).

continued influence of French language and literary forms, nineteenth century Haitian writers began to create a distinctly Haitian literature. Jacques Stephen Alexis, in “Du réalisme merveilleux des Haïtiens,” elucidates: “Certainly, as ‘bourgeois’ creators, if one can put it that way, initially they mechanically copied these forms, while infusing them with Haitian content. From there was born this literary and artistic trend of French language and expression that became progressively Haitian in form, producing the Haitian literature and art of today” (98).¹¹⁷ The turn to a Haitian literature began by shifting the focus to Haiti as a nation with its own language, history, geography, and citizenry. Brathwaite describes the Haitian cultural revolution that followed independence: “It defined its historic originality in terms that focused on its ethnic and cultural uniqueness. It simultaneously sought to refute racist stereotypes of nonwhite inferiority and, giving it specific weight and content, accented its sense of a distinctively Creole national sensibility” (52). Traces of this shift towards a national literature appear with patriotic content in Haitian popular songs, which extolled heroes, celebrated fights against tyranny, and explored racial identity (Cobb 17). These motifs also appeared in early Haitian theatre and poetry, which depicted patriotic themes and commemorated events and heroes from the revolutionary period.

The young Haitian Romantic poets who formed the *Cénacle* of 1836, a literary circle and movement that included the Nau, Ardouin, and Lespinasse brothers, created the journal *Le Republicain* (1836 – 1837) in Port-au-Prince. After President Boyer ordered *Le Republicain* censured then closed after an “anti-government article,” they reopened under the name *L’Union, Recueil Commercial et Littéraire*, which would last until 1839 (Léger 95). During this period, Haiti’s writers began to clearly define the scope of what a Haitian literature could be, independent

¹¹⁷ “Certes, en tant que créateurs ‘bourgeois’ si l’on peut dire, ils ont, au début, copié mécaniquement ces formes, tout en y infusant souvent un contenu haïtien. De là est né ce courant littéraire et artistique de langue et d’expression française qui allait s’haïtianiser progressivement jusque dans ses formes, pour donner la littérature et l’art haïtien d’aujourd’hui” (98).

of French literature. In *L'Union* in 1837, Emile Nau declared: "Poetry is everywhere, it is not lacking, the poets are. Our writers must therefore celebrate Haiti, its splendor and its military glories, evoke its intense nights and its deep sky, its superstitions and its legends, the ardent charm of its women and the subtle craftiness of its peasants" (qtd. in Ntonfo 13).¹¹⁸ Embedded in this appeal to the writers of his time is a preview of the indigenist movement that followed in the twentieth century. For nineteenth century Haitian prose writers, this celebration of Haiti appears via different modes of orality, depictions of history, particularly revolutionary, and detailed descriptions of Haiti and its inhabitants. This chapter next explores "Souvenirs historiques" by Ignace Nau and Haiti's first novel, *Stella*, by Emeric Bergeaud. These examples of early Haitian fiction offer examples of this progressively Haitian form. The chapter will then trace Saint Domingue/Haiti's role and influence through similar traits in New Orleans writers Victor Séjour's "Le Mulâtre" and Adolphe Duhart's "Simple histoire."

Short Fiction by Ignace Nau

Ignace Nau, born in Léogâne in 1808, is recognized as Haiti's earliest fiction writer. Although primarily known for poetry (Charles 5), Nau also published many short stories in the Haitian journals *Le Republicain* and *L'Union*, of which he was a founder, as well as the Parisian journal *La Revue des Colonies*. *La Revue*, a journal that advocated for civil rights for free people of color and abolition, was founded by Cyril Bisette, a free man of color from Martinique who had been exiled to Paris following his conviction for sedition. *La Revue* published works by writers

¹¹⁸ "La poésie est partout, ce n'est pas elle qui manque, ce sont les poètes. Nos écrivains doivent donc célébrer Haïti, ses fastes et ses gloires militaires, évoquer ses nuits intenses et son ciel profond, ses superstitions et ses légendes, le charme ardent de ses femmes et la ruse finaude de ses paysans" (qtd. In Ntonfo 13). See also Brickhouse p. 115 for discussion of Émile Nau's vision of a Haitian literature that reflects both Haiti's African and European influences and "cultural *métissage*."

from and about France's colonies, past and present, including Victor Séjour, whose short story I discuss later in this chapter. Nau published in *La Revue* while in France following the censorship and closing of *Le Republicain*.

Ignace Nau's choice of short story as a genre is interesting. While in some respects Nau's stories reflect Romanticism as discussed in the previous chapter, his work also distinguishes itself as creating a new, Haitian form. Marie-José Nzengou-Tayo notes, "The Haitian short story proceeds from a double tradition: on the one hand, the French literary tradition which goes far back into the sixteenth century and beyond to the Greek and Latin tradition; on the other hand, the African oral tradition of story-telling" (38). The genre itself then suggests the potential for narratives that intersect languages and cultures. Of the genre, Léger explains, "The short story, always treated as a minor literary genre in France ...undergoes a double minorization when it is produced by writers from former French colonies because it suddenly becomes integrated into a literature from the so-called 'periphery'" (91).¹¹⁹ Submitting work to journals edited and published by free men of color in Haiti and the metropole offered distance from French literature and a space in which Nau could more freely celebrate Haiti and its people as subject. An example of this growing focus on Haiti, Nau's earliest story "Isalina ou Une scène créole," appeared in three parts in *La Revue* over July to September of 1836. It recounts a love story between peasants Paul and Isalina. Paul's rival, Jean-Julien, resorts to injuring and bewitching Isalina, necessitating Paul's consultation with old Galba for a cure. The story depicts a rural setting, records peasant home life and work at the sugar mill, incorporates creole words and phrases, and describes Voudon rituals. Nau firmly anchors "Isalina" to Haiti and its inhabitants, emphasizing the significance of place.

¹¹⁹ "La nouvelle, qui a toujours été un genre littéraire minorisé à l'intérieur de l'hexagone, et ce, pour des raisons essentiellement d'ordre générique et formel, subit une double minorisation lorsqu'elle est produite par des écrivains originaires d'anciennes colonies françaises puisqu'elle s'intègre du coup dans une littérature dite de la 'périphérie'" (91).

The previous chapter examined first person point of view, framing narration, and the influence of French Romanticism on New Orleans writers. First person narration is also a prominent feature of nineteenth century Haitian fiction but additionally emphasizes the act of storytelling by Haitian voices. Wébert Charles considers Nau to be an early *lodyanseur*, predating Justin Lhérisson's work by almost seventy years (6).¹²⁰ Associating Nau's writing with the Haitian storytelling tradition of *lodyans* additionally distinguishes his stories from French literary praxis.¹²¹ The alignment of Nau's stories with an oral tradition highlights the relationship between speaker and audience. Nau's story "Une visite à Furcy," published anonymously in *L'Union* in 1839, is written in the second person, directly addressing the audience as *vous*, with shifts to first person as the narrator encourages the reader to visualize a guided trip through the Montagnes Noires range on horseback. Other stories introduce multiple narrators who engage in dialogue, shifting the roles of speaker and listener through their exchanges. One of Nau's better known stories, "Le Lambi," also published in *L'Union* but in 1837, begins with an unnamed narrator who encounters an old man, Jérôme. The story shifts to Jérôme who, prompted by the sound of a conch, invites the first narrator to hear a story of the revolution and the significance of the conch shell. Analyzing the interaction between the two characters in this story, Léger explains, "This game of communicative exchange between narrator and narratee, and vice versa, permits Nau to simulate the dialogical activity of the Haitian oral folk narrative... allow[ing him] to introduce the features of orality into the world of writing while at the same conforming to Haitian Creole reality" (100).¹²²

¹²⁰ Justin Lherisson is the author of *La famille des Pitite-Caille* (1905) and *Zoune chez sa ninnaine : fan'm gain sept sauts pou li passé* (1906). He is also credited with writing the lyrics to the Haitian national anthem.

¹²¹ The word *lodyans* derives from the French *l'audience*, which "dans le context haïtien, est une forme d'entretien oral, où le locuteur use de ruses serpentine pour raconter de manière humoristique tel événement social ou tel fait politique" ["in the Haitian context, is a type of oral exchange where the speaker uses serpentine ruses to relate in a humorous way some social or political event"] (Shelton qtd. in Saint-Fort 318).

¹²² "Ce jeu d'échange communicative entre narrateur et narrataire, et vice-versa, permet à Nau de simuler l'activité dialogique du récit oral populaire haïtien... Cette interaction entre narrateur et narrataire permet à Nau d'introduire

“Souvenirs historiques,” originally published untitled and unsigned in the “Souvenirs historiques” section of *L’Union* in 1838, is a strong example of the complex narration in Nau’s stories and his emphasis on storytelling. The text opens with an unnamed narrator, reintroduces readers to Jérôme of “Le lambi,” and then adds a third storytelling voice. As the first narrator recounts how his plans to travel through the mountains have been halted by heavy rains, he comes across Jérôme. The old man then invites the first narrator, whom he simply addresses as *bourgeois*, to join him to visit his old comrade in arms Jean-Baptiste. “Souvenirs historiques” highlights storytelling as Jérôme states, “You like to hear about what happened between us and the colonists, you will no doubt be pleased to meet my old comrade” (Nau, “Souvenirs historiques” 29).¹²³ The layers of storytelling then build as Jérôme previews what Jean-Baptiste witnessed during the revolution and the stories he will tell. Upon their arrival, the first narrator observes, “We only had to see each other for an instant to chat as though our acquaintance had been formed long ago” (31).¹²⁴ They soon ease into a conversation that shifts from the first narrator’s observations about Jean-Baptiste and descriptions of what he recounts, to Jean-Baptiste telling revolutionary tales, shifting between first person singular and plural, and offering descriptions of dialogue between historical figures. “Souvenirs historiques” conveys the oral nature of storytelling by overlaying dialogue between the characters with alternating first-person points of view as each contributes his own narration.

Orality in storytelling also integrates features of Haitian language. In her description of the *Cénacle*’s influence on the formation of a Haitian literature, Kersuze Simeon-Jones explains, “The

les traits de l’oralité dans le monde de l’écriture et par la même occasion de rester en conformité avec la réalité créée haïtienne” (100).

¹²³ “Vous qui aimez à **ouïr raconter** ce qui s’est passé entre nous et les colons, vous serez sans doute satisfait de faire la connaissance de mon vieux camarade” (29 ; emphasis added). In particular, the verb *raconter* suggests telling or narrating a story.

¹²⁴ “Nous n’avions besoin que de nous voir un instant pour causer comme si notre connaissance datait d’une époque plus reculée” (31).

Nau brothers suggested a Haitian literature that is not limited to the use of standard French... Rather, the Haitian writer should incorporate regional French language with its local and familiar expressions” (98). Ignace Nau wrote his short stories in standard French but also, to varying degrees, he included creole words and phrases, as well as words specific to a Haitian context. “Souvenirs historiques,” for example, includes the words *boucan* (28), a word with Taino origins for a wooden grill, *macoute* (29), a straw bag, *chadetiers* (31), a type of Haitian citrus tree (from *chadeque/ chadèk*), and *malfini* (36), a hawk. Other stories, such as “Isalina,” include more extensive use of Creole words and expressions. Readers at the time would have found Nau’s departures from standard French surprising and even controversial. Alexandre Bonneau’s 1856 critique of Nau’s “Le lambi” is an example of this linguistic criticism. Bonneau responds very harshly to Nau’s inclusion of Creole language. After acknowledging that Nau has distinguished himself as a prose writer, Bonneau continues: “*Le Lambi*, despite the interest it offers, is not without flaws, and we will point out in particular Ignace Nau’s misuse of Creole locutions. One can observe local color without bristling the language with expressions that do violence to it” (127).¹²⁵ To the nineteenth-century French literary critic, Nau’s departure from standard French detracts from the text. A twenty-first century view reveals that Nau is shaping a new Haitian literature. He is also previewing the indigenist and creolité movements appearing in Haitian and Antillean literature in the twentieth century.

Haitian revolutionary history figures prominently in “Souvenirs historiques.” The story recounts the exploits of well-known personalities from the revolution and those of everyday

¹²⁵ “*Le Lambi*, malgré l’intérêt qu’il présente, n’est pas sans défauts, et nous signalerons en particulier l’abus qu’a fait Ignace Nau des locutions créoles. On peut observer la couleur locale sans hérissier la langue d’expressions qui lui font violence” (127). In this same text, in the section “Les Noirs, Leur Langage, Leurs Aptitudes,” Bonneau expresses overtly racist interpretations of African and Creole languages in his comparisons to European languages. This clearly informs his approach to Nau’s inclusion of Creole in his short stories.

Haitians. Older characters with firsthand knowledge communicate past events. Jérôme acknowledges both participation and familiarity with famous leaders. The first narrator asks him if Jean-Baptiste played a role in “those times” (Nau, “Souvenirs historiques,” 29). Jérôme responds: “Eh! Who wouldn’t have? What slave wouldn’t have taken part in the liberation? Men, women, children, all responded to the first cry of freedom that came down from the mountains. Our unruly battalions, chaotic like this torrent, flooded the plains and our women, animated with the same zeal as us, tying their children on their backs, marched after us and shared our perils and our spoils” (29).¹²⁶ As promised, Jean-Baptiste relays events, beginning with a detailed sketch of Dessalines. He then calls attention to his familiarity with the revolutionary hero as he adds, “Nevertheless, he knew how to appreciate courage, bravery, and, whatever young men say today who did not know him like we his veterans, he largely rewarded fearlessness; protected with all his might those who had rendered service to him” (32).¹²⁷ He then proceeds to describe the violent combat between Dessalines’s forces and those of the French Rochambeau.

By recounting Haitian history through the voices of the formerly enslaved, “Souvenirs historiques” documents the cruelty perpetrated by the colonists and justifies the violence of the response under Dessalines. Jean-Baptiste explains, “And besides, had our enemies given us the right to be human and compassionate towards them? They had no pity for the old man, nor for the woman, nor for the child; there was no bad example that the master did not trace onto the slave.

¹²⁶ “Eh ! qui ne l'eut point fait ? Quel esclave n'eut point concouru à la délivrance ? Hommes, femmes, enfants, tous répondirent au premier cri de la liberté descendue des montagnes. Nos bataillons indisciplinés désordonnés comme l'est ce torrent, inondèrent les plaines et nos femmes, animées du même zèle que nous, attachant leurs enfants sur leur dos, marchaient à notre suite et partageaient nos périls et nos butins” (29).

¹²⁷ “Cependant, il savait apprécier le courage, la bravoure, et, quoi qu'en disent les jeunes hommes aujourd'hui qui ne l'ont pas connu comme nous ses vétérans, il récompensait largement l'intrépidité ; protégeait de toute sa puissance ceux qui lui avaient rendu des services” (32).

Force by force, the colonizers used to say” (Nau, “Souvenirs historiques” 36).¹²⁸ Through repetition, Jean-Baptiste emphasizes the generations of suffering that had been perpetrated against enslaved people. He continues, “And also note that our revenge was half a century old, that our African brothers arrived each day, and each hour, and each child added hatred upon so much accumulated hatred, [we had] a greater need than to free ourselves and take our turn shouting at the colonizers: ‘force by force’ (36).¹²⁹ By recounting his story in the first person, Jean-Baptiste conveys, as a witness and a participant, the cruelty perpetrated upon enslaved people and the heroism of the rebels. His story, confirmed by Jérôme’s presence, instructs the unnamed and implied younger narrator as well as the reading audience.

In addition to describing Haiti’s revolutionary historical past, Nau’s short stories depict rural Haiti and its citizens. Nau’s story “Un jour de l’an dans la campagne” recounts a rural Independence Day celebration in 1821, while “Un jour de dimanche” takes readers to the markets of Port-au-Prince. Each story showcases interactions between ordinary people as they celebrate, work, and shop. Ntonfo, clarifying how Nau puts the *Cénacle* of 1836’s theories into practice in his short stories, explains, “[Nau’s writing] draws its material and its characters from the indigenous world, from the peasant world, imagining, moreover, an effect which, according to the expression by Vaval Duraciné, ‘comes to life and becomes fully realized with the reflection of local legends’” (14).¹³⁰ “Souvenirs historiques” portrays Haiti’s landscape and the personalities that inhabit the space.

¹²⁸ “Et d’ailleurs, nos ennemis nous avaient-ils donné le droit d’être humains et compatissants à leur égard ? Ils étaient sans pitié ni pour le vieillard, ni pour la femme, ni pour l’enfant ; il n’était point de mauvais exemple que le maître ne traçât à l’esclave. La force par la force, disaient les colons” (36).

¹²⁹ “Et notez aussi que notre vengeance était vieille d’un demi siècle, que nos frères d’Afrique arrivaient à chaque jour, et chaque heure, chaque enfant ajoutait une haine à tant de haines accumulées, un besoin de plus de nous affranchir et de nous écrier aux colons à notre tour : ‘la force par la force’” (36).

¹³⁰ “il tire sa matière et ses personnages du monde indigène, du monde paysan, imaginant par ailleurs une action qui selon l’expression de Vaval Duraciné, ‘s’anime et se colore au reflet des légendes locales’” (14).

“Souvenirs historiques” begins with the unnamed narrator affixing the setting to geographical locations. He details his journey through the *Petit-bois* plain, the *Bassin-général* gorge, and on to the heights of *Cadet* mountain (27). Nau links place to its inhabitants, and one character, Jérôme, literally emerges from the landscape. After uncrossable water stops the narrator and his horse, he encounters Jérôme who comes out of the brush. The narrator recounts: “I saw an old man stand up from the grass where he was lying and stick his head out from a clump of bushes, which sheltered him from the sun. At his feet was a bundle of wood and nearby was a fire in which potatoes were cooking” (28).¹³¹ Jérôme cooks his potatoes over a *boucan*, a wooden barbecue. The narrator describes Jérôme’s features in detail: “His chin was covered with a long, thick beard, and his head, the conical shape of which gave him a rather singularly bizarre look, wore gray hair, braided in the African style” (28).¹³² From the narrator’s previous encounter with the man in “Le lambi,” readers would also know that Jérôme, who introduced himself in this story as “old Jérôme, former millworker, aged Bourgeois, and crippled,” seems to simply appear (Nau, “Le lambi” 13).¹³³ In “Souvenirs historiques,” Jérôme throws his potatoes into his *macoute* and leaves with the first narrator to visit his old friend Jean-Baptiste.

The narrator connects Jean-Baptiste to the land by offering a broad overview of the space and then by narrowing his focus to specific details. When they arrive at Jean-Baptiste’s newly whitewashed cottage with its cane thatched roof, the narrator looks over Jean-Baptiste’s property while Jérôme goes in search of his friend. He views, “Five to six *carreaux* [about eighteen acres] of land, well placed on the back of the hill that looks out to the countryside, divided by *bois debout*,

¹³¹ “Je vis un vieillard se redresser de l’herbe où il était couché et sortir la tête d’une touffe de buissons, qui l’abritait contre un soleil vertical. À ses pieds était un paquet de bois et tout auprès brûlait un boucan de feu dans lequel cuisaient des patates” (28).

¹³² “Son menton était revêtu d’une barbe longue et épaisse, et sa tête, dont la forme conique lui donnait un air assez singulièrement bizarre, portait des cheveux gris, nattés, à la manière africaine” (28).

¹³³ “Le vieux Jérôme, ancien moulinier, Bourgeois vieilli et perclus” (13).

courtyard and garden. The beautiful Metivier spring diagonally crosses this picturesque site, and goes from waterfall to waterfall, flowing into the basins of the Grande-Rivière” (Nau, “Souvenirs historiques” 30-31).¹³⁴ After situating the property’s location geographically, the narrator describes the garden in more detail: “The garden consists mainly of a large, airy and well-maintained banana plantation and fruit trees of all kinds mixed in here and there. Beside the white star of the coffee tree shines the ruddy urn of the pomegranate tree which, from a distance, resembles in miniature a golden censer from which a pure and celestial flame incessantly escapes” (31).¹³⁵ He notes orange, *chadetier*, and sweet lemon trees growing “spontaneously at the edge of the stream, every evening the waves carry[ing] off their wreaths of plucked flowers”.¹³⁶ The property, reflecting the region and suggestive of the locale, is beautiful, fertile, and well-maintained by Jean-Baptiste. Readers learn that the land was a concession to him from the state in return for his service. When Jérôme returns with Jean-Baptiste, the narrator explains, “The latter’s countenance exuded confidence and respect. Seeing his broad, high forehead, bearing two large scars, Gall would recognize his intelligence” (31).¹³⁷ Jean-Baptiste is a rural peasant, but, as his scars and his story reveal, his story is part of Haiti’s story.

¹³⁴ “Cinq à six carreaux de terre, heureusement placés sur le revers de la colline qui regarde la campagne sont divisés en *bois debout*, cour et jardin. La belle source de Métivier traverse ce site pittoresque en diagonale, et va de cascade en cascade, se jeter dans les bassins de la Grande-Rivière” (30-31).

¹³⁵ “Le jardin consiste principalement en une vaste bananeraie aériée et bien entretenue et ça et là entremêlée d’arbres fruitiers de toutes sortes. À côté de la blanche étoile du cafier brille l’urne vermeille du grenadier qui, de loin, ressemble en miniature à un encensoir d’or d’où s’échappe incessamment une flamme pure et céleste” (31).

¹³⁶ “Les Orangers, les *Chadetiens*, les Limoniers et les Citronniers doux y croissent comme spontanément au bord du ruisseau dont l’onde emporte tous les soirs leurs couronnes de fleurs effeuillées” (31).

¹³⁷ “La physionomie de celui-ci respirait la confiance et le respect. À voir son front large et élevé, portant deux grandes cicatrices, Gall lui donnerait de l’intelligence” (33). Gall most likely refers to Franz Joseph Gall, the founder of phrenology.

Émeric Bergeaud's *Stella*

Just as Ignace Nau's short fiction shaped a new vision for Haitian literature through representations of orality, history, place, and people, Émeric Bergeaud's novel *Stella* did so two decades later. Born in 1818 in Les Cayes, Bergeaud grew up privileged under Boyer's government, but fled to Saint Thomas in 1848 soon after Faustin Soulouque came to power. Bergeaud wrote *Stella* during his decade in exile. Christiane Ndiaye notes the significance of the dates of this period: "The year 1848 therefore has a double meaning for him, since more than forty years after the Haitian revolution, democracy, liberty, fraternity and equality remain a dead letter, while France proclaims the abolition of slavery in the territories which were unable to free themselves from the colonial yoke" (3).¹³⁸ In 1857, he traveled to Paris where he entrusted his novel to his friend Beaubrun Ardouin. With his brothers Céligny and Coriolan, Ardouin was a member of the *Cénacle* of 1836. Beaubrun, a historian, had also fled Haiti under Soulouque during the same period as Bergeaud. His brother Céligny, who remained in Haiti, was executed in 1849. Bergeaud returned to Saint Thomas in poor health and died there in 1858, never having returned to Haiti. Ardouin published *Stella* posthumously in Paris in 1859.

In *Stella*, Bergeaud offers an allegorical interpretation of the Haitian revolution via the fictional characters of Marie, L'Africaine, her sons Romulus and Rémus, the Colonist, and Stella. Léon-François Hoffmann writes, "we must remember that *Stella*, a didactic novel, a propaganda novel in the best sense of the term, was aimed at Haitian readers and at French readers simultaneously" (118). Not only was Bergeaud's intent to teach and inspire Haitians about their nation's history, but he also wanted to offer a counter to colonial representations of Haiti.

¹³⁸ "L'année 1848 a donc une double signification pour lui, puisque plus de quarante ans après la révolution haïtienne, démocratie, liberté, fraternité et égalité restent lettre morte, alors que la France proclame l'abolition de l'esclavage dans les territoires qui n'ont pu se libérer du joug colonial" (3).

Hoffmann explains, “Bergeaud wants to redeem and justify his country in the eyes of the French, who held it in low esteem... He also wants to teach them something about Haitian history, which they knew, if at all, through the biased versions of French historians or the elucubrations of hacks specializing in spine-tingling exoticism” (118). Though very different from Nau’s short fiction, Bergeaud’s *Stella* participates in the early formation of a Haitian literature and emphasizes the same features of orality/storytelling, revolutionary history, and depictions of Saint Domingue/Haiti and its inhabitants.

Orality in *Stella* can be understood through storytelling, interpreted both in the genre of the novel as well as within the text itself. The novel is written in formal standard French prose; much like in the earlier stories by Nau, it includes regionally specific words such as *ajoupa*, *makoute*, *calebasses*, and others. The novel contains “Notes Explicatives” in the final pages offering definitions, discussion, and explanations of Creole proverbs. These notes suggest Bergeaud anticipated a broader, non-Haitian audience. *Stella* evokes oral storytelling that connects across genres and cultures and reflects Haiti’s complicated history. Ndiaye categorizes the novel as aligning more closely with poetry: “We see in fact, by rereading the work through textual analysis rather than by referring to a ‘model’, supposed to be that of the novel in this case, that *Stella* is characterized above all by a poetics that should instead be considered *epic*” (2).¹³⁹ She acknowledges that epic poetry originated as a form of oral expression not only in western Greco-Roman tradition but also around the world. Later in her article, she offers a persuasive comparison of heroes and other epic elements in *Stella* to those of *Soundjata*, the Malian epic. This complements Hoffman’s observations of a dual French / Haitian audience in that it suggests that

¹³⁹ “L’on constate en effet, en procédant à une relecture de l’œuvre à partir d’une analyse du texte plutôt qu’en se référant à un ‘modèle’, supposé être celui du roman en l’occurrence, que *Stella* se caractérise avant tout par une poétique qu’il faudrait plutôt qualifier d’*épique*” (2).

Bergeaud simultaneously draws from Western models of epic and mythology, particularly with regards to *The Aeneid*, myths of Romulus and Remus, and the founding of Rome, as well as African forms. Ndiaye concludes, “it appears that [Bergeaud] performs a kind of double return to popular sources by ‘reactivating’ a genre that is no longer produced in Western written literature and which has also disappeared from Haitian (Creole) oral traditions however is strongly marked by African heritage” (2).¹⁴⁰ Bergeaud, through his retelling of the Haitian Revolution as an epic, embraces storytelling that draws from Haiti’s European and African influences.

The first chapter, “Saint-Domingue,” takes readers to a “wealthy land... towards the end of the last century” (Bergeaud 1) then invites them to contrast “a young family violently sequestered from humanity” (1) in their poor shack on the plain to the “building on the hill that, from the outside, resembled a feudal castle from the Middle Ages; its tile covered roof standing out red and sinister against the blue sky” (2).¹⁴¹ By the second chapter, “Marie L’Africaine,” the narrator introduces readers in greater detail to the *ajoupa*’s inhabitants: an enslaved mother and her two teenaged sons. Each night the three gathered around the *boucan* in their smoky hut to talk. The narrator uses metafiction explicitly as he ponders, “Perhaps misfortune is fable’s father; to escape painful reality, it feeds on illusions and takes pleasure in forgetting itself in a succession of gentle ghosts. In this way, stories also became the *ajoupa*’s consolation; the slave’s imagination flies, on its fairy wings, as light as those of dreams, chasing after happiness he doesn’t know and goods that he will never have!” (11).¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ “Ainsi, lorsqu’on s’interroge sur *la manière* dont procède Bergeaud pour évoquer ce moment marquant de l’histoire d’Haïti, il apparaît qu’il opère une sorte de double retour aux sources populaires en ‘réactivant’ un genre qui ne se produit plus comme tel parmi les genres de la littérature écrite occidentale et qui a disparu aussi des traditions orales haïtiennes (créoles) pourtant fortement marquées par l’héritage africain” (2).

¹⁴¹ “Sur une terre fortunée... vers la fin du dernier siècle” (1); “une jeune famille violemment séquestrée de l’humanité” (1); “le bâtiment du morne avait à l’extérieur quelque chose des châteaux féodaux du moyen âge ; son toit recouvert de tuiles se découpait rouge et sinistre sur le ciel bleu” (2).

¹⁴² “Le malheur est peut-être le père de la fable; il se nourrit d’illusions et prend plaisir à s’égayer à la suite de doux fantômes, pour fuir la réalité douloureuse. Les contes sont ainsi devenus la consolation de l’ajoupa; sur leurs ailes

On another night, Marie tells her children her own story. Her stories connect Marie's sons to an Africa they will never know, both through content and the act of storytelling itself. Marie's tale of her African origins, the Middle Passage, and being enslaved in Saint Domingue also begins Haiti's story. Marie tells her sons how she was born to the chief of a powerful tribe and to a mother who was daughter to a king in a land far away. She married the man her father chose, one of his officers, but her father and husband both died in battle. She then recounts the horrors of the Middle Passage as she and her mother are sold to slavers and taken to Saint-Domingue. Her mother died two days into the crossing; Marie survived and gave birth to her eldest son en route and struggled to keep him alive through the journey. The narrator's use of metanarrative layers storytelling within *Stella*. He tells readers the story of Marie and her sons, and then reveals Marie sharing her own story with her sons. Speaking in the first-person plural, he adds, "we have recorded [this touching and true story] for the reader's benefit" (12).¹⁴³

The word *histoire* can be translated as history or story, and in *Stella* the two overlap. The novel covers the entirety of the Haitian Revolution, from the earliest fires being set through independence. Bergeaud describes real events and key historical figures. This history is also recounted as allegory through fictional characters and events. Bergeaud recognized the allure of fiction just as Beaumont had viewed the novel as an effective form to welcome a larger readership to his abolitionist message almost a quarter century earlier. Marlene Daut notes, "Bergeaud believed that it was precisely because of its flowery language and use of metaphor that the genre of novel had the ultimate power to properly disseminate the redemptive meanings of Haitian history to the masses" (*Tropics of Haiti* 428).

féeriques, aussi légers que celles des songes, vole l'imagination de l'esclave à la poursuite des félicités qu'il ignore et des biens qu'il n'aura jamais!" (11).

¹⁴³ "une histoire touchante et vraie, que nous avons recueillie au profit du lecteur" (12).

Bergeaud explores the difference between history and fiction within *Stella*, and in the chapter “Romulus et Rémus” he explicitly contrasts the two. The chapter begins, “History is a river of truth which pursues its majestic course across the ages. The Novel is a lying lake whose expanse hides underground; calm and pure on the surface, sometimes it hides in its depths, like Lake *Asphaltite*, the secret of the destiny of peoples, of societies” (Bergeaud 19).¹⁴⁴ His use of metafiction then offers a method by which readers could examine ideas against the current of historical events. Bergeaud discusses the events and figures of the Haitian Revolution. Daut notes, “Given the specific engagement with the history of Saint-Domingue, the Revolution, and the immediate post-independence period of all of Haiti’s most eminent nineteenth-century authors, that the country’s first novelist takes up these topics as well should hardly come as a surprise” (*Tropics of Haiti* 424). Bergeaud’s focus on the revolution aligns his work with that of other nineteenth century Haitian writers as he portrays in detail the different battles as they are won and lost, the heroism of the *indigène* fighters against the French forces, and prominent historic figures from both sides.¹⁴⁵

History assumes meaning through the setting and characters. Setting in the novel begins by contrasting the isolated *ajoupa* where Marie L’Africaine lives with her sons to the Colonist’s imposing mansion on the hill above (Bergeaud 2-3). The Colonist’s greed dominates the landscape. Bergeaud expands his focus to juxtapose the cruelty of the sugar plantation against Saint Domingue’s natural beauty, highlighting the corrupting pervasiveness of the slave economy. He

¹⁴⁴ “L’Histoire est un fleuve de vérité qui poursuit son cours majestueux à travers les âges. Le Roman est un lac menteur dont l’étendue se dissimule sous terre; calme et pur à sa surface, il cache quelquefois dans ses profondeurs le secret de la destinée des peuples, des cités, comme le lac *Asphaltite*” (19). Daut explores Bergeaud’s meaning behind ‘secret destinies’ in *Tropics of Haiti* (428).

¹⁴⁵ Hoffman, in *Essays on Haitian Literature*, addresses Bergeaud’s use of historically recognized figures such as Sonthonax, Leclerc, and Rochambeau. He explains, “In their cases, the novelist could make use of what is known of their personalities” (117). After offering examples of Rochambeau’s real life cruelty, Hoffman reasons, “We reach the somewhat paradoxical conclusion that, from a literary point of view, the novel’s historical characters are better drawn, more ‘lifelike,’ than the fictional ones” (117-18).

recounts, “a slave -- for a single mistake, -- was soon sawed between two boards, soon rushed into the cauldron of boiling sugar, other times placed on the furnace’s fiery grate, other times buried alive!!!” (4).¹⁴⁶ The violence of slavery clashes harshly against the setting where it occurs and which, on the same page, the narrator invites readers to admire. He exclaims, “Friends of nature, philosophers, poets, come delight, learn, be inspired in the midst of so much splendor; come have your fill of new emotions, warm your spirit in the life-giving sunbeams, quench your soul at all the springs of poetry and love” (Bergeaud 4).¹⁴⁷ The horrors of colonialism and slavery are in sharp relief against the lush backdrop of natural Saint Domingue.

In “Environment and Identity in the Nineteenth-Century French Caribbean Novel,” Christie Margrave explores the relationship between landscape and identity in *Stella*. Margrave argues, “[Bergeaud is] underlining the unnatural colonial repression of people and land, ... reminding the reader that the protagonists’ new identities are to be forged in harmony with the island landscape, in opposition to France” (174). She identifies the mountains and trees as two sites connecting the formation of a new, Haitian identity to the land. The hill, earlier symbolizing the Colonist’s stature, becomes dwarfed by the mountains as Marie L’Africaine’s sons escape after her murder by the Colonist. Marie guides them after her death: “[t]hrough the hovel’s open door, L’Africaine’s final gaze, as precise as speech, revealed to the two brothers the mountain where they must next withdraw to avenge her death” (Bergeaud 18).¹⁴⁸ The mountain offers refuge for escaped enslaved people, is inaccessible to the *maréchaussée*, and becomes a headquarters for Romulus and Rémus, Stella, and the growing rebellion. Margrave observes, “The mountain

¹⁴⁶ “l’esclave, -- pour une simple faute, -- était tantôt scié entre deux planches, tantôt précipité dans la chaudière à sucre en ébullition, d’autres fois placé sur la grille ardente des fourneaux, d’autres fois encore enterré vivant !!!” (4).

¹⁴⁷ “Amis de la nature, philosophes, poètes, venez vous réjouir, vous instruire, vous inspirer au sein de tant de magnificence ; venez vous rassasier d’émotions nouvelles, réchauffer votre esprit à de vivifiants rayons, désaltérer votre âme à toutes les sources de poésies et d’amour” (4).

¹⁴⁸ “A travers la porte ouverte du réduit, le regard suprême de l’Africaine, aussi précis que la parole, indiqua aux frères la montagne où ils devaient prochainement se retirer pour venger sa mort” (18).

becomes not only the space from which the revolutionaries draw their life blood, but also a space of mutual safety: there, they protect the freedom necessary to maintain their new nation, and their identity is protected by that freedom” (174).

Trees in *Stella* represent colonial destruction and consumption, but also the germination and growing roots of a people and a nation. The significance of trees appears early in the text. The narrator recognizes that the *ajoupa*'s inhabitants “hardly dared to pick the fruit ripening on the tree outside their door” because all belongs to the colonist (3).¹⁴⁹ Later, Marie l’Africaine tries to explain the survival of her eldest son after his difficult birth on the slavers’ ship: “like a seed fallen from the forest tree, you took root, thanks to a hidden hand who dug for you a furrow in life, unbeknownst to men” (Bergeaud 14).¹⁵⁰ In both examples, the trees become the Colonist’s literal and symbolic property. Margrave illustrates how Bergeaud uses “arboreal symbolism” to demonstrate how colonial greed consumes the island’s resources: “*Stella* articulates the fact that there will be no freedom and no independent identity without such trees, since deforestation makes way for slave plantations” (176). To mark the rebels’ victory in battle, the narrator notes, “the palm tree, glorious tent of a victorious people, was named *tree of liberty*; immortal consecration of the most sacred right of man, by one of nature’s most noble creations” (Bergeaud 93).¹⁵¹ The palm, a tree native to the island, becomes a symbol of freedom and Haitian identity.

As the novel progresses, the main characters of *Stella*, Marie l’Africaine, her sons Romulus and Rémus, Stella, and the Colonist shift into more symbolic roles pointing readers to the novel’s overarching themes. Bergeaud explains, “*Romulus*, *Rémus* and the *Colonist*, are collective beings,

¹⁴⁹ “à peine osaient-ils cueillir de l’arbre le fruit mûrissant à leur porte” (3).

¹⁵⁰ “Semblable au pepin tombé de l’arbre de la forêt, vous avez pris racine, grâce à une main cachée qui vous a creusé un sillon dans la vie, à l’insu des hommes” (14).

¹⁵¹ “le palmier, tente glorieuse d’un peuple vainqueur, a été nommé l’*arbre de la liberté* [VI]; consécration immortelle du droit le plus sacré de l’homme, par une des plus nobles productions de la nature” (93).

l'Africaine, an ideal, *Stella*, an abstraction” (“Introduction” vi).¹⁵² Marie l'Africaine sacrifices herself to the Colonist's brutal punishment to protect her son. After her death, she visits her sons as a ghost and encourages their vengeance against the Colonist. Her torn and bloody dress serves as Haiti's first flag and a symbol of what her sons and the rebels fight against and for. Romulus is L'Africaine's eldest son, fathered by Marie's African husband and born on the slave ship. Rémus is her younger son, the product of her rape by the Colonist. The two brothers embody the uprising's Black and biracial factions. They struggle, at times against each other, through the long fight for Haiti's independence. The brothers' names evoke the founding of a great nation through their allusion to Roman mythology. Bergeaud explains, “The revolution of Saint-Domingue, laborious birthing of a new society, gave birth to four men who epitomize excess and glory: RIGAUD, TOUSSAINT, DESSALINES, PÉTION. We have borrowed from these men's lives the details which we needed to complete those of the two brothers who, strictly speaking do not have individual features” (vi).¹⁵³ When the brothers rescue young, blond, and French Stella from the Colonist's burning mansion, they first assume she is the Colonist's daughter before learning she herself has been held captive by the Colonist. She symbolizes the spirit of liberty born of the French revolution. Lastly, the Colonist represents the rapaciousness of the colonial society, the violence of the slave plantations, and duplicity as he aligns with different colonial powers in his attempt to maintain control of Saint Domingue. By the end of the novel, the brothers have rejoined each other and, guided by their mother and Stella, together are able to overcome the colonial oppressors. Unlike the Roman myth of Romulus and Remus that leaves one brother the victor to found Rome,

¹⁵² “*Romulus, Rémus*, et le *Colon*, sont des êtres collectifs, *l'Africaine* une idéalité, *Stella* une abstraction” (vi).

¹⁵³ “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, PÉTION. Nous avons emprunté à la vie de ces hommes les détails dont nous avons besoin pour compléter celle des deux frères qui, à proprement parler n'ont point d'individualité” (vi).

Stella's Haitian independence conveys unity across races. They declare, “l’union, c’est la force!” (Bergeaud 203), echoing *L’union fait la force* from the Haitian coat of arms.

New Orleans’s *gens de couleur libres* writers are intimately connected to Haiti through shared colonial experience, immigration patterns, and the desire to challenge racial oppression and slavery. Nineteenth century works by Ignace Nau and Émeric Bergeaud reveal the early development of a Haitian literature with a focus on orality via language and storytelling, history and the struggle for independence, and Haiti’s geography and people. The next section will analyze short fiction set in Saint Domingue by New Orleans’s writers Victor Séjour and Adolphe Duhart.

Saint Domingue in New Orleans Short Stories by *Gens de Couleur Libres*

Even after becoming part of the United States, New Orleans continued to benefit from strong cultural and economic exchanges with the Caribbean. Waves of immigration during and following the Haitian Revolution increased the connections between New Orleans and the former French colony as it became a focal point for refugees. Later in the nineteenth century, Black Louisianans traveled in reverse as they sought the freedoms offered by an independent Haiti. Short fiction by New Orleans’s nineteenth century *gens de couleur libres* writers depict these exchanges between New Orleans and Saint Domingue/Haiti. Michel Séigny, whose short story “Marie” was analyzed in the previous chapter, wrote stories set in the Caribbean such as “Un Pirate” (1853), set in Cuba, and “Le Pêcheur de la Guadeloupe” (1858). Joanni Questy, a *gens de couleur libres* poet and contributor to *Les Cenelles*, included a reference to Haiti as a possible destination for one of the characters in his short story “Monsieur Paul” (1867). The following section will analyze the role of Saint Domingue in two short stories by New Orleans authors Victor Séjour and Adolphe Duhart. Séjour’s “Le Mulâtre” and Duhart’s “Simple histoire” are both set in colonial Saint

Domingue and share the emphasis on recounting the story of Haiti's history, geography, and people with the Haitian fiction I addressed previously in this chapter.

Victor Séjour's "Le Mulâtre"

Victor Séjour's life reflects the intersections of New Orleans with both France and Haiti. He was born in New Orleans in 1817 to parents Juan Francisco Louis Victor Séjour Marcou, of San Marcos (Saint Marc), Saint Domingue, and Eloisa Philippe Ferrand of New Orleans (Tinker 428).¹⁵⁴ Growing up in New Orleans, Séjour was Michel Séligny's student at the Académie Sainte-Barbe before moving to Paris to study. Séjour would become known primarily as a playwright, but in the March 1837 edition of *La Revue de Colonies* he published "Le Mulâtre," the first known short story by an African American writer. In his time, the story would not legally have been published in New Orleans because of restrictive laws against abolitionist texts. *La Revue de Colonies* is the same Parisian journal where Ignace Nau published his earliest short story "Isalina." Though a native New Orleanian, Victor Séjour had strong family ties to Haiti. Bell writes, "Some of the writer's relatives still lived in Haiti, and Séjour's nephew, Frédéric Marcelin, became a noted political activist and renowned Romantic writer. Séjour possibly was relating some of his family's experiences in their Caribbean homeland. Séjour's convincing and vivid descriptions of black culture suggest that the writer visited the island himself" (96). O'Neill, in his biographical writing on Séjour, concludes that Séjour never traveled to Haiti (16). While it is unclear whether Séjour draws directly from family stories in his work, he does set the short story in his father's hometown of Saint Marc. Both Séjour's life and short story demonstrate Haiti's influence on New Orleans's *gens de couleur* community and writers.

¹⁵⁴ He was named Juan Victor Séjour Marcou et Ferrand at birth but would later simply use the name Victor Séjour.

“Le Mulâtre” (“The Mulatto”) shares the metafiction and emphasis on storytelling of Nau’s stories. It begins with a first-person narrator who is leaving Cap at dawn for the town of Saint-Marc. The narrator sets the story in time and place as though looking to the past. He clarifies that Saint-Marc is a “little town in St-Domingue, today called the republic of Haiti” (Séjour 57).¹⁵⁵ Soon after he arrives, an old man strikes up a conversation with him. The narrator, showing his familiarity with the man, recounts, “Antoine, I said to him, you promised me the story about your friend Georges” (58).¹⁵⁶ Antoine confirms that the narrator wants to hear the tale right then, the voice shifts to Antoine telling his story and never returns to the first narrator. The framing narration shares qualities with the French Romantic texts I discussed in the previous chapter, but Séjour also uses a similar pattern to the narration in Nau’s stories. When they first encounter each other, the narrator describes Antoine: “an old black man, already in his seventies; his steps were solid, his head high, his height imposing and vigorous; nothing betrayed his advanced age other than his remarkably kinky white hair” (57).¹⁵⁷ The first narrator, whom we know little about other than he is referred to by Antoine as *maître*, which suggests he is white, asks the older man to tell a story about events he has witnessed or learned about first hand.

History is linked to place and people as Antoine explicitly describes the cruelty of colonial Saint Domingue. He begins by pointing out the building right beside him: “this structure which resembles, in its originality, a temple, and by its elegance, some sort of palace, it’s the St-M*** house (58).¹⁵⁸ He then describes the building’s occupants: “Every day in this building’s rooms, the loafers, the independently wealthy and the large planters get together. The first two play billiards,

¹⁵⁵ “petite ville de St-Domingue, aujourd’hui la république d’Haïti” (57).

¹⁵⁶ “Antoine, lui dis-je, vous m’aviez promis l’histoire de votre ami Georges” (58).

¹⁵⁷ “un vieillard nègre, déjà septuagénaire; ses pas étaient fermes, sa tête haute, sa taille imposante et vigoureuse; rien ne trahissait son grand âge, sinon la blancheur remarquable de ses cheveux crépus” (57).

¹⁵⁸ “cet édifice qui ressemble, par son originalité, à un temple, et par sa coquetterie, à quelque palais, c’est la maison St-M***” (52)

or smoke delicious cigars from Havana; while the latter buy *nègres*; that is to say free men, snatched by trick or by force from their homeland, becoming, through violence, the goods, the property of their fellow men” (58).¹⁵⁹ Antoine’s description of the beauty of the building and the casualness of the men who frequent it contrasts sharply with the horrors of the slave market. This highlights the callousness of the participants and observers. Moreover, Antoine’s narrative is in the present tense, suggesting the market is perhaps ongoing within the context of the story. He pauses in his description to ask if the first narrator is trembling, acknowledging the impact of what he relates and highlighting the back and forth of storytelling. He then narrows his focus to the sale of a young Senegalese woman. The ugliness of the sale becomes apparent as the crowd observes the semi-naked woman’s beauty, and one young man complains about the price and asks if the woman is “guaranteed” (59). After confirming her virginity is intact, the young man, Alfred, purchases *L’Africaine*.

The story moves forward quickly in time and Laïssa, the Senegalese woman, now lives in the worst shack on the plantation with her grown son in a similar context to the *ajoupa* shared by Marie l’Africaine and her sons. Laïssa’s rape by her enslaver Alfred has produced a son, Georges. She has refused to reveal his father’s identity to him until he turns twenty-five and before her death gives him a tiny portrait of his father hidden in a small bag. Meanwhile Georges, seemingly unaware of his origins, becomes loyal to Alfred. When robbers attack the house, Georges is wounded fighting them off, revealing his bravery, while Alfred cowers. As Georges hangs between life and death, healing from his many wounds, Alfred begins to pursue Georges’s wife Zélie. Alfred’s attentions become more forceful, and Zélie pushes him away, causing him to hit his head,

¹⁵⁹ “Dans une des pièces de ce bâtiment, se réunissent chaque jour les flâneurs, les rentiers et les grands planteurs. Les deux premiers jouent au billard, ou fument le délicieux cigare de la Havane; tandis que les derniers achètent des nègres ; c’est-à-dire des hommes libres, arrachés par la ruse ou par la force de leur patrie, et devenus, par la violence, le bien, la propriété de leurs semblables” (52).

drawing blood. Georges begins to recover only to discover that his wife has committed a capital offense. Alfred refuses to intervene in Zélie's execution and Georges, incensed, flees with his two-year-old son to the Maroon camp to plan his revenge. The ending comes three years later when Georges returns to the plantation to avenge Zélie's death.

Though very different in form and plot, Bergeaud's *Stella* and "Le Mulâtre" share specific features, especially portrayals of violence against Black women at the hands of their enslavers. Each text includes a main character who is the product of rape. Bergeaud expresses that soon after *L'Africaine's* arrival, "the Colonist that she had for a master *deigned* to notice her. It soon became necessary to give in to the sultan's whim" (9).¹⁶⁰ In Séjour's story, Antoine qualifies Georges's mother's rape by explaining, "I won't tell you all that [Alfred] did to possess Laïssa; because she was nearly raped" (61).¹⁶¹ Each text also portrays enslavers committing deadly violence against women and sons planning revenge against their white fathers. Daut notes, "The *Colon's* brutality against their mother effectively performs the same role for Romulus and Rémus that Zélie's death performed for Séjour's Georges" (*Tropics of Haiti* 414). In each case, the sons escape to plan their vengeance then return to destroy the source of their oppression. Brickhouse explains, "Séjour's short story play[s] upon widespread cultural anxieties about slave revolt and the threat of black violence unleashed in a displaced southern United States intimately connected to Saint-Domingue" (121). Séjour does not explicitly explore the historical events that ended slavery in Saint Domingue but setting "Le Mulâtre" in colonial Saint Domingue is significant. The story was published more than thirty years after the Haitian Revolution raising a strong critique of continued slavery in both France's colonies and the United States.

¹⁶⁰ "le Colon qu'elle eût pour maître *daigna* la remarquer. Il fallut bientôt céder à son caprice de sultan" (9).

¹⁶¹ "Je ne vous dirai pas tout ce qu'il fit pour posséder Laïssa; car celle-ci fut presque violée" (61).

The violence of colonial Saint Domingue is juxtaposed against the beauty of the region. Brown writes of “Le Mulâtre,” “The story is immediately noteworthy for its setting... Haiti was by the 1830s a well-established symbol of the radical potential of the black desire for freedom and concomitant overthrow of an established colonial order. But instead of modeling a vision of what a liberated United States *could* look like, Séjour brings us to a prerevolutionary Haiti” (186). Aside from the symbolic implications of the setting, Séjour offers only a brief description of the location after explaining the narrator is going to Saint-Marc. The prerevolutionary Haiti that Séjour constructs has a lush and vibrant landscape, but it takes an odd turn as the narrator approaches the town. The narrator notes, “I had viewed so many beautiful mountains and tall, deep forests that truthfully I thought myself indifferent to this masculine beauty of creation. But, at the appearance of this last town, with its picturesque vegetation, its new and strange countryside, I was astonished and confused before the sublime diversity of God’s work” (57).¹⁶² The lane that brings Laïssa to the plantation, the “chemin de *guêpes*,” previews what awaits her at Alfred’s plantation. The narrator recounts, “[it’s] an easy enough route that leads through the charming countryside gathered around Saint-Marc like young virgins at the foot of the altar” (60).¹⁶³ The setting’s description, while delighting the narrator, seems to presage the discord to come.

“Le Mulâtre” offers an overview of Saint Domingue society across race and class and demonstrates the corrosive effects of the colonial system. A web of relationships connects the characters to each other. Brickhouse observes, “to relate the story’s interweaving plotlines as a whole is to reveal the text’s self-consciousness about the colonial implications of kinship and the

¹⁶² “J’avais tant vu de belles montagnes, de forêts hautes et profondes, qu’en vérité je me croyais blasé de ces beautés mâles de la création. Mais, à l’aspect de cette dernière ville, avec sa végétation pittoresque, sa nature neuve et bizarre, je fus étonné et confondu devant la diversité sublime de l’œuvre de Dieu” (57).

¹⁶³ “le chemin des *guêpes*, route assez commode qui mène à ces délicieuses campagnes, groupées autour de Saint-Marc comme de jeunes vierges au pied de l’autel” (60).

larger discourse structuring its own narration of family” (121-22). Georges is the thread linking the characters. The story’s events transform him from a loving son who is loyal to his enslaver to a vengeful murderer. Self-destruction and violence result from the ways that slavery corrupts relationships, particularly within families, bringing to fruition Antoine’s observation at the beginning of the story. He simultaneously previews what will happen to Georges while making broader claims about slavery: “Whether he [an enslaved man] is born good, noble, generous; whether God gives him a large and loyal soul; despite all that, often he goes to the tomb with hands stained in blood, and a heart hungry for vengeance” (57).¹⁶⁴ Antoine connects violent behavior directly back to slavery’s destruction of families. He continues to explain this view and then poses a rhetorical question: “because experience teaches him that his good acts weren’t counted, and that he shouldn’t love his wife, nor son because one day the first will seduced by the master, and his blood will be sold away despite his despair. So, what do you expect him to become?” (57-58)¹⁶⁵

The characters also form larger groups beyond family ties suggesting communities within Saint Domingue society. After Laïsa’s death, Georges’s cries reach others enslaved on Alfred’s plantation who share his grief: “They started to cry, to strike their chests, to pull their hair in despair” (62).¹⁶⁶ The same group joins Georges’s mourning with both Christian and Vodun rituals, chants, and funeral dances. The narrator recounts, “After these first signs of pain, they washed the corpse, and set her out on a type of long table held up by sawhorses. The dead woman was laid on her back, face turned to the East, dressed in her best clothes, and hands crossed on her chest”

¹⁶⁴ “Qu’il naisse bon, noble, généreux ; que Dieu lui donne une âme loyale et grande ; malgré cela, bien souvent il descend dans la tombe les mains teintes de sang, et le cœur avide encore de vengeance” (57).

¹⁶⁵ “car l’expérience lui a appris que ses bonnes actions n’étaient pas comptées, et qu’il ne devait aimer ni sa femme, ni ses fils ; car un jour la première sera séduite par le maitre, et son sang vendu au loin malgré son désespoir. Alors, que voulez-vous qu’il devienne ?” (57-58).

¹⁶⁶ “Ils se mirent à pleurer, à frapper leur poitrine, à arracher leurs cheveux de désespoir” (62).

(62).¹⁶⁷ Georges also finds community when he escapes to the Maroon colony. He and his young son travel by foot six hours, finally arriving at a hut in the woods. Antoine notes, “you will understand this type of joy that brings a shine to your eyes when you become aware that this little isolated hut is the maroon camp, which is to say the slaves who have fled the tyranny of their masters” (69).¹⁶⁸ After Georges states the password “Afrique et liberté,” he declares, “I am one of you,” (69). The Maroon camp welcomes Georges and his son. Contrasting the social support that Georges finds among enslaved and Maroon groups, whites in Saint Domingue also form communities. Alfred is not isolated in his casual depravity towards enslaved people. The white characters’ mundane ease at the slave market begins much earlier. The day before Zélie’s execution, two white Creole children are playing in the street chatting about how they intend to watch. One says, “it will be nice to see her turn between the sky and earth” as they laugh (66).¹⁶⁹ Antoine expounds that colonial society reinforces generational racism and slavery. He notes his listener’s reaction to his story, then explains: “It surprises you to hear two ten-year-old children so gaily discuss another’s death; it is perhaps the fatal consequence of their upbringing. From their earliest age it is repeated to them that we are born to serve them, created for their whims, and they don’t have to consider us as any more or any less than a dog” (66).¹⁷⁰

Though set in the past, “Le Mulâtre” draws parallels to critique ongoing slavery in French colonies and the United States. “Le Mulâtre” shares common elements with texts by Nau and

¹⁶⁷ “Après ces premières marques de douleur, ils lavèrent le corps de la défunte, et l’exposèrent sur une espèce de table longue soutenue par les tréteaux. La morte est couchée sur le dos, le visage tourné vers l’Orient, vêtue de ses meilleurs habits, et les mains croisées sur sa poitrine” (62).

¹⁶⁸ “Vous comprendrez cette espèce de joie qui brille dans ses yeux quand vous saurez que cette cabane toute petite, tout isolée, qu’elle est, est le camp des nègres marrons, c’est-à-dire des esclaves qui fuient la tyrannie de leurs maîtres” (69).

¹⁶⁹ “Ce sera gentil de la voir pirouetter entre ciel et terre” (66).

¹⁷⁰ “Cela vous étonne d’entendre deux enfants de dix ans s’entretenir si gaiment de la mort d’autrui; c’est une conséquence peut-être fatale de leur éducation. Dès leur bas âge on leur répète que nous sommes nés pour les servir, créés pour leurs caprices, et qu’ils ne doivent nous considérer ni plus ni moins qu’un chien” (66).

Bergeaud including storytelling by an eyewitness, Haitian history, and a focus on Haiti and its people. Séjour constructs a narrator who, because he has lived and witnessed the events firsthand, is invited by another to tell his story. Antoine's tale offers explicit details of the cruelty and abuse of slavery. Séjour's story presents ordinary people in the town of Saint-Marc and the communities that are formed, revealing the harsh divisions and sociological impacts of a colonial slave culture. "Le Mulâtre," through its focus on Saint Domingue, directs readers to acknowledge the corrupting influences of slavery and their violent implications.

Adolphe Duhart's "Simple histoire"

Adolphe Duhart's "Simple histoire" also takes place in Saint Domingue and was first published in *La Tribune de la Nouvelle-Orléans* in 1865. Duhart was born in New Orleans in 1830 to refugees from Saint Domingue. Educated in France before returning to New Orleans to teach at the *École des Orphelins*, he later succeeded Joanni Questy as its director (Desdunes 93). "Simple histoire" reflects the cultural intersections of New Orleans, France, and Haiti, drawing from Duhart's own experiences and colonial history. Set in the eighteenth century, "Simple histoire" recounts the tale of two children growing up together on a plantation, Clément, the son of an enslaved woman, and the owner's daughter, Mlle de Sauillac. The two are childhood friends, but then are separated when Mlle de Sauillac is sent to Paris for school. When they meet again as young adults, their friendship becomes romantic. The plot then turns to the pair's mothers as they cope with hiding the child who results from their union. Like the previous fictional works I analyzed in this chapter by Nau, Bergeaud, and Séjour, Duhart's story emphasizes Haitian history and people.

Duhart's story reveals French literary influences, but he applies French narrative structure to a Caribbean setting. Michaelides explains, "Duhart transposes the model inspired by French bourgeois drama onto the system of slavery in Saint-Domingue, inserting it into the history of the Haitian revolution" (38).¹⁷¹ The plot of "Simple histoire" recounts one household's story, but in doing so, makes larger social and moral claims that interrogate not only the eighteenth-century context in which it is set but also the New Orleans setting of the story's publication. The story challenges social constructions of race in colonial Saint Domingue, but by implication, also in the Louisiana of Duhart's time. The title, "Simple histoire," understates the larger consequences of the family events recounted in the text. Duhart presents a story that is anything but simple.

Saint Domingue's colonial history plays a significant role in "Simple histoire." Duhart presents Saint Domingue society through the filter of hindsight. He notes the revolution to come and connects his story to a prominent figure associated with the earliest uprising. The third person narration describes Saint Domingue society while contrasting the head of the family, Monsieur de Sauillac, to other whites on the island: "those inhabitants who had only left France to escape the most profound misery, and who, upon arriving in the Colony, quickly amassed, at the price of the unfortunate Africans' blood, those glittering fortunes which were only due to their greed and brutality" (81).¹⁷² As the youngest son of a French noble family, who himself had amassed a great fortune, Monsieur de Sauillac was part of the wealthy planter class. Though it draws class distinctions between *petits blancs* and *grands blancs*, the story makes clear that both groups' obtained wealth through violence and the forced labor of enslaved Africans. The story also

¹⁷¹ "Duhart y transpose ce modèle inspiré du drame bourgeois français sur le système d'esclavage à Saint-Domingue, l'insérant dans l'histoire de la révolution haïtienne" (38).

¹⁷² "ces habitants qui n'avaient quitté la France que pour échapper à la plus profonde misère, et qui, arrivés dans la Colonie, amassaient en peu de temps, au prix du sang des malheureux Africains, ces fortunes brillantes qu'ils ne devaient qu'à leur avidité et à leur barbarie" (81).

emphasizes its time frame as it alludes to the future: “More crimes must bloody this unfortunate land, before its descendants, heirs to its fortitude and its dynamism, shout this first cry of liberty which must reverberate from land to land and from century to century wherever there are slaves, and conquer through the price of their blood the independence which the children of Haiti now enjoy” (83).¹⁷³ This recognition of Haiti’s independence foreshadows the story’s ending when it is revealed that a generation later, the child that is born to Mlle Sauillac and Clément will later marry and have two children. The narrator explains, “[from them came] the first martyr to succumb to the cause of Haitian liberty and independence” (85).¹⁷⁴ In his notes accompanying the text, Michaelides identifies this as a reference to Vincent Ogé (222). Though set in colonial Saint Domingue, “Simple histoire” emphasizes the revolution that follows and underscores a biracial figure’s role in the country achieving independence.

The characters in “Simple histoire” are from within the de Sauillac household. Other than Monsieur de Sauillac, they undermine Saint Domingue’s enforced hierarchies. Mlle de Sauillac and her brother are sent to France for their education and to ensure they learn French manners in contrast to the coarseness their father perceives in Saint Domingue society. Ironically, Mlle de Sauillac’s newly acquired French education has also turned her values away from those of her father. The narrator observes, “stripped by her education of all these ridiculous prejudices, fruits of slavery, of the unfortunate Africans she only saw brothers that a terrible fate had reduced to servitude” (82).¹⁷⁵ Having grown up enslaved on Monsieur de Sauillac’s plantation, Clément

¹⁷³ “D’autres crimes devaient ensanglanter cette terre infortunée, avant que ses descendants, héritiers de sa force d’âme et de son énergie, ne jetassent les premiers ce cri de liberté, qui doit retentir, de contrée en contrée et de siècle en siècle, partout où il y aura des esclaves, et ne conquissent au prix de leur sang l’indépendance sous laquelle vivent maintenant les enfants d’Haïti” (83).

¹⁷⁴ “elle eut deux enfants, desquels est sorti le premier martyr qui succombât à la cause de la liberté et de l’indépendance haïtienne” (85).

¹⁷⁵ “Dépouillée par son éducation de tous ces préjugés ridicules, fruits de l’esclavage, elle ne voyait dans les malheureux Africains que des frères qu’un sort affreux avait réduits à la servitude” (82).

dreams of liberating himself and others. He spent his childhood alongside Mlle de Sauillac, but now that they are older, Clément tries to distance himself from her when she returns from France. The story notes, “[he] appeared to only have for her the respect that a mistress is due,” despite his affection for her (83).¹⁷⁶ This distancing fails, bringing enormous risk to both as they are overcome by passion: “their hearts understood each other, and despite the terrible voice of honor and of prejudice, despite the immeasurable distance between a slave and his mistress, they swore their eternal loyalty” (84).¹⁷⁷ Once Mlle de Sauillac finds herself pregnant, she tearfully confides in her mother. Mme de Sauillac and Clément’s mother, Man Maria, work together to hide the pregnancy from Mlle de Sauillac’s father. Mme de Sauillac then persuades her husband to free Man Maria and Clément, sending them away from the household, but gives the child to her daughter. The household’s upheaval is resolved to everyone’s satisfaction, presenting a conclusion in the style of a French bourgeois drama while subverting colonial era boundaries of race and class.

Upon closer examination, the relationships within the family reveal troubling connections. The story describes it as a happy coincidence that Man Maria and Mme de Sauillac bear children at the same time. Biracial Clément grows up alongside white Mlle de Sauillac and they behave as siblings. Man Maria was Mlle de Sauillac’s nursemaid, so Clément and Mlle de Sauillac would have been milk siblings. Though Clément’s father is never mentioned, and it is only noted that he was the son of a white man, there is a strong possibility that it could be Monsieur de Sauillac, as the master of the house. This suggests Mlle de Sauillac and Clément are not only lovers, but half siblings. When Man Maria and Mme de Sauillac conspire to hide the identity of the baby’s parents, Man Maria, who was still young enough to bear children, claimed that the child was fathered by

¹⁷⁶ “Clément qui ne paraissait plus avoir pour elle que le respect que l’on doit à une maîtresse” (83).

¹⁷⁷ “Leurs cœurs s’entendirent, et malgré la voix terrible de l’honneur et du préjugé, malgré l’incommensurable distance de l’esclave et de la maîtresse, ils se jurèrent une éternelle fidélité” (84).

Monsieur de Sauillac's son. The narrator explains, "the younger de Sauillac who whether he believed it himself or whether he wanted others to believe it, never denied it" (85).¹⁷⁸ The consensual relationship between Mlle de Sauillac and Clément would have resulted in Clément's death had it been discovered beyond the circle who knew, but it is accepted and expected that the white men of the household will create children with the enslaved women.

Though set in eighteenth-century Saint Domingue, Duhart's assessment of class and racial divisions were applicable to New Orleans society at the story's publication date just before the end of the Civil War. Michaelides also notes Duhart does not reference divisions between *gens de couleur libres* and enslaved Black people in Haiti: "without a doubt Duhart sought another paradigm for Louisiana *gens de couleur*, who were getting ready to represent and to instruct the newly freed after the Civil War. This elite cadre needed the example of a biracial revolutionary chief showing the path to others and fighting for the liberty of all" (38-39).¹⁷⁹ As Haiti moved forward creating an independent nation and literature, New Orleans writers still looked to the island's history. The bonds between Haiti and New Orleans were built on shared colonial experience under France, family ties across oceans, and mutual concerns of racial justice and freedom. New Orleans writers drew inspiration and models from Haiti's past and shaped a literature that extended beyond the city's U.S. borders.

¹⁷⁸ "en disant qu'elle l'avait eue du jeune de Sauillac qui soit qu'il le crut lui-même, soit qu'il eut intérêt à le laisser croire aux autres, ne la dementit jamais" (85).

¹⁷⁹ "Duhart cherchait sans doute un autre paradigme pour les gens de couleur louisianais, qui se préparaient à représenter et à instruire les nouveaux affranchis après la guerre de Sécession. Il fallait à ce cadre d'élite l'exemple d'un chef révolutionnaire mulâtre montrant le chemin aux autres et combattant pour la liberté de tous" (38-39).

CONCLUSION

Gens de couleur continued to have a strong presence in New Orleans during the turbulent latter half of the nineteenth century. Americanization and growing racial tensions and violence led *gens de couleur* who remained in the city to align with newly freed Blacks as the former colonial tripartite system gave way to the United States' racial binary. English language use became more prevalent leading to a decline in the city's French press and literary production. White and Black Creoles made efforts to sustain French language literature in New Orleans. New Orleans authors who wrote at the century's conclusion explored similar themes as their predecessors and continued a tradition of highlighting the city's unique history and culture.

The Americanization of New Orleans irrevocably changed the city and *gens de couleur libres'* role in it. The influx of white Americans from other states continued; they sought political and economic advantage and to change the city's culture. The arrival of Irish and German immigrants also reshaped the city. Much as the *petits blancs* had resented the strong economic and social position of Saint Domingue's *affranchi* class, non-Latin European immigrants viewed New Orleans's *gens de couleur* population as an impediment to their own success. Sumpter explains, "These groups had no experience with 'racial' mixing and had a stake in differentiating themselves from free people of color in order to compete for jobs, housing, and status as "white"" (24). New Orleans became more racially segregated and English speaking as the city's population shifted. These changes had enormous impacts on New Orleans's *gens de couleur* population.

A key component of Americanization was the transition from the colonial tripartite to a racial binary. Increased racial segregation and the expulsion of free Blacks over the nineteenth century enabled the change. Racial segregation, enforced through state and municipal legislation, dramatically altered how New Orleanians interacted. Public spaces including theatres, balls, taverns, brothels, and even cemeteries became racially segregated.¹⁸⁰ *Gens de couleur libres* pushed back against segregation within the city. In 1837, in response to the removal of seating for *gens de couleur* attendees of the Orleans Theatre, free people of color opened the Marigny Theatre (Duplantier 75-76). Transportation was also separated by race, both for the living and the dead. Sumpter details, “The owner of the railroad that carried corpses to the cemetery was required to carry the corpses of whites, free persons of color, and slaves in different cars” (33). *Gens de couleur libres* continued to inhabit the traditionally French municipalities of the city but not only for reasons of tradition and culture. Sumpter explains, “increasingly hostile legislation against them [people of color] was not enforced as strictly as in the American Sector of the city” (31). The security offered by the French sections of the city for *gens de couleur libres* abated as the white population grew stronger and more dominant.

In addition to limitations on *gens de couleur libres* within New Orleans, there were also efforts to expel segments of the population from the state. The newspapers *L’Abeille* and *The Daily Picayune* both pressed for free Blacks to be expelled (Bell 86-87).¹⁸¹ Parallel to calls in the white press, the state took legislative measures to reduce the free Black population. Legislation sought to expel *gens de couleur libres* who had come to Louisiana after 1825, send the newly freed to

¹⁸⁰ See Sumpter’s list “Chronological Summary of Major Legislation Passed after 1803 Affecting Social and Spatial Segregation” for municipal and state legislation passed between 1806 and 1859 (33).

¹⁸¹ Bell writes, “The New Orleans *Bee* (*L’Abeille*) claimed that without guidance from the ‘superior [white] race’ free blacks would ‘lapse into a state of barbarism and crime.’ Such a class of persons, the *Bee* maintained, should be expelled since they were ‘dangerous companions to the slaves’” (86). She also details, “The New Orleans *Daily Picayune* advocated their expulsion on the grounds that free blacks were a ‘debauching, drunken, insolent group whose main object was to tamper with slaves and thereby make them discontented’” (86-87).

Liberia (1852), and, in 1857, end manumission altogether (Sumpter 34). These efforts responded to white concerns about an educated and prosperous *gens de couleur libres* class, fears of growing abolition movements, and the potential for violent uprisings by enslaved peoples. They also served to further impose the American binary racial framework on the city and state.

A second aspect of the Americanization of New Orleans was English language use. Although it had begun earlier in the nineteenth century as immigrants from other states and Europe had arrived following statehood, this linguistic shift accelerated after the Civil War and continued into the twentieth century. Louisiana's Anglophone population's strengthening political and economic power encouraged mandates concerning language use in schools and government. Estaville recognizes two key pieces of legislation: "As early as the Reconstruction Constitution of 1864, the Louisiana legislature required that the 'general exercises in the public schools were to be henceforth conducted in the English language'... and four years later the infamous 'Carpetbagger Constitution' categorically declared that '...no law shall...be issued in any other language than the English language'" (111). State lawmakers continued to pass legislation to enforce English into the early twentieth century. The decline in French language use and education weakened New Orleans's French-language press.¹⁸²

There were efforts to sustain Louisiana French language texts during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Alcée Fortier, professor of Romance Languages at Tulane University, served as president of *L'Athénée louisianais*, the Louisiana Historical Society, the American Folklore Society, the Modern Language Association, and the *Fédération de l'Alliance*

¹⁸² Linking readership to education, Estaville observes, "From 33 newspapers in 1860, the French-language press withered to only seven by 1900, and, of the 26 mid-century bilingual newspapers, five survived to the century's end... *L'Abeille*, Louisiana's last important French-language newspaper, suspended publication in 1923, just two years after a new state constitution banned once again the use of French in public schools" (112-13).

Française (“Alcée Fortier”). For his reviews in *Modern Language Notes*, Fortier wrote about late nineteenth century New Orleans French language writers. In “The French Literature of Louisiana in 1887 and 1888. I,” Fortier stressed that bilingual Americans were still writing in French even as he noted, “our Louisiana authors know that in writing in French they have but little chance of being read outside of their State” (49). He also reminded readers that the only magazine being published in Louisiana at that time, *Comptes-Rendus de l’Athénée Louisianais*, was in French (49). In “The French Literature of Louisiana in 1887 and 1888. II,” Fortier again called attention to French language works published in the *Comptes-Rendus de l’Athénée Louisianais* and discussed the critical reception of George W. Cable’s *Creoles of Louisiana* and its pejorative depictions of Louisiana Creoles (116). In later issues, Fortier continued his appeals to maintain Louisiana French. In at least one text he acknowledged poetry by New Orleans *gens de couleur libres*. His article “French Literature in Louisiana” briefly mentions *Les Cenelles* and its poets, including Victor Séjour. Of Séjour’s writing, Fortier reports, “‘Le Retour de Napoléon’ was favorably received in France” (44). In this same article, Fortier also included verses from Camille Thierry’s 1874 book of poetry *Les Vagabondes* (44). Thierry was Michel Séligny’s half-brother (Tinker 466).

Due to the worsening racial climate, many *gens de couleur libres* elected to leave the country all together, primarily for France, Mexico, and Haiti. *Gens de couleur libres*, of course, already had existing ties with France, and some chose to move there permanently. Victor Séjour, for instance, preferred to remain in Paris after his studies rather than return to New Orleans, living out his life in France. Michel Séligny lived the final decade of his life in France after his relationship with a white woman caused scandal in New Orleans (Fabre, “New Orleans Creole Expatriates” 180). Mexico became a destination after violent attacks by whites in Attakapas

County (later divided into four parishes) outside of New Orleans. In 1857 Louis Nelson Fouché, an architect and free man of color originally from Jamaica, helped found the Eureka colony near Tampico. Mitchell explains, “Mexico’s president Ignacio Comonfort welcomed Louisiana’s free people of color, insisting that they would have ‘the same rights and equality enjoyed by the other inhabitants [of Mexico] without at any time having to feel ashamed of their origin’” (29-30).

Haiti also became a destination, at least temporarily.¹⁸³ Many *gens de couleur libres* had maintained family connections in Haiti; the nation’s history and independence beckoned. The Haitian government actively recruited immigrants of color from Louisiana, and many came, particularly from rural areas. Both the Haitian and New Orleans press encouraged immigration, but for differing reasons. On January 15, 1860 the New Orleans *Daily Picayune* reported that eighty-one free persons of color from Opelousas, fourteen households in all, were boarding the *Laurel* bound for Haiti.¹⁸⁴ After acknowledging that the passengers were leaving with “a considerable amount of capital” having sold their property in Louisiana, the article ruminates that the Haitian population is averse to labor and will benefit from the newcomers, because, as the article explains, “the example set by men of their own race, who, under the beneficial influences of the whites, have grown up in industrious habits and conservative principles. If anything can be done for Hayti, these are certain the people to do it” (“The City” 8). The English language daily, with racist and patronizing diction that demonstrates the climate of the city, took care to distinguish between free people of color from Louisiana and those who are outsiders and a potential threat to the state’s ongoing slave economy. In sharp contrast, Duplantier’s translation of an announcement

¹⁸³ Duplantier notes, “At least 450 free black Louisianians left New Orleans for Haiti in the years before the Civil War. Most were to return soon after the fall of the city to Union forces, but some... made Haiti their permanent home” (76).

¹⁸⁴ The article perhaps intends the *Laura*? Duplantier cites multiple examples of the *Laura*, captained by the same Captain Pierce referenced in the *Daily Picayune* article, as the ship bringing travelers from New Orleans to Haiti, including in the fictional source Joanni Questy’s short story “Monsieur Paul.”

in *Le Progrès* (Port-au-Prince), dated July 25 of that same year expresses optimism, recognizes shared history, and welcomes two hundred and fifty people of color arriving from Louisiana: “We hope that they decide to join us here to enjoy liberty and equality under the Haitian palm, and we hope that they will help us to make our beautiful land, which our generous fathers fertilized with their own blood, the black metropolis of the civilized world” (77). While the state of Louisiana sought to decrease its free Black population, *gens de couleur libres* also had motivation and options to leave New Orleans.

Despite worsening social conditions, many decided to stay and fight for abolition and civil rights for all Blacks. The struggle continued long after the Civil War and Reconstruction and caused *gens de couleur libres* to at times turn away from existing institutions and form new alliances. Bell recognizes that initially many people of color enlisted in the 1st Native Guards, Louisiana Militia, of the Confederacy but acknowledges, “the Afro-Creole community’s loyalty to Louisiana should not be interpreted as support for the Confederate cause” (233). Following the federal occupation of the city, the New Orleans Native guard, made up primarily of free men of color, joined the Union army and more followed. The Catholic Church in New Orleans increasingly aligned with the Confederacy, encouraging segregation, and even “[withheld] church sacraments from black [Union] soldiers,” (Bell 243) causing families to look elsewhere for spiritual guidance. Many *gens de couleur* joined the freemasons or became adherents to Spiritualism, including Adolphe Duhart¹⁸⁵ *Gens de couleur* were at the forefront of the struggle for civil rights and social justice through the increasing violence, racism and segregation that followed the war and Reconstruction. Battles included the *Comité des Citoyen’s* effort to

¹⁸⁵ See Emily Suzanne Clark’s *A Luminous Brotherhood: Afro-Creole Spiritualism in Nineteenth-Century New Orleans*, The U of North Carolina P, 2016 for a detailed history of the Spiritualist movement in New Orleans. Bell also discusses the growth of Spiritualism at length as well as Afro-Creole activism.

desegregate public transportation in 1892 that led to the 1896 *Plessy vs Ferguson* court decision upholding segregation. The New Orleans Black press continued to be at the forefront of these endeavors. In 1893 the *Crusader* reported on Bonseigneur, a member of the *Comité des Citoyens*, who had purchased a home in Mandeville but was forced to sell by local white residents before his family could occupy it. Louis A. Martinet addressed this same case in *The Violation of a Constitutional Right* (Karcher 19).¹⁸⁶ Certainly the reality of late nineteenth century Mandeville contrasts sharply with the idealized outcome of Duhart's short story "Trois amours" from fewer than thirty years earlier.

Gens de couleur libres writers lived at intersections of place, language, and race during the nineteenth century. New Orleans's language and culture shifted as it transitioned from its French and Spanish colonial past to being part of the United States. *Gens de couleur libres* also traversed place as they emigrated from Saint Domingue and traveled between France and New Orleans. They continued to live and work in French even as New Orleans Americanized and became increasingly Anglophone. Biracial identity and free status established during French colonization left them outside of the United States' racial binary. Their short fiction displays the transgressive spaces of their lived experiences. Their stories portray French and Saint Domingue/Haitian history and culture through specific references within the texts and through shared literary tropes. Through their writing, *gens de couleur libres* challenged racial stereotypes and slavery. Short fiction by New Orleans's *gens de couleur* writers reflects their concerns and documents this unique time and place in the United States.

This dissertation's first chapter examined New Orleans *gens de couleur libres*' ties to France. New Orleans's long French Colonial history resulted in social, cultural, and literary

¹⁸⁶ Karcher's article documents the extensive correspondence between Albion W. Tourgée, the white attorney who represented Plessy and Louis A. Martinet, activist and founder of *Comité des Citoyens*.

connections between the city's *gens de couleur libres* population and France. Two French Romantic novels, Victor Hugo's *Bug-Jargal* and Gustave de Beaumont's *Marie*, present French narrators who visit the Americas. These novels provide models for the study of French Romantic style in short fiction by *gens de couleur libres* authors. Michel Séligny's short story "Marie" is set in New Orleans but through its characters emphasizes French history and Romanticism. Adolphe Duhart's "Trois amours," set in nearby Mandeville, examines race within the context of a wealthy Creole family. Séligny and Duhart's stories reflect the influence of French literary style and present characters with connections to France set within multiracial New Orleans.

The second chapter studied connections between New Orleans and Haiti. After parallel colonial histories, immigration from Saint Domingue strengthened French language use in the city, despite its now American identity, and increased the *gens de couleur* population. Nineteenth century New Orleans *gens de couleur libres* were intimately familiar with Saint Domingue/Haitian culture and history through family and community. Haitian writers Ignace Nau and Émeric Bergeaud share the French literary influences of New Orleans writers, yet also began to develop a uniquely Haitian literature that featured revolutionary history and descriptions of Haiti and its people. Short fiction by New Orleans *gens de couleur libres* evoked Haiti's colonial past while critiquing ongoing slavery and racism in the United States. Victor Séjour's "Le Mulâtre" portrays the violent repercussions of slavery, both to enslaved and enslaver. Adolphe Duhart's "Simple histoire" links its characters to Haitian history as it recounts a biracial love story and its implications.

Though New Orleans *gens de couleur libres* writers faded from public memory, they left behind a significant history and body of work to discover and research. Their influence also appears in the work of New Orleans writers who followed. Rodolphe Lucien Desdunes, a member

of the *Comité des Citoyens* and himself born a free person of color descended from emigrants from Saint Domingue, recorded the legacy of *gens de couleur libres* in New Orleans. His 1911 book *Nos hommes et notre histoire: Notices biographiques accompagnées de réflexions et de souvenirs personnels* (later published in English as *Our People and Our History: A Tribute to the Creole People of Color in Memory of the Great Men They Have Given Us and of the Good Works They Have Accomplished*) lists prominent nineteenth century New Orleans *hommes et femmes de couleur libres* and their biographies. The book also includes histories, anecdotes, examples of their poetry, and the occasional photograph. Desdunes sets the tone early as he begins the first chapter with a quotation by Montesquieu: “An injustice against one is a threat to all” (5).¹⁸⁷ Desdunes introduces readers to New Orleans’s *hommes de couleur* and their origins. *Of Nos hommes et notre histoire*, Michel Fabre writes, “In spite of lacunae, errors, and a tendency to turn history into hagiography, it has been a standard reference for all those who have written on the group” (“The New Orleans Press” 47). Not only Desdunes praises the achievements of New Orleans’s *gens de couleur libres*, but he seeks to rescue them from obscurity as New Orleans’s French and Creole history begins to fade from public awareness.

Alice Dunbar-Nelson also sought to preserve the legacy of New Orleans’s *gens de couleur libres* through her writing. Dunbar-Nelson was born in New Orleans in 1875 to a formerly enslaved woman and a “probably white and mostly absent” father (Ewell and Menke 296). Educated first at Straight College (later Dillard University), then at Cornell, Columbia, and the University of Pennsylvania, she published her first book of poems and sketches, *Violets and Other Tales* in 1895 and later *The Goodness of St. Rocque and Other Stories* in 1899. Through her fiction, Dunbar-Nelson creates a representation of the complexity of nineteenth-century New Orleans across place

¹⁸⁷ “Une injustice faite à un seul est une menace faite à tous” (Montesquieu qtd. In Desdunes 5).

and race. Like stories set in New Orleans and surrounding areas by French language *gens de couleur libres* writers, her stories offer specific place descriptions and details of the city. “Sister Josepha,” from *The Goodness of St. Rocque*, includes characters speaking French and English, reflecting a culture in transition. She locates the story at specific sites including Jackson Square, St. Louis Cathedral, and the Couvent du Sacré Coeur, which at the time of the story was still located in the *Vieux Carré*. The title character, Sister Josepha, comes from obscure origins and her racial identity is unclear and only hinted at through ambiguous physical descriptions, not unlike descriptions of Lydia in Duhart’s “Trois amours.” Dunbar-Nelson also records the changes happening in the city. The story “Tony’s Wife,” from the same collection, describes life on Prytania Street and depicts New Orleans’s shifting population through German, Irish, and Italian working-class characters.

Dunbar-Nelson sought to record the history of New Orleans’s *gens de couleur libres*. Her 1916 essay “People of Color in Louisiana” recounts Louisiana’s history from its colonial era through Reconstruction. She depicts the growth of New Orleans’s free people of color and details their accomplishments and their continued struggle for freedoms. She concludes her essay with a call to celebrate and study New Orleans people of color: “There is no State in the Union, hardly any spot of like size on the globe, where the man of color has lived so intensely, made so much progress, been of such historical importance and yet about whom so comparatively little is known” (41). Dunbar-Nelson emphasizes the uniqueness of New Orleans and the *gens de couleur* and links people inexorably to place in her essay and her fiction. She acknowledges the relative obscurity of *gens de couleurs libres*’ history and work already in the early twentieth century and the need for future documentation.

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