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The Unencumbered Body: Imagining Liberty and Sovereignty in Pre- and Post- Revolutionary Literatures of the Americas

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UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

THE UNENCUMBERED BODY: IMAGINING LIBERTY AND SOVEREIGNTY IN
PRE- AND POST- REVOLUTIONARY LITERATURES OF THE AMERICAS

By

Elizabeth Kelly

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Faculty
of the University of Miami
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Coral Gables, Florida

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PRE- AND POST- REVOLUTIONARY LITERATURES OF THE AMERICAS

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The Unencumbered Body: Imagining Liberty and Sovereignty in Pre- and Post-
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In the following work, I argue that writers in pre- and post-revolutionary Haiti and the United States conceived of liberty and resistance to sovereign power through figures that complicate the relationship between the physical body and the psyche, including sleepwalkers, spirits, and zombies. These figures, which were immensely popular in both post-colonial settings, interrogate scientific understandings of the body as intimately tied to a psyche and call into question conflicting religious understandings of the body's relationship to the spirit. In doing so, these disembodied figures complicate popular assumptions about political agency in their respective new nations. As a comparative analysis of lesser-known texts by Haitian authors and more canonical U.S. works, including Leonora Sansay's *Secret History, or the Horrors of St. Domingo* (1808), Charles Brockden Brown's *Edgar Huntly, or Memoirs of a Sleepwalker* (1799) and Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Dred, a Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp* (1856). My work uncovers a clear, multidirectional influence between the locales that can be traced by following the development of such figures from the end of the eighteenth century through the U.S. antebellum period. I frame my discussion with an extended introduction contextualizing the relationship between the revolutions and subsequent literatures and a conclusion that addresses larger concerns about the importance of including Haitian literature of the period as part of the vast corpus of hemispheric literature that emerged between the onset of the Haitian Revolution (roughly 1791) and the mid-nineteenth century.

In my first chapter, I consider firsthand accounts of the Haitian revolution and early nineteenth-century Haitian histories, both of which attach particular set of meanings to the tortured body in the context of the revolution. I argue specifically that Haitian writers coded some acts of revolutionary violence as reactions to European violence enacted against black bodies, while other acts were coded as presenting an African understanding of a very different relationship between the body and the mind. After establishing the tortured body as a symbol of multiple levels of oppression and repression in revolutionary writings, I move on to assert the emergence of two important conceptions of the relationship between the body and the political subject in the writings of Toussaint Louverture and Jean-Jacques Dessalines, both of which were later taken up in early nineteenth-century Haitian literary works and oral cultures. First, I argue that Toussaint Louverture's writings use metaphors of family and disease to formulate relationships between his own body, the French government, and the bodies other revolutionaries. Next, I consider Jean-Jacques Dessalines' presentation of the bodies and spirits of the dead as disembodied figures who continued to resist the encroachment of colonial power. My project then traces these dual understandings in the earliest available Haitian creative work, Ignace Nau's "Isalina" (1836), arguing that Haiti's nineteenth-century national literature utilized and reformulated both understandings established by these revolutionary leaders.

The third chapter of my dissertation turns to creative texts about the Haitian revolution, including the anonymously authored *Mon Odyssée* (circa 1799) and *Secret History*, which propose novel means of separating the resistant subject from the tortured body. The author of *Mon Odyssée* uses cross-dressing as a means of escaping violence, and more importantly understands this means of changing his own body as subverting not only gender normativity but also his own subjection to sovereign power. Similarly, Leonora Sansay suggests that authorship serves as a multi-layered means of disembodiment through which the protagonist escapes domestic violence, and resists both the domination of her husband and the political violence of revolutionary Saint Domingue. My fourth and final chapter considers the appearance of the

sleepwalker in late eighteenth-century and antebellum U.S. novels, including *Edgar Huntly* and *Dred*, both of which position their sleepwalking protagonists as able to resist the encroachment of political power over territories through the formulation of disembodiment presented in somnambulism. I ultimately argue that the disembodied figure so firmly rooted in resisting colonial power in Saint Domingue evolves throughout Haitian and U.S. literatures of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated in loving memory to Gail Paradise Kelly, whose scholarship and passion have always inspired me, and to Dale Cowher, for his constant support in all that I do.

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Introduction: Reinventing Freedom: The Body and the Disembodied in the Americas

The relationship between Haiti and the United States has a long, convoluted, and discomfiting history, the remnants of which are still legible in contemporary interventions in Haitian affairs by the U.S. government and NGOs. At the time of the Haitian revolutionary period, public discourse centered on the enslavement of black bodies, violence perpetrated on white bodies, and a European and American disbelief in the possibility of self-rule on the island.¹ While in the nineteenth century, Haiti encapsulated the culmination of white fears of slave rebellion, popular U.S. perceptions of modern-day Haiti as a nightmare of disease, despotism, and poverty exist as an only slightly transformed remnant of these same fears. This project, however, is not about the ways in which the United States continues to justify interventions in Haiti “projecting the U.S. population’s fears (real or imagined) onto the Haitians” (Weber 272). Instead, this work explores the ways in which treatments of embodiment and the disembodied reveal the profound influence of Haitian culture and literature on writers in the United States in the from just before the start of the nineteenth century through the U.S. Civil War.

Despite the complex political relationship between the U.S. government and the revolutionaries of Saint Domingue, specific aspects of Haitian culture have profoundly

¹ For the purposes of this project, I am considering the Haitian Revolutionary period to extend from the Ogé revolt in 1790 to the declaration of Haitian Independence in 1804, with some reference to the Macandal plot of 1751-1758. While particular U.S. leaders may have privately supported the aims and goals of the revolutionaries, the complex foreign relations policies of the United States towards France and later the new nation of Haiti were heavily bound up in preserving slavery in the U.S. and securing the Louisiana purchase. For further discussion, see Tim Matthewson’s “Jefferson and the Non-Recognition of Haiti”.

influenced the ways in which writers in the United States thought about bodies and sovereign power. This influence is still legible today, even in the dim echoes of Haitian culture that have been popularized and commodified to the extent that they appear wholly separate from their religious and cultural origins. The most apparent of these is the intensely popular contemporary phenomenon of zombies in U.S. film and television. While the “walking dead,” flesh-eating zombies of popular culture bear little resemblance to the Haitian zombi of the nineteenth century, or even the refigured zombi narrative reinvigorated after the 1915 U.S. occupation of Haiti, the presence and popularity of the zombi today can be read as expressing a vague longing to disrupt social and political institutions. The so-called “zombie apocalypse” is, after all, a dystopian future in which anarchy reigns and there is no imagined possibility of government control over individual liberties. I do not suggest that the zombies appearing in U.S. films, television shows, and comic books bear even the slightest resemblance to the culturally specific meanings of the zombi in Caribbean cultures. They do, however, bear traces of a relationship between disembodiment and liberty that developed in revolutionary Saint Domingue and carried through into resistant literatures in the United States.

At the core of this project are two driving concerns: first, how did the black insurgents in Saint Domingue conceive of the relationships between their bodies, the struggle for liberty, and the new nation of Haiti? Second, what kinds of influence did nineteenth-century Haitian understandings of these relationships have on early U.S. literature? I argue ultimately that despite these leaders’ disavowal in nineteenth-century political discourse, their writings and those of the Haitian historians who studied the Haitian revolutionary period gave rise to new ways of thinking about the body and the

disembodied as means of resistance to sovereign power. The specific patterns of embodiment and the presence of disembodied figures like zombies and sleepwalkers in these literatures suggest the profound influence of nineteenth-century Haitian thought on U.S. popular literature and culture.

Revolutionary Saint Domingue has been codified in a number of striking narratives that are consistently focused on tortured bodies – the ravaged bodies of the enslaved populations, the women raped, the men, women and children tortured, the victims of mass execution. While contemporary histories move towards considering the ideological motivations for the series of conflicts and revolts that comprise what we now call the Haitian Revolution, representations of these events by late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century eyewitnesses, biographers, and historians outside of Haiti instigated particular narratives of violence and suffering that persist today. Interestingly, the revolutionaries themselves and the Haitian historians that first attempted an in-depth exploration of the period also emphasized the role of bodies in general and of particular bodies in considering the means and motivations for the revolution. These texts present a new system of thinking about the revolutionary subject and the revolutionary body that remained influential in later U.S. literatures. In addition, the writings of both Toussaint Louverture and Jean-Jacques Dessalines proposed powerful legacies of the revolution that could only be realized through moving beyond the confines of embodiment. The earliest Haitian literary productions were also deeply concerned with bodies and resistance to political and social discipline. While nineteenth-century creative texts about the Haitian revolution by authors outside of Haiti made use of some of the same tropes about white bodies as non-Haitian historians, they also reflected specifically

Haitian understandings of the relationship between the body, the spirit, and resistance to the encroachment of political and social power. Evidence of these understandings survives in canonical U.S. literatures that used disembodied figures to create means of resistance to the encroachment of sovereign power over peoples and territories outside of Haiti. U.S. and Haitian national literatures of the long nineteenth century arose simultaneously and in a contiguous relationship with each other despite national, political and linguistic boundaries that have historically barred scholars from considering them together. These literatures trace a provocative, complex series of relationships between the body, understandings of political subjectivity, and conceptions of liberty and nationhood.

In *From Rebellion to Revolution: Afro-American Slave Revolts in the Making of the Modern World*, Eugene Genovese argues that slave revolts played a vital role in constituting modernity. Since then, scholars have moved towards Paul Gilroy's assertion that "cultural historians could take the Atlantic as one single, complex unit of analysis in their discussion of the modern world and use it to produce an explicitly transnational and transcultural perspective" (15). In beginning to think through Haiti's role in Atlantic modernities, critics like Michel-Rolph Trouillot and Sybille Fischer point out the systematic silencing of the role of the Haitian Revolution in formulating conceptions of modernity and in rendering particular aspects of Haitian history and culture incomprehensible. While these writers disagree on how these silences have been produced, they firmly establish the need for rethinking Haiti's role in constituting modernity as an independent black state and a space in which Enlightenment ideologies surrounding liberty and equality were redefined.

Scholars have begun to answer the challenges posed by these critics through exploring the tremendous transnational influence of black Atlantic cultures on what we now term modernity. In considering the revolutions that initiated particular political aspects of the modern world, scholars of Caribbean history have begun to explore the relationship between black radical anti-slavery and independence movements throughout the Americas on contemporary understandings of Enlightenment discourse. Nick Nesbitt refers to the Haitian Revolution as creating a “shattered, incomplete project of Enlightenment *countermodernity*,” arguing that considering the transnational implications of the political and practical aims of the revolution changed the face of modernity in a much broader, public way than much of Enlightenment scholarship recognizes (6). Additionally, a great deal of recent scholarship has turned towards examining the production and dissemination of the political writings of Haiti’s revolutionary leaders, and the publication of pamphlets, essays and commentaries written during about the revolution inside and outside of Haiti. While these kinds of documents are certainly the most widely studied archive of Haitian writings of the period, they are by no means the only set of texts available for examining intellectual understandings of and responses to the Haitian revolution. Among the multiple forms of silencing of Haiti is the pervasive notion that Haitian writers did not produce and publish creative works during the revolutionary and post-revolutionary periods. This notion also prefigures the nonrecognition of the powerful contribution of early Haitian literary works to political, scientific and literary discourse circulating throughout the rest of the world in general, and throughout the Americas more specifically. Creative works by Haitian authors circulated in U.S. periodicals during the end of and just after Haiti’s revolutionary period.

Although they now are difficult to access, survive primarily in archives and have rarely been translated or republished, plays, poems, short stories and novels were published and circulated during the civil wars just after Haitian independence. Part of the larger stakes involved in this project is establishing a sense of Haitian literature during this period, at least as far as it focuses on the relationship between the body and political subjectivity.

I have also chosen to place Haitian texts in conversation with U.S. texts of roughly the same period in order to understand the multidirectional influences of these revolutions in settings throughout the Americas. A great deal of scholarship examines the influence of the Haitian Revolution on the antebellum United States, particularly in terms of black anti-slavery movements, but there is much work to be done in understanding this form of influence through looking at the literatures produced before, during, and after the revolutionary periods. To begin this exploration, this project makes use of earlier scholarship that works to forge various levels of connections between the U.S. and Haitian literary spheres in the early to mid-nineteenth century. Maurice Jackson and Jacqueline Brown's *African Americans and the Haitian Revolution* provides a nuanced look at the international public sphere of lectures and newspaper articles circulating among black radicals in the U.S. in the early nineteenth century. Alfred Hunt's *Haiti's Influence on Antebellum America* considers Haiti's enormous influence on cultural, political, and literary projects in the later nineteenth century. These works, although primarily treating the revolution through historical and political frameworks, begin to uncover pieces of the relationship between Haitian and U.S. writers, setting the stage for the literary approach this project begins in exploring particular themes and tropes of post-revolutionary literatures in Haiti and the U.S. as a cohesive unit of study.

Although Haitian literature is rarely periodized, and the current lack of readily available collected works creates some scholarly difficulties in looking at “early” Haitian literature as a cohesive unit, there was certainly an ample and varied corpus of works that survive from the century following the revolution. I have chosen to consider the period of early Haitian literature as extending forward to the 1915 U.S. occupation of Haiti because the occupation and its aftermath brought forth a new generation of Haitian writers who responded quite vocally to the need to create a “national” literature in Haiti. Prior to the U.S. occupation, several writers emerged whose works were both well-received and widely read, but who have received little attention in Anglophone scholarship. With the exception of Haitian writers’ brief and limited attempt to revitalize these authors in the 1930’s and 1940’s, these works have only recently become focal points for scholarly attention. Scholars like A. James Arnold note that the later indigenous and Negritude movements in Haitian literature were heavily influenced by these nineteenth-century authors, like Ignace Nau and Vendenesse DuCasse, despite their relative obscurity today. Early Haitian writers created a body of literature that questions, pressures and complicates normative understandings of the relationship between the body and spirit, and proposes that figures who disrupt that relationship contain the power to resist the encroachment of political and social control. Among these, as Joan Dayan notes in the prologue to her seminal work *Haiti, History and the Gods*, are the disembodied characters that appear and reappear in early and contemporary Haitian works.²

² Dayan notes “In charting the cultural imagination of a place, I summon many characters, bodied and disembodied. The idea of bodies, alternately idealized or brutalized, is at the heart of this retrieval” (xvi). Although this project emphasizes nineteenth-century works, Dayan also points out the continued prevalence of disembodied figures in Haitian oral culture and contemporary literature.

Nineteenth-century writings about the Haitian revolution consistently focus on the material violence, both real and exaggerated, of the era. I suggest here the body itself is central to writings about the Haitian revolution and its leaders, whose own writings and contributions were generally relegated to bodily, rather than intellectual, responses. Here my own consideration of the body works closely with Judith Butler's understanding of the body as a "materiality [...] which is bound up with signification from the start" (6). The materiality of the body *and* the significations read onto it become constitutive of the subject in ways that are just as problematic in terms of race as they are in terms of the system of gender Butler examines. Much of this project is concerned with thinking through the ways in which embodiment, in both the senses of materiality and its signification, played a role in documenting and remembering the Haitian Revolution. I posit that, despite the inescapability of materiality and signification, disembodiment, or the dislodging of the subject from a material body, proposes an oppositional force to that inescapability. This kind of dislodging is presented in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century literatures through scientific, religious, and cultural phenomena like possession, zombification, magnetic sleepwalking, and mesmerism. In each of these phenomena, the body that has been possessed, zombified, mesmerized or subjected to magnetism, performs actions that are not necessarily attributable to the subject, but rather to outside forces.³ Disembodiment, and to a lesser extent reimagining embodiment, make a space for the potential to escape both materiality and legible signification.

³ In this case I refer to the most common usage of zombi to denote the body deprived of its "*ti bon ange* – that component of the Vodoun soul that creates personality, character and willpower" (Davis 8). Joan Dayan also defines the zombi in Haiti as "a double incarnation, meaning both spirit, and more specifically, the animated dead" (37).

While Butler's work here focuses on gender, I have chosen to use it as a model because there are surprisingly few critics who have addressed the relationship between race and embodiment, and none who have done so in nineteenth-century Caribbean settings.⁴ In one of the few studies to address embodiment in the writings of former slaves, Katherine Fishburn asserts that in the antebellum United States, "blacks, who were both identified with and known by their bodies, were said to be inferior to whites, who were identified by their bodies yet known by their rationality" (30). For this problematic reason, she argues that former slaves "had to deny knowledge of [their] profoundly meaningful embodiment in order to (self) consciously argue their relatedness to whites as reasonable human beings" (36). While Fishburn's work focuses on former slaves in the United States, her complex reading of African American narratives is helpful in thinking through some of the reasons writers in the new nation of Haiti, faced with audiences who often failed to acknowledge their immense contribution, would move away from self-presentation focused on the body.

Not all of the revolutionaries, however, viewed white audiences as "reasonable human beings" to which they wanted to relate. Among the works I have chosen to study, there are surviving texts that were intended for Haitian audiences and specifically disavowed ties to European and American ideological positions.⁵ For Louverture, denying his own bodily relationship to slavery makes sense in light of his written engagement with Enlightened Republicanism. In the case of Dessalines, who challenged

⁴ Roxann Wheeler's *The Complexion of Race* explores race as an aspect of embodiment, arguing that eighteenth-century British conceptions of race relied upon social and cultural difference as markers of race far more than skin color. Hence, the tendency towards racial classification relied upon particular races as embodying significant cultural and social digression from European norms.

⁵ Here I use the term "texts" to denote not only written proclamations, but also written records of oral texts.

and eventually dismissed Western philosophy, such a reading does not suffice. In his specific and focused treatments of the body and the spirit, Dessalines highlighted an understanding of embodiment that Fishburn argues was particular to African slaves, who

crafted for themselves (and for us) a therapeutic anti-humanism (a destructive hermeneutics), one that redefines what it means to be human, one that is not based on the dualisms of mind and body, subject and object, self and other – but on their necessary intertwining. (44)

Louverture and Dessalines, who were both former slaves in positions of power in the colony of Saint Domingue, presented new modes of thinking about the self and body that did not consider enslavement as a defining factor in their individual identities and the identity of the new nation. Instead, Dessalines in particular, reimagined the new nation of Haiti as one built by and through powerful bodies and powerful spirits, and by or through suffering alone. The issue of bodily suffering, however, was intimately tied to writers of all backgrounds who addressed the Haitian Revolution. The material, corporeal realities of enslavement and wartime violence were unavoidable to those who experienced, witnessed, and wrote about the tumultuous world of the last years of the colony at Saint Domingue and the newly independent nation of Haiti. While Louverture and Dessalines tried, and in some ways succeeded in escaping particular significations of the body, they could not entirely avoid the lived, bodily experience of war-time Saint Domingue.

I argue that in early works written in and about Haiti, embodiment, as an expression of materiality and signification, becomes a means through which authors attempted to understand the “unthinkability” of the violence of revolutionary Saint Domingue. While authors outside of Haiti focused on the materiality of the bodies of particular leaders and wartime violence, Haitian historians and the leaders themselves

tended to disrupt the narratives that focused on materiality, and instead moved towards introducing new ways of signifying their bodies and their relationships to violence and sovereign power. For example, U.S. and British historians tend to focus on the material legacy of slavery, the “Africanness” of revolutionary leaders and white exposure to violence in Saint Domingue. The revolutionary leaders themselves tend to recast both their own identities and their roles in the revolution in terms of other modes of signification, including their relationships to French authorities and the legacies they would leave in the new nation of Haiti. Writers who traveled from Haiti to the U.S. also portray a similarly complex play between materiality of the body and a rejection of the modes of signification upon which popular narratives surrounding Haiti relied. I argue that these texts literally and figuratively transported new modes of signifying the body and the subject to the United States, and that these forms found their clearest expression in the sleepwalkers presented in Charles Brockden Brown’s *Edgar Huntly, or Memoirs of a Sleepwalker* (1799) and Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Dred: A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp* (1856).

My chapters reconstruct the complex relationship between U.S. and Haitian popular cultures in the long nineteenth century by looking at writers’ treatments of the body and the disembodied in both locales. The first chapter of my dissertation argues that a distinctive popular discourse surrounding suffering black bodies in Haiti was established in the histories of the Haitian Revolution and the popular biographies of its leaders in the early nineteenth century. Specifically, I argue that these works tend to create an iconography of specific formulations of both black on white and white on black violence, including beating, burning, dismemberment, rape, and the mutilation and

exhibition of the dead. I argue these works, even while overwhelmingly focusing on acts of black on white violence, also consider them a somewhat justified reaction to Spanish and French colonial violence. The meanings and means of execution during the revolutionary period developed in response to the execution of Vincent Ogé, a particularly troubled event that emblemized the impetus to revolt in the eyes of many of the nineteenth-century historians who examined the period. Finally, I assert that particular forms of bodily violence become connected in the histories to an African past and were thus explained as barbarism not entirely linked to the revolution's goals.

The project's second chapter moves on to contrast later nineteenth-century biographies of the revolution's most prominent leaders, Toussaint Louverture and Jean-Jacques Dessalines' with their own writings and proclamations. Where early biographers and eyewitnesses emphasized the tortured body as the primary means through which to interpret the violence of colonial rule on the island and the uprisings and revolts that became known as the Haitian revolution, I argue that these leaders themselves developed understandings of the body and the disembodied legacy that were just as influential to Haitian and American literature as the conflicting narratives written outside of Haiti that gained popularity in historiography. In *Beyond the Slave Narrative*, Deborah Jenson proposes reading political writings, including letters and proclamations as foundational to formulating a specifically Haitian literary canon. These archival documents, which Jenson argues eclipse both the political and the literary, initiate several linkages between the Americas as a geo-political unit and the relationship between the body of the political subject and conceptions of sovereignty and liberty, and serve as a basis for understanding literary treatments of the body in Haitian works.

While scholarly work on documents of the Haitian revolutionary period has uncovered infamous examples of the metaphor of the body in the letters of revolutionary leaders, this chapter focuses on tracing two particular narratives surrounding the body that arose in the writings of Toussaint Louverture and Jean-Jacques Dessalines. Louverture's mid-nineteenth century biographers tended to treat his political agenda as intrinsically linked to his body through a legacy of slavery, African origins, and training as a healer. Louverture himself presented a very different set of bodily metaphors to negotiate his complex relationships to French colonial officials and the Haitian people. He used familial language in order to first establish loyalties with France, and later to signal the disruption of those loyalties. As Jenson argues, Louverture also used metaphors of healing to recast his own intervention in dealing with the continuous uprisings that led to a break with French colonial governance.⁶ Finally, I assert that the last texts he wrote while a prisoner of the French at Fort de Joux understood his own bodily suffering as being intimately tied to the loss of his written legacy, a formulation of disembodiment that bears some similarity to the much more well-known disembodied *lwa* Jean-Jacques Dessalines became after his death.

This chapter moves on to consider Dessalines' own treatment of the body in oral and written proclamations.⁷ In *Haiti, History and the Gods*, Joan Dayan points out that a number of nineteenth-century Haitian historians, including Beaubrun Ardouin and Thomas Madiou emphasized the events surrounding Dessalines' death and dismemberment, creating narratives surrounding disembodiment that would continue to thrive in later Haitian literary works and Vodou cosmology. Dayan argues that early

⁶ See Jenson's discussion of Louverture's letters in *Beyond the Slave Narrative*, p. 60.

⁷ The archival materials on Dessalines are much less carefully maintained and studied; hence some of my discussion relies upon renderings of his speeches by eyewitnesses and early Haitian historians.

twentieth-century works, including Massillon Coicou's *L'Empereur Dessalines*, reinvigorated narratives of Dessalines' physical dismemberment and announced his survival in Haitian culture through the disembodied figure of a *lwa*, or spirit intermediary in the Vodou cosmology. Dayan points out that countless rituals, songs, and other forms of oral tradition emphasize this particular *lwa* as being linked to war, attachment to land, and an African past, arguing that Dessalines' profound influence on notions of race, land ownership, and sovereignty is enacted, remembered and celebrated in oral and religious tradition that center around his disembodiment and re-embodiment through ritual possession. Dessalines, whom biographers tended to both Africanize and scapegoat for the massacres in Saint Domingue, created an arc of identity building that was very much invested in understandings of the body. Like Louverture, he attempted to assert himself as a protector of white bodies, but as relations with French colonial powers became increasingly fraught, Dessalines began to establish radical understandings of the black body as a source of military power and of the new nation as inclusive of both the living and the dead. Dessalines' entry into the Vodou cosmology as a disembodied figure associated with a non-Western past and a unifying figure for the past and present nation of Haiti is also consistent with his own understandings of the roles of living and dead bodies in creating the new nation. I also argue in this chapter that the possibility of disembodiment Dessalines presents in his proclamations laid the groundwork for early Haitian literature's treatments of the body and the zombi through a reading of the first piece of Haitian prose fiction, Ignace Nau's "Isalina" (1836).

My project's third chapter turns to writers who traveled back and forth between the United States and Haiti to consider the means through which Haitian understandings

of embodiment and disembodiment were reimagined for audiences outside of the new nation of Haiti. These texts include Leonora Sansay's *Secret History; or, the Horrors of St. Domingo* (1808), and the anonymously authored *My Odyssey: Experiences of a Young Refugee from Two Revolutions by a Creole of San Domingue* (circa 1799), which has now been identified as the work of Jean-Paul Pillet. I begin this chapter by examining the ways in which Leonora Sansay asserts women's bodies as sites of struggle and sources of power, suggesting that particular forms of embodiment allow women to access social and political power. I move on to discuss the association of white creoles in both Sansay's and Pillet's writings with forms of suffering associated with degeneracy and the perhaps contradictory access to alternative forms of power associated with the West Indies. As part of their discussion of white creole bodies, Sansay and Pillet both suggest that white creole subjects, aware of the vulnerabilities and possibilities contained in their own embodiment, use dress and fashion in order to stake out visible forms of identity and reimagine their own embodiment. While this kind of reimagining of the body can be read as participating in the same performative aspects of embodiment found in the United States and Europe, in the cases of these texts, it is profoundly influenced by Caribbean culture.⁸ These authors do not, however, limit their negotiations of embodiment to the point of view of the colonizers, but allude to the disembodied formulation of ritual possession found in revolutionary Haiti as posing a substantial means of accessing forms of liberty from physical and epistemic violence.

In order to think about the genealogy of the relationship between the body and the resistant subject throughout the Americas, my final chapter turns to the sleepwalking

⁸ I use the term Caribbean here because while Pillet's text considers slave cultures in Saint Domingue only, Leonora Sansay's also includes descriptions of white women's participation in Cuban practices.

novels of the late eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries, Charles Brockden Brown's *Edgar Huntly* and Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Dred*. In order to situate these texts within their contemporaries' discourse surrounding the body, the chapter begins with an examination of popular European and U.S. scientific theories of sleepwalking. I argue that in late eighteenth-century medical explorations, sleepwalking was viewed in terms of volition and vulnerability, two key concepts that reveal a cluster of concerns about the relationship between the subject and the body. I argue that in contrast to late eighteenth-century European models, which emphasized the physical and psychological vulnerability of the sleepwalker to outside influences, early American understandings of the disease saw the phenomenon as being characterized by excessive will on the part of the sleepwalker himself. I argue that Charles Brockden Brown relies upon both notions of vulnerability to foreign influence and excessive will on the part of the eponymous character in his construction of sleepwalking in *Edgar Huntly*. Both aspects of the disease become essential to understanding Brown's treatment of relations between Huntly and the Irish and Huntly and the Indians, and ultimately both are integral to Brown's suggestion that sleepwalking is a means through which Huntly's sleepwalking emblemizes the role of the United States in exerting sovereign power over the Indians on the frontier.

Edgar Huntly's sleepwalking bears marked similarities to the brief mentions of somnambulism half a century later in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Dred*. In this text, both the title character and Stowe's mulatto protagonist, Harry, are figured as sleepwalkers upon entering the "great dismal swamp," a liminal space that is explicitly tied to their claims to freedom, and to Dred's claim to sovereign power. I argue that Stowe uses

nineteenth-century pseudo-science, including theories of mesmerism, race, phrenology, and spiritualism in characterizing Dred. Dred's power within the text arises from his ability to influence others through using forms of mesmerism and magnetism that Stowe specifically ties to his relationship to African and Caribbean traditions of resistance. This chapter considers public imagination surrounding altered consciousness (in this case through modes of sleepwalking and spiritual zeal) in imagining forms of resistance to state power, particularly in terms of the ways in which state power is exerted over racially othered bodies (in *Edgar Huntly*, Amerindians, and in *Dred*, African slaves).

While these texts respond to Western scientific discourse, they also lend themselves to productive readings through Caribbean contexts and modes of cultural imagination. *Dred* carries with it overt allusions to Caribbean influence; Dred carries Denmark Vesey's bible and enacts his legacy, linking him textually with the influence of Vesey's Afro-Caribbean origins. Both Dred and Huntly become figures who resist the encroachment of political control over subjects and bodies, positioning them as parallel figures to the disembodied subjects found in Haitian literary and oral traditions. I want to start thinking these post-revolutionary literatures as formulating a particular form of countercultural resistance to Enlightenment ideology that is not limited to ideological, political or national borders but rather encompasses these specific usages of bodies and spirits to expose, interrogate, and complicate notions of sovereignty and liberty. Early Haitian writers produced alternative understandings of the relationship between the body and the revolutionary subject that are both fascinating in their own right and profoundly influential to the literatures and cultures of the early Americas as a whole.

Chapter 1: Remembering and Dismembering: The Legacy of Tortured Bodies in Revolutionary Saint Domingue

Before the publication of Thomas Madiou's *Histoire d'Haiti* (1847) and Beaubrun Ardouin's *Études sur L'Histoire d'Haiti* (1853-1860), the history of the Haitian revolutionary period was written in bits and pieces in imaginative biographies and personal narratives of those who had lived in or traveled to the colony of St. Domingue prior to the proclamation of Haiti's independence in 1804. Eyewitnesses and historians wrote for alternately fascinated and horrified white audiences to whom sensationalized violence appealed on a number of levels. For the most part, neither witness testimony nor biographies of the revolutionary leaders written in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries made claims to objectivity, rendering their particular biases somewhat more transparent than those included in later histories. These biographies, witness testimonies and histories comprise one of the earliest archives of written material from and about Haiti and reveal particular patterns surrounding the suffering of the human body in general, and the death and postmortem treatment of bodies in general and of specific bodies. Nineteenth-century authors who attempted in various ways to narrate the events in Haiti from 1791- 1804 were morbidly fascinated with treatments of bodies, both living and dead, particularly those who were subjected to politically motivated violence, including executions, torture, and rape.

The tortured body occupies a conflicted space in the pre-nineteenth century archive that narrates the history of the Haitian Revolution.⁹ Many of the early texts addressing the revolution seek to mediate and explain the torture of bodies during the

⁹ I use the word tortured here to signify the body as having suffered and been deformed in order to promote clear social and political objectives; their suffering and deformation were both conscious and purposeful.

period, and characterize particular leaders, like Jeannot, Jean François and Biassou, in terms of their attitudes towards corporeal violence, including having survived and inflicting torture on others.¹⁰ Despite later condemnation of massacres of the whites at the end of the revolutionary period, several nineteenth-century authors saw this violence as an echo of the French torture of both slaves and rebels, and a reaction to particular methods of torture and execution witnessed in Haiti by the insurgents in the revolution's early periods, and often associated particular forms of cruelty to an African past. In these texts, leaders of the 1790's uprisings are characterized as both violent by nature and simultaneously reacting to the violence they experienced as slaves. These leaders were also accused by many historians of having manipulated African spiritual beliefs in order to inspire insurgents to fight regardless of risk of death, and of extreme acts of cruelty and violence. The figure of Dessalines embodies these understandings of African beliefs about the body and the spirit, and his reportedly "ferocious" nature and dismemberment become a point of fascination and anxiety for authors of such histories.

Vincent Brown notes that in addition to the countless cruelties slaves and rebels endured while living, the mutilation and display of the dead were common throughout the Caribbean, arguing that "through the treatment given dead bodies slaveholders attempted to seize and manipulate the African vision of the afterlife, to govern the actions of the living" (135). While early nineteenth-century historians and eyewitnesses displayed some awareness of African religious beliefs, their reliance on exaggerated tropes of

¹⁰ Jean-François Papillon, Georges Biassou, and Jeannot Bullet, generally referred to by historians in the nineteenth century as "Jean-François," "Biassou," and "Jeannot," three black generals who struggled for power over the insurgents after the death of Boukman. Jean-François and Biassou had Jeannot executed in 1791 for excessive cruelty, and Jean-François and Biassou fought with Louverture, who was then their subordinate and the Spanish in the early 1790's. Biassou remained loyal to the Spanish when Louverture and Jean-François rejoined the French colonial forces in 1795. Many historians link Jean-François, Biassou, and Jeannot with the practice of various forms of African ritual.

African savagery as a motivator in tortures and mutilations of the dead blatantly ignores the possibility of revolutionary leaders participating in a set of practices they had witnessed and been subjected to in Saint Domingue. Interestingly, the display of dead bodies to reinforce power over populations was very much in play long before the insurgencies in Saint Domingue. Vincent Brown argues that:

Dead bodies, dismembered and disfigured as they were, would be symbols of the power and dominion of slave masters. In their view, the severed heads standing sentry over the plantation landscape conveyed a warning to potential rebels and reassurance to supporters of the social order. Such symbols were thought to be effective because they had emotional power; they harnessed the otherworldly and the sacred to specific bodies, places, and narratives, which in turn bore witness to the social power of the rulers. (136)

Early nineteenth-century biographers and historians, many of whom would have undoubtedly been familiar with such practices, still chose to ignore the ways in which the leaders of the early insurrection participated in already-existing patterns of violence and violation that were well established by colonial slaveholders at the time.

This chapter traces the torture of people and the mutilation of dead bodies during the revolutionary period through a sampling of narratives and histories that represents the various forms such works generally took during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The works included here certainly do not comprise the entire archive, but instead present a variety of authors who considered the revolution from remarkably different points of view. One of the earliest texts included is an anonymously authored pamphlet entitled *A particular account of the commencement and progress of the insurrection of the negroes in St. Domingo*, the translation of a speech made to the French National Assembly on November 3, 1791 and published in London in 1792. This author, an indignant planter whose invectives against the *Société des Amis des Noirs* take over a

great deal of the text, narrates several particular instances of violence in the 1791 slave uprisings that become stock images in the narratives and histories that follow. In contrast, Charles LeClerc's *An Expedition Against the Insurgents in 1791* presents his personal account of an expedition into Limbé a few months after the uprisings there, and, as Jeremy Popkin points out, is unique for its inclusion of "his own emotional reactions to his experience" (94).¹¹ Written from a very different point of view, and geared to engage a worldwide audience are Louis DuBroca's biographies of Toussaint Louverture and Jean-Jacques Dessalines, texts published in 1802 and 1806, respectively, that sensationalized both these leaders and the revolution in ways that, if loosely based in historical documentation, certainly participated in the developing discourse surrounding the revolution. Deborah Jenson refutes arguments that DuBroca's biographies were written as "propaganda for the Bonaparte expedition," and little is actually known of his life and affiliations (625). Whether we take them as overt propaganda or not, these biographies certainly contributed a great deal to popular narratives surrounding the Haitian leaders. I have also included Marcus Rainsford's *An Historical Account of the Black Empire of Hayti*, a text Sara Johnson has called "one of the only sympathetic analyses of the Haitian people's bid for independence to appear in the nineteenth century" (66). Johnson's assertion could be refuted by Baron Pompée de Vastey's 1823 *An Essay on the Causes of the Revolution and Civil Wars of Haiti*, a text which "passionately defended Haiti's revolutionary birth, its sovereignty, and the legitimacy of Christophe's erstwhile monarchy in an attempt to argue for its belonging within the modern Atlantic world" (Garraway 5). Sir James Barskett's *History of the island of St.*

¹¹ Charles Leclerc would later marry Pauline Bonaparte, Napoleon's sister, and lead the French forces into Saint Domingue in 1802.

Domingo: from its first discovery by Columbus to the present period, a work about which little is known, while sympathetic to the French colonists, also attempts a surprisingly neutral appraisal of the early insurgencies.

Written in 1827, William Woodis Harvey's *Sketches of Hayti; from the Expulsion of the French to the Death of Christophe* presents an attempt to document the history of emancipation and independence in Haiti and seeks to understand the revolution from the documents and oral histories the author gathered in Haiti during his role as advisor to Christophe. Michael Clavin reads Harvey as attempting to establish himself within the "competitive basis of [...] claims of eyewitness authenticity" that were popular in the early nineteenth century (9). A more scholarly approach to writing Haiti's history would be taken up a few decades later by Haitian historians, who sought to legitimize their work through including transcripts of a number of documents and speeches. The most substantial of these works, which have never been translated into English, are Thomas Madiou's *Histoire d'Haiti* and Alexis Beaubrun Ardouin's *Études sur L'Histoire d'Haiti suivis de la Vie du Général J. M Borgella*. In 1853, Ardouin situates his work as being created "from the natural view as a Haitian, and in opposition to that of so many foreign authors who have considered this history from their own point of view" (V. I, 1).¹² Critics like Charles Forsdick and David Murphy argue that Madiou and Ardouin "formed the core of the so-called 'mulatto' school of history, in reaction to which an equally partisan 'noiriste' version of the past rapidly emerged" (167). What Forsdick and Murphy refer to as the noiriste school of Francophone intellectuals emerged towards the end of the nineteenth century, and thus is not included in this study.

¹² All translations of Madiou's and Beabrun's histories that follow are my own.

The characterization of tortured bodies in these works follows three major trends. First, acts of violence by the insurgents are coded as reactions to various kinds of torture inflicted by the Spanish and French on the island. These bodily experiences include beating, burning, dismemberment, rape, and the mutilation and exhibition of the dead. Second, this chapter considers the meanings and means of execution during the revolutionary period as they developed in response to the February 1791 execution of Vincent Ogé, a prominent event that becomes emblematic of the revolutionary period in the eyes of nearly every historian to examine the period. Finally, particular forms of bodily violence become connected in the histories to an African past, both through emphasizing the origins of some revolutionary leaders (which will be discussed in more specificity with regard to Dessalines in the following chapter), allusions to West African and Afro-Caribbean religious and spiritual practices, and linking Africanness with particular forms of military strategy and political organization. Considering these aspects of the discourse surrounding bodily violence in the revolutionary period traces the movement from the tortured black body to the triumphant torturer in what would become the independent nation of Haiti.

Horrors of Saint Domingue: Vengeance, Dismemberment and Rape in the Early Insurrection

Despite a number of arguably more important symbolic meanings of the Haitian revolution, historians in the nineteenth century were alternately horrified and fascinated by the levels of violence and means of torture employed and/or reported in the early insurrections. Attempts to reconcile the violent images produced in these materials by

the authors themselves tend to cover a broad range of ideological positions. Matt Clavin argues that many of the nineteenth-century narratives participate in a “relationship with the genre of sensationalism. Writers grabbed readers' attention by making contents more provocative, pornographic, and appealing when they used words like ‘bloody,’ ‘horror,’ and ‘massacre’” (13). While Clavin’s assertion of the influence of Gothic literary movements on these works is certainly convincing, the tortured body’s appearance in St. Domingue’s unique political climate also establishes an understanding of the tortured body as the basis for revolution in the colony that may not extend to other forms of Gothic literature. One of the predominant characterizations of the violence, even inadvertently by the harshest critics of the new nation of Haiti, considered the forms of torture and execution employed by the insurgents a reaction to French cruelties, both in perpetuating colonial slavery, and in their attempts to suppress the various participants in the fighting. Here violence is sometimes attributed to the French, and sometimes excused on the part of the rebels as a reaction and even a mimicry of French methods. In each of these cases, British and American authors insulate themselves from blame for the promulgation of colonial violence by situating its origins elsewhere.

One of the earliest descriptions of the 1791 rebellions in the North is contained in the anonymously authored *A particular account of the commencement and progress of the insurrection of the negroes in St. Domingo*, a speech made to the French National Assembly directly following the early insurrections and reprinted for English audiences the following year. The text of the speech contains a number of horrifying details that set the stage for the particular forms of torture and dismemberment and became stock images in later histories of the revolution. The anonymous speaker describes a series of attacks

on individual plantations, noting that in the attack at Galifet, a patrol came upon “negroes [who] were all united and attacked [him]. *Their standard was the body of a white infant impaled upon a stake*” (7, emphases original).¹³ The gruesome image he conjures of their standard is certainly calculated to strike fear and horror into his audience. The speech is also footnoted here to render the reported actions of the insurgents seemingly inconsistent with their excellent treatment in the colony. The note reads “At the Cape, it was a proverbial mode of expressing any man’s happiness- ‘*Ma foi, il est heureux comme un negre de Galifet*’ – ‘He is as happy as one of Galifet’s negroes’” (f.n. 4).¹⁴ The text goes on to describe an interaction between the leader of the patrol, Galifet’s attorney, and the leader of the rebels, his unnamed coachman. The patrol leader, Odeluc, is reported to have said “‘Wretch, I have treated thee ever with kindness – why dost thou seek my death?’ ‘True,’ he replied, ‘But I have *promised* to cut your throat;’ and, that instant, a hundred weapons were upon him” (4, emphasis original). Here the exchange characterizes French slaveholding as kind, and the language is rendered, at least in the English translation, in a biblical manner, and the rebels appear to have no motive other than cruelty.

Not surprisingly, the speaker in this text characterizes not only the insurgents as unusually cruel, but also their actions at times as specifically cannibalistic. The trope of the cannibal as a representation of blackness in general, and Africanness in particular, was common in the discourse of race in the nineteenth century, and dates back a great

¹³ The name of the plantation is generally spelled “Gallifet.” The editor of the text later footnotes a listing of atrocities, including the infant on a spike, as having been included in “an authentic account of the calamities of this unfortunate colony, published, in December last, by M. Baillio, a French gentleman, a few days after his arrival in Paris from St. Domingo” in a text referred to as *Mot de Vérité* (f.n. p. 14).

¹⁴ Le Cap, as it was colloquially known, was officially called Cap Français. For the purposes of clarity in this work, my references to it follow this distinction. Other authors, many of whom are quoted in the work that follows, refer to it as “the Cape,” “Cape Français,” or “Cape François.”

deal further. Its usage in narratives surrounding the Haitian revolution appears to have varied implications, however, that also emphasize the mistreatment of the dead as a means of extending torture of the body. The speaker in this text refers to the insurgents repeatedly as “cannibals” and finds that their acts constitute a betrayal of “more dreadful character” than the violence he describes (7, 8). The speaker also connects cannibalism to the extreme discipline with which the insurgents punished both their own troops and slaves who refused to join the insurrection, asserting that “those who determine to remain faithful to their masters! They seize them by force and roast them at the next fire” (12). Similarly, he reports that “they confine [the wounded] in a hut and set fire to it” (12). The implied cannibalism practiced in “roasting” faithful slaves at a fire, rather than burning or torturing them, not only constitutes a dramatization of pre-existing preoccupation with cannibalism as a signifier of blackness, but participates in a general pattern of measuring barbarism through the treatment of the dead. LeClerc’s description of the ruins of Cap Français a few months after the uprisings there also attributes the mutilation of bodies and other atrocities to the “inventive genius of cannibals,” although his use of the term appears as a random epithet in a text that does not refer to actual or perceived cannibalistic practices (Popkin 98). He also links his references to cannibals to the mutilation of dead bodies in noting that “new proof of the ferocity of these cannibals” was discovered when “they hunted up the dead and mutilated them in the most awful way” (Popkin 97). Here, rather than implying actual cannibalism, LeClerc equates cannibalizing the dead with mutilating the dead, a parallel that considers each act against the body as continuing its torture after death.

Michael Gros, whose famous *Recital Historick* documents his capture and imprisonment at the hands of Jeannot, describes a similar usage of mutilated corpses to intimidate white prisoners. Gros asserts that his captors “glutted themselves by shocking our eyes with the mutilated corpses of our brethren, and by painting to us the cruelties they would exercise on us upon our arrival at Grand-Rivière” (Popkin 123). Gros also claims his captor sent a priest to speak to the prisoners, who compared their fate not to that of the slaves or insurgents, but to Jesus. Gros quotes the priest as saying “My children, we must all know how to die: our Savior Jesus Christ died for us upon the cross” (124). Gros details the privations and unsanitary conditions of the dungeon at Grand-Rivière as “a prelude to the sufferings” they would later endure under Johnny, Gros’ rendition of Jeannot’s name. The prisoners’ torture here is coded as a source of pleasure for Jeannot, at least according to Gros, who maintains that they were condemned to “be sacrificed by twos, and that, every twenty-four hours, to prolong his enjoyment at the cruelty he thus barbarously exercised” (Popkin 124). Gros’ delineation of torture as sacrificial implicitly compares the prisoners’ treatment to the sacrifice of Christ, juxtaposing the goal of Jeannot’s pleasure with the salvation of others.

Gros asserts that one of the purposes of the extensive violence Jeannot exercised on his prisoners was to render their bodies unrecognizable. He reports that one of his companions was “extended on a ladder and [given] three-hundred stripes in my presence” (125). In a set of atrocities that Gros reads as calculated to “appease” Jeannot’s vengeance, the torturers “caused gunpowder to be inserted into every part of his body and exploded by the application of red-hot pokers” (126). The victim apparently survived this method of torture, and, according to Gros, was “reconducted into the dungeon, and

with an insulting derision, [Jeannot] demanded [of] the other prisoners whether they recognized their comrade” (126). The object of Jeannot’s excessive cruelty, which is constituted as vengeance although Gros is unclear about any specific act meriting such treatment, becomes to permanently disfigure the victim’s body, causing both suffering and mutilation. Gros describes a similar punishment of one of his comrades who attempted to run before being captured, and was beheaded after being whipped, again rendering his body unrecognizable as an extension of his punishment.

Gros also infamously accuses Jeannot and his henchmen as practicing forms of cannibalism, noting that “when these poor afflicted wretches were at the gasp of death, we beheld *Johnny*, the mulatto *Delile*, and the Negro *Godard*, amidst these horrible torments, cutting piecemeal two of those whom they had thus butchered, trussing the other two, like a fowl ready prepared for the spit, toad-fashion, and drinking their blood” (127). He also argues that out of a “thirst for human blood,” Jeannot also “roast[ed] the remainder of the prisoners alive on the spit” (127). At least in the construction of Gros’ narrative, the implied cannibalism figures as the ultimate extension of cruelty, after which Jean-François had Jeannot shot. After this point in the narrative, Gros describes a few leaders who plotted to kill the prisoners by shooting or strangulation, but his assertions of torture, dismemberment and cannibalism end with Jeannot’s death, implying that the tortures, cannibalism, and mutilation of the dead were in his view attributable to Jeannot as an individual, rather than as a representative of the insurgents in general.

Interestingly, Rainsford’s narrative attempts to mediate the focus on black violence in revolutionary histories by inverting tropes of dismemberment and cannibalism found in other accounts. Rainsford attributes the one scene of torture he

includes, the dismemberment of captured black insurgents, to Bryan Edwards' *An Historical Survey of the French Colony in the Island of St. Domingo*, quoting Edwards' text as noting:

They were broken on two pieces of timber placed crosswise. One of them expired on receiving the third stroke on his stomach, each of his legs and arms having been first broken in two places; the first three blows he bore without a groan. The other had a harder fate. When the executioner, after breaking his legs and arms, lifted up the instrument to give the finishing strike upon the breast, and which, (by putting the criminal out of his pain,) is called *le coup de grace*, the mob, with the ferociousness of cannibals, called out *arretez*, (stop,) and compelled him to leave his work unfinished. In that condition, the miserable wretch, with his broken limbs doubled up, was put on a cart-wheel, which was placed horizontally, one end of the axle-tree being driven into the earth. He seemed perfectly sensible, but uttered not a groan. At the end of forty minutes, some English seamen, who were spectators of the tragedy, strangled him in mercy. (95)

This scene highlights the cruelty of the executioner and the courage and silence of the afflicted.¹⁵ Here what is perhaps most striking is the reaction the author notes on the part of the French mob, who not only intervene to prolong the victim's suffering, but also "looked on with the most perfect composure and *sang-froid*" and "ridiculed, with a great deal of unseemly mirth, the sympathy manifested by the English" (95). Rainsford's coding of the mob as exhibiting "the ferociousness of cannibals" inverts the trope of the black insurgents as cannibals, and, rather than detailing the crimes of the victims, Rainsford emphasizes French cruelty and apathy that become the precursors of the later violence of the revolution.

The first comprehensive history of the revolution published in 1847 and 1848 (consecutive volumes) was Thomas Madiou's *Histoire d'Haiti*. Unlike many of the earlier and later authors who offered personal narratives, biographies, and even what they

¹⁵ Various renditions of this particular execution are discussed below; this passage in Rainsford bears striking similarity to Madiou's account of Ogé's execution found in Vol 1, p. 82-83.

considered histories, Madiou firmly situates himself as Haitian, and writes with the overt intent to write a history of the black struggles for freedom and independence, rather than a history of how the revolutionary period affected the colony's white population. Madiou writes "This history is especially that of the African race transplanted to Haiti, who became free by their own efforts, arising from their blood and in the midst of revolutionary shocks through which our country was reborn" (V. 1, III). Here Madiou situates Haiti in the context of the French, and by implication, the U.S. revolution, and continues to do so throughout the text. He furthers the linkage between the Haitian revolution and European powers that colonized Haiti by arguing that

In order to understand our country's history, one must not neglect studying that of other peoples [...] The history of Haiti, already under the influence of successive European conquests of our island, is related to the most civilized people of the old world. If the Spanish and French, in possessing the Pearl of the Antilles, had left bloody traces of their domination, they had also left their languages, manners, customs, in sum the seeds of a new civilization. (V. 1, III)

Although Madiou's concerns about civilization certainly echo common nineteenth-century discourses surrounding civilization in general and can be read as furthering notions that black civilization could not have arisen without European influence, his acknowledgement of the "bloody traces" left by the French and Spanish also foreshadows the particular ways in which the bodily violence of the Haitian Revolution are framed within the text as a continuation of and reaction to French violence.

He goes on to describe a plethora of forms of torture employed by the planters in reaction to the uprisings of 1791 that begin with the most common form of torture utilized in compelling slaves (the whip) and ending with branding, another common means of marking the slave's body:

Young white settlers [...] charged forward, with whips as weapons. Countless battalions of insurgents were captured, hanged and skinned alive. In Le Cap, the (hanging) scaffolds were full night and day, and the slave prisoners were broken on the wheel, or burned alive. Two members of the Provincial Assembly tended to these horrible executions. As for the insurgents who were released, they were branded on the cheek with the letter R (rebel) so that on the plantations they would not be confused with the faithful slaves. (V. 1, 95-96)

Madiou's listing of tortures begins and ends with forms of violence that pre-existed the uprisings, and reaches its apex in a variety of extreme forms of death that render the body unrecognizable, posing complete destruction of the body (in being broken, skinned, or burned) as the ultimate extension of French violence.

Like Rainsford, Madiou inverts the trope of black barbarism by likening the French to cannibals, reporting that by 1796, "the colonists were called Négrivores, in all of the North" (V. 1, 336). He also, however, highlights the cannibalism of particular leaders of the early insurgencies as particularly barbaric acts that offend even their fellow insurgents. He notes that Jeannot, "often after having attended to executions, [...] cut off the head of a white, poured the blood in a jar, mixed it with *tafia* and drank it" (V. 1, 97-98). Jeannot's decapitation of the French is juxtaposed with the execution of Boukman at the hands of the French, described just before Jeannot's excesses in Madiou's text.¹⁶ Madiou reports that "Boukman's head was cut off and his body was burned within sight of Jean-François' camp. His bloodied head was transported to Le Cap, and was exposed on a pike in the middle of the *place d'armes*" (V. 1, 97). Madiou's reading of Jeannot's violence is distinctly less sympathetic than his treatment of Jean-François and Biassou,

¹⁶ Boukman Dutty, generally referred to as Boukman, is generally acclaimed as the original leader of the black insurgents in the 1791 uprisings, and the practitioner of the ceremony at Bois Caïman which is widely believed to have been a source of identification and empowerment for the early insurrections.

although Madiou's willingness to juxtapose it with the treatment of Boukman's body does parallel his acts of violence and cruelty with those of the French.

Madiou's description of Jeannot's torture of prisoners goes far beyond the catalogue of physical injuries described up until this point, leaning towards an interpretation that Jeannot's actions (which, like the descriptions of anonymous author of *A Particular Account* discussed above, literalize white fears of both sexual aggression and cannibalism) that moves outside of the framework of French wartime violence, and are thus linked with cowardice and punishable within the revolutionary regime. Madiou comments that after his capture and death sentence, Jeannot, "a man, so cruel that the sight of blood always gratifying to him, feared the approach of death. He committed all kinds of baseness to evade death; he even offered that in exchange for Jean-François' pardon, he would become his slave" (V. 1, 98). Here Madiou links Jeannot's cruelty with his cowardice, and also, by implication, with a lack of commitment to his own freedom from enslavement. Interestingly, while Madiou condemns the cruelties of Jeannot, he provides a relevant counterpoint to Jean-François' execution of Jeannot. He notes that "Jean-François did not have Jeannot executed because of his cruelty, one may claim, but because Jeannot was beginning to ignore his authority. He continued to live in good friendship with Biassou, who burned prisoners in small fires and tore their eyes out [...] But it must also be said that Biassou was as powerful as Jean-François" (V. 1, 98-99). Hence, at least for Madiou, the cruelties inflicted by the leaders of the early Northern insurrection move from a reiteration of French atrocities, to a height of bodily torture that was curbed, not because of its cruelty but because of its relationship to the balance of power and authority among the revolution's leaders.

Madiou also creates an even stronger linkage between the violence of slavery and the reactions of the insurgents in his description of Jean-François' surrender in December 1791, a scene in which Jean-François reactions are prompted by bodily violence reminiscent of slavery:

On the appointed meeting day, they met at the Michel plantation. Bullet, a white creole, who the colonial assembly had charged with accompanying the commissioners rushed upon Jean-François and struck him with a whip. He himself, instead of firing with his pistol or piercing Bullet with a sword, stood stupefied; this can be attributed to a remains of the profound respect the slaves had for their masters [...] he threw himself at the feet of [St. Léger] telling him he was the only white in whom he saw any humanity. He promised him he would cease the hostilities if he would give him four hundred pardons for key leaders of his army. (V. 1, 119)

Here Madiou emphasizes Jean-François' status as a former slave, and attributes his reactions to the emotional and physical legacies of his enslavement. Interestingly, he does negotiate for the freedom of himself and his men despite his apparent "stupefication." Despite his attributing Jean-François' reaction to his former enslavement, Madiou, like other historians of his time, goes on to assert, however, that his and Biassou's participation in slave trading with the Spanish "proves that they were not moved by the emancipation of their brethren: their political horizon was still contained in a very narrow circle" (V. 1, 122).¹⁷ Hence, Madiou reads Jean-François' physical reactions to reminders of own bodily experience as a former slave, an issue entirely separate from the political goals he attributes to Jean-François at this time.

¹⁷ Spenser St. John also notes that "the blacks, under Jean-François, were massacring every white that fell into their hands, and selling to the Spaniard every negro or coloured man accused of siding with the French" (43). He later goes on to say that "Toussaint remonstrated against this vile traffic, but never shared in it," perhaps conveniently ignoring the then well-known fact that Toussaint owned slaves before the complete eradication of slavery on the island (50).

Wendell Phillips, an American abolitionist, tells the same story of Jean-François being whipped by a French officer and highlights Jean-François' restraint as well as his immensely powerful military position:

a young lieutenant, who had known him as a slave, angered at seeing him in the uniform of an officer, raised his riding whip and struck him over the shoulders. If he had been the savage which the Negro is painted to us, he had only to breathe the insult to his twenty-five thousand soldiers, and they would have trodden out the Frenchmen in blood. But the indignant chief rode back in silence to his tent, and it was twenty-four hours before his troops heard of this insult to their general. (171)

Unlike Madiou, who reads Jean-François' reaction as a traumatized response brought on by his former experiences as a slave, Phillips characterizes the interaction as one which shows the restraint and savvy of Jean-François in the face of an insult, rather than a traumatic event. Phillips also emphasizes the distinctly powerful position Jean-François occupied at the head of his army, and the calculated nature of his response. Phillips recounts Jean-François calling for 'Death to every white man' while in charge of 1500 white prisoners. Interestingly, Phillips does not link Jean-François' response to the kind of brutality Madiou ascribes to Jean-François, but rather to a sense of honor that had, by any standard, been insulted (171).

Interestingly, Ardouin adds another dimension to the scene. His rendition is slightly different, staging Bullet as the former master of Jeannot:

Other settlers joined them, and among them, one called Bullet, the former master of Jeannot. Having forgotten that it was Jean François who had purged the colony of this ferocious man, Bullet was bold enough to hit the generalissimo with his whip! He was not afraid of exciting revenge in the heart of one who could strike him to death in an instant, or make roll the heads of the white prisoners. (V. I, 299)

Despite his recognition of Jean François' indignation, Ardouin makes no mention of retaliatory killing in this case. He argues that Jean François returned to negotiations after "Saint Léger came into his camp, alone and unarmed among him and his troops. This act of trust and the kind words of Saint Léger, made him return" (V. I, 299). Saint-Léger's willingness to risk his own safety results in Ardouin's narrative in a humbling of Jean-François, who he then asserts "stooped to kneel before them [the civil commissioners]" and gave his demands (V. I, 299). These included an exchange of white prisoners, and according to Ardouin's rendition, the pardon of his wife, "who had been condemned to death [...] but not yet executed for fear of exasperating him" (V. I, 299). Ardouin asserts that the French failed to bring his wife to the exchange of prisoners, and that the deliverance of the white prisoners can be attributed to "the humanity of the black chiefs" (V. I, 300). He notes that the combination of "the elevation of the colonial assembly, the insolence of Bullet, and the deceptive counsels of Poitou" equally contributed to the discontentment of the black insurgents, as did the abuses of power of the white planters (V. I, 300).

Despite the numerous retellings of Jean-François having been exposed to the same abuse during the revolution as he endured as a slave, his reactions are not often read as portraying the same kind of excessive cruelty as Jeannot's. For Madiou, despite the courage and leadership Jeannot displayed in leading his troops in the attack on Le Cap, he declined into cowardice in the ensuing battles. Interestingly, Madiou links this cowardice with the display of violence against the whites, noting that after Jeannot was "the first to flee" from the battlefield, he set up a camp that was literally a theater of horrors:

His standard was the corpse of a *Petit-Blanc* mounted on a pike at the entrance of his camp, and his tent was surrounded by spears on which the heads of whites

were mounted. He violated young white women in front of their fathers and mothers and many of the young white girls he then slaughtered [...] Every day he had brought before him a few whites: some were sawed apart between two boards, others that he found too big had their feet cut off, and when the unfortunates were deemed too small, he made them grow six inches, he said, by dislocating their legs and thighs. (V. I, 97-98)

Interestingly, particular forms of dismemberment, including Rainsford's descriptions of breaking on the wheel, and sawing people in half between two boards, become stock images in the narration of the revolution. Here the atrociousness of the violence is significantly linked to not only the pain and death inflicted, but also the inordinately damaged corpse that results from it. Here Jeannot's excessive torture of white bodies and their disfigurement are coded as acts of revenge arising out of weakness of spirit.

Louis DuBroca's *La Vie de J.J. Dessalines, Chef des Noirs Révoltés de Saint-Domingue* focuses intently on the bodily cruelties of the revolution in general, and those practiced by Dessalines as attributable to the particularly barbarous and cruel nature of the insurgents. The first massacre he denotes, which he attributes to Biassou and Dessalines, creates a scene of killing deliberately organized to induce suffering of the white population. He asserts after assembling the white population in a "natural amphitheatre,"

Tortures begun with the elders, and a refinement of vengeance, which were the most cruel, because they were supposed to have tormented the blacks longer than others. They were hung by the chin sharp pieces of bent iron, around twenty inches, and affixed to poles about eight feet tall. Some of these unfortunate waited more than twelve hours until away death came to complete their unspeakable suffering, because the executioners, in unheard of atrocities, dropped the victims down from time to time, and then rehung them to relish with more bitterness all the anguish of the most painful deaths. (24-25)

Here DuBroca focuses primarily on the executioners' purposeful infliction of pain, and the implied pleasure they felt at the suffering of the white populations. This systematized suffering is linked in DuBroca's text with age. He follows this passage with the explanation that "The middle-aged whites who had not inhabited the island more than half a score of years, were set in pairs between boards of their height that were bound together and that the sawyers sawed in two" (25). Finally, the youngest "had their eyes torn out with corkscrews and were then chopped up with swords" (25). While DuBroca's text is clearly interested in sensationalizing the violence for the entertainment of his European (and later Mexican) audiences, his index of forms of torture and dismemberment systematizes retribution in a way that equates the insurgents' perception of the victim's torment of slaves with degree of pain inflicted, although on this scale, the extended torture of being hung by the chin is rendered more atrocious than the dismemberment involved in being sawn in half, or "chopped up." These acts, however cruel, do become coded as a systematic reaction to at least the perception of the excesses of the French.

Ardouin includes an index of tortures in his description of the early uprisings, noting that the insurgents "impaled some, sawed others between planks, beat or burned or scorched some alive" (V. I, 233). Ardouin links the insurgents' level of violence to a number of sources, including the abuse and degradation they were subjected to as slaves.

While clearly not excusing their behavior, Ardouin provides the following explanation:

But we explain them, we apologize for them as well, by the nature of things, by the state of degradation slavery required of these men, the systematic privation of all moral and religious education, which is the most certain barrier human societies use to contain the masses in subordination. (V. I, 233)

In this vein of thinking, Ardouin proposes that had the slaves been treated differently, both with less degradation and with more religious education, their insurrection would have been more like that of the men of color, and the violence that ensued in the early rebellions would have been avoided.

Rainsford also acknowledges the propensity of “the modern writers of France” to depict French colonists in the West Indies as displaying “a viciousness of conduct, beyond the apparent bounds of human actions” and as “the meanest dependents and vilest accessories” of the French (71). Despite his skepticism surrounding characterizations of the colonists by writers like Raynal and De Charmilly, Rainsford notes that “Their character, as displayed on prominent occasions, during that period which it is the intent of these sheets to describe, unhappily was not often such as to controvert the assertions made from such good authority” (71). Despite his admission of the unseemly conduct of the planters, he does not maintain that their characters (or their actions) are wholly to blame for the initial insurrections. Instead he argues that it is the willful blindness of French colonists to the character and condition of the African slaves that becomes one of three primary causes of the revolution, which he summarizes as: “an ignorance [...] of human nature, a blindness to actual circumstances, and a want of individual virtue in the colonists, [which] gave birth to the revolutionary spirit in St. Domingo” (73). He also pits these characterizations against each other, implying that the vices of the colonists led to their own suffering, whereas the suffering of the African slaves did not arise as a result of their own actions. He asserts that “If the master was proud, voluptuous, and crafty, the slave was equally vicious, and often riotous; the punishment of one was but the consequence of his own excesses, but that of the other, was often cruel and unnatural”

(75). Here the slave's violence is read as resulting from their poor treatment at the hands of the planters; thus, the "cruel and unnatural" punishment they received was entirely undeserved.

Sir James Barskett's *History of the island of St. Domingo: from its first discovery by Columbus to the present period* less directly places the legacy of cruelty in the context of the tortures committed by the Spanish who originally colonized the entire island, and the French, under whom the slave trade there expanded. Barskett's advertisement for the text notes that among "the circumstances which invest it with peculiar interest" are "the barbarous extirpation of its original inhabitants; the importation of Africans, forcibly dragged from their native shores; - the oppression and cruelties endured by one generation after another of these hapless beings" (n.p.). Barskett's assertions may well participate in the kinds of anti-Catholic rhetoric referred to as the "black legend" of Spain, a term Julián Juderías coined to describe the portrayal of Spanish colonialism as overwhelmingly cruel in order to further colonial interests of competing nations like England. Regardless of Barskett's own national and political allegiances, his comments about Spanish and French cruelty comprise one means through which the historiography of colonization in Saint Domingue centered around the treatment of slaves' bodies.

Barskett's understanding of slavery also extends to the free men of color in the colony, who he describes, at least in the mid-1700's, as existing in a condition of slavery to the state. He argues that

Although released from the dominion of individuals, yet the free men of colour in all the French islands were still considered as the property of the public, and as public property, they were obnoxious to the caprice and tyranny of all those whom the accident of birth placed above them. By the colonial governments, they were treated as slaves in the strictest sense; being compelled, on attaining the age of manhood, to serve three years in a military establishment called the

maréchaussée; and on the expiration of that term, they were subject, great part of the year, to the burthen of the *corvées*; - a species of labour allotted for the repair of the highways, of which the hardships were insupportable. They were compelled moreover to serve in the militia [...] and the king's lieutenants, majors and aides-major enforced their authority over these people, degenerated into the basest of tyranny (64-65)

Despite his acknowledgement of the grossly unequal rights of men of color and their vulnerability to whites in positions of power, Barskett notes that “it may be said with truth, that the manners of the white inhabitants softened, in some measure, the severity of their laws” (65). He imagines the relationship between whites and the free colored population as paternalistic, paralleling legal practice in the colony with the Roman law of the Twelve Tables, in which he notes that “a father was allowed to inflict the punishment of death on his own child: - manners, not law, prevented the exertion of a power so unnatural and odious” (66). Thus for Barskett, a relationship between the white population and the free people of color reflects a paternalism which should render the situation just and non-oppressive. He extends this understanding into his reading the Code Noir, which he argues “breathed a spirit of the tenderness and philanthropy [sic] highly honourable to the memory of its author” (66).¹⁸

Despite the gentle paternalism Barskett finds in the legal system governing the colony, he allows that “a very strong prejudice against the inhabitants of the sugar islands, on account of the slavery of their negroes, prevailed at this time in France” (67). He blames this hostility, rather than French cruelty or the movement for rights on the part of the free people of color, for the unrest among that population, a reading that seems particularly inconsistent with their well-publicized goals. Barskett also alludes to the

¹⁸ The Code Noir did make provisions for particular forms of manumission and required that slaves convert to Catholicism, two aspects of the law that Barskett may have found admirable. For an in-depth discussion of its provisions and the impetus behind them, see Malick W. Ghachem's *The Old Regime and the Haitian Revolution*, pages 29-76.

disunity among the planters and the military as an underlying cause of the revolution in general. In early periods of unrest, he argues that “if the planters had remained united among themselves, it seems probable that the tranquility of the country would have been preserved” (71). He notes that the mulattoes joined the fight against the black insurgents as a result of “the lower class of whites, considering the mulattoes as the authors of the rebellion, marked them for destruction; and they would undoubtedly have been murdered, if the governor and the colonial assembly had not taken them under their protection” (85). In the end, Barskett argues that all parties involved “assumed a diabolical character: each party endeavoured to excel in the infliction of cruelties” (89).

Barskett generally defends the white population’s treatment of the free people of color, even while admitting that several plantation owners and managers were massacred “with circumstances of barbarity however indefensible and terrible, such as an infuriated people were likely to practice” (84). He moves on to a reading of the violence as arising from a clear reaction to the cruelties of slavery, arguing that

the former tyranny and cruelty of many of the owners and managers, had fixed in the minds of the slaves, a mortal hatred of the planters in general [...] The spirit of vengeance by which they were impelled, not content with a retaliation of wrongs and sufferings on the individuals by whom they had been inflicted, menaced alike the humane master and the barbarous tyrant; and most of the negroes were only to be satisfied with the extermination of all who bore the same complexion as their oppressors. (112)

The level of violence, some of which was presumably inflicted upon the kind, paternalistic slaveholders he describes above, has escalated to a point of racial extermination, and is no longer defensible as a reactionary measure.

While most historians of his time attributed the black insurgents’ motivations to vengeance, Rainsford is careful not to directly link the cruelties practiced in African

slavery to French violence in the revolution. He does, however, note that after Louverture's exile,

over an hundred of those who contributed to form the enlightened society of Toussaint, or who were distinguished for knowledge or benevolence were seized and sent on board different vessels in the harbor, and were never more heard of; in all probability, as the same mode of execution was afterwards openly had recourse to, they were immediately slaughtered or thrown into the sea. (191-192)

Both Rainsford's use of the term "slaughter" rather than "assassination" and his assertion of persons being thrown into the sea denotes a dehumanization involved in both practices; the former because it denotes the lack of judicial process involved, and the latter because it is, at least for an abolitionist audience, a reminder of the way slaves were killed along the Middle Passage.¹⁹ Both denote unusual cruelty, and Rainsford states that "the astonishment which this flagrant act of the French government occasioned, was such as to paralyse the minds of the whole people" (192). Rainsford also implies a parallelism between the treatment of insurgents and the treatment of slaves in describing the mass execution of "blacks [who] had been hunted down in the neighbourhood of Port Republicain" after Louverture's exile. Rainsford reports that

They were hurried on board of the ships at anchor in the bay, and crowded into their holds; that under cover of the night this dishonored navy put to sea, and first either burning brimstone in the hold, or extinguishing sense by suffocation, or neither, the miserable cargoes were discharged into the sea in such quantities, that at length the tide (as if the mighty Arbiter of all, meant to hold their shame before them) brought the corpses into the bay. (197)

¹⁹ The *Zong* massacre, in which over a hundred slaves were purposefully drowned at sea, had recently been brought into the forefront of the British abolition movement, and the image of drowning slaves would have been quite familiar to Rainsford's readers.

The image here of the crowded holds, suffocation, and drowning in the sea are eerily reminiscent of the Middle Passage as well.²⁰ Even more haunting is Rainsford's additional comments that "under the dark concealment of night, the tender wife, the aged parent, and even the rougher comrade in arms, stealing by the watchful suspicion of their masters, were seen wandering on the sea-shore, to identify each victim as the wave produced him" (197). Rainsford's depiction highlights the treatment of the dead as an added cruelty to the murder of the living.

The Baron de Vastey, a prominent Haitian writer who served in Henri Christophe's court and was well-read in U.S. newspapers, also argues that after the arrest of Louverture, when the series of events we now call the Haitian Revolution culminated in a war for independence from France, "the detail of horrors and cruelties" committed by the French knew no bounds" (35).²¹ He argues that those "who hitherto had been spared in our wars were indiscriminately butchered with every possible aggravation," and that "to *arrest* and *hang* became synonymous" (35, *emphases original*). De Vastey also outlines the French articulation of such cruelties as a new vocabulary destined to hide various atrocities, including referring to the mass drowning of insurgents as "a national haul" and dismembering with dogs as "descend[ing] into the arena" (35). This brief index of tortures, which the French apparently dissembled about in their written orders, is

²⁰ James Barksett's *History of Santo Domingo* makes allusions to the same form of murder, noting that "great numbers were hurried on board various ships in the different harbours. Some were crowded into the holds and suffocated, and then thrown into the sea: others were chained, and forced overboard alive" (164).

²¹ Marlene Daut notes because of their publication in U.S. newspapers, Vastey's works were an important part of "the historiography of the Haitian Revolution circulated in the Atlantic World until at least the end of the U.S. Civil War" (n.p.).

consistent with both acts of war (hanging and shooting) and well known methods of killing rebel and runaway slaves in the Caribbean.²²

One of the methods of torture contemporary critics have addressed in Rainsford's text is the use of dogs to hunt, kill and maim insurgents. Upon LeClerc's death in 1802, Donatien-Marie-Joseph de Vimeur, the vicomte de Rochambeau was appointed to lead French forces into Saint Domingue to bring the colony back under French control. Rochambeau introduced dogs as a means of torture there. Rainsford's account includes only a brief mention of the use of the dogs, implying that they present a more atrocious form of torture than the massacres he regularly reports on the part of French troops. He asserts that "in their extremity, to aid and fill of the measure of their enormities, the use of blood-hounds was resorted to, that dreadful expedient, the temporary adoption of which in a neighbouring colony [Jamaica], had already excited the disgust of the powers of Europe" (196). To this brief mention, Rainsford adds a substantial appendix entitled "Some Account of the Nature and History of the Blood-Hounds Used in the American Colonies." Sara Johnson argues that Rainsford here attempts to redefine both the origin and nature of the barbarism of Saint-Domingue, and reads his attention to the dogs as describing a transnational system of colonial domination with which his reader would have been familiar (66). Rainsford indeed counts the dogs among "the numerous rude inventions of the barbarous ages to attain a superiority in war, [...] that of the use of beasts in a variety of ways in conjunction with the regular armies" (251). Johnson argues that

The axis of Spanish, French, British, and North American slave-holding powers in the region collaborated in subduing nonwhite enemy combatants, using canine warfare techniques that dated back to the Spanish conquest of the Americas. In all

²² For further discussion see Vincent Brown's *The Reaper's Garden*, p. 130-138.

cases, the use of dogs as a torture mechanism showcased the legal nonpersonhood and subhuman status of the colonized. (67)

Johnson also asserts that later Haitian historians, including Madiou and Ardouin “incorporated detailed accounts of Rochambeau’s torture methods into their analyses of how the initial slave revolts became an outright war of independence. These accounts circulated widely, becoming the basis for the lore surrounding the use of dogs as a gruesome weapon in the French arsenal” (68). Notably, Madiou links Rochambeau to the Spanish conquistadors through his means of torturing the population of Haiti with the use of dogs, signaling a parallelism between Spanish tactics of colonization over three hundred years earlier and French methods of suppression of the insurgents in the final years of the Haitian Revolution. Madiou writes “Rochambeau, following the example of the Spanish in the 16th century, the first conquerors of the island, did not hesitate to introduce to St. Domingue the mastiffs, which he would use to devour his prisoners” (V. II,459). Madiou also connects this form of torture to the history of Christianity in asserting that Rochambeau also “drew from the martyrology of the first Christians the most horrible tortures,” implying that the bases of torturing black bodies can be linked to a much older, more far-reaching discourse than the particulars of French colonization (V. II, 459).

Both Sir James Barskett and W. W. Harvey also link the use of dogs to creating a spectacle of extreme violence against black bodies. Barskett expands the understanding of the use of the dogs as “descending into the arena” by adding that

On more than one occasion, some of the prisoners, whom their merciless oppressors were pleased to denounce as criminals, were thrown alive to the bloodhounds. Of this unparalleled enormity the authors made no secret, at the scene of its perpetration, giving public notice of the time and place at which the horrid spectacle would be exhibited. The ordinary day for such exhibitions was

Sunday. A large ring was lined with the military under arms; the ferocious dogs were in the centre, and the human victims were delivered naked to their rage” (165).

He goes on to note that the bloodhounds “would frequently break loose and devour infants from the public way,” an assertion taken almost verbatim from Rainsford’s appendix (166). Here the dogs are alternately described as a transnational phenomenon linked to slavery, a particularly dehumanizing factor in the fighting, and a source of public spectacle. Harvey’s description is remarkably similar, but codes the use of dogs as a means of repressing particularly ardent defenders of black liberty, asserting that “Such of the black prisoners as had evinced the greatest zeal and activity in defense of liberty, were selected from the rest; and on Sundays, were dragged to a spot chosen for the purpose, and in sight of thousands of spectators, were thrown to these terrible animals, and torn to pieces” (15-16). Here the apex of French tortures is not only the use of dogs to dehumanize, dismember, and torture black bodies, but also the notion that white spectators also derive pleasure from the phenomenon. Phillips specifically attributes this pleasure to French women, who reportedly “clapped their hands to see a Negro thrown to these dogs, previously starved to rage” (182).

Wendell Phillips description of the violence that ensued also alludes to the French use of dogs at the end of an index of forms of executions, each more violent than the next. He asserts that:

The French exhausted every form of torture. The negroes were bound together and thrown into the sea; anyone who floated was shot, others sunk with cannon balls tied to their feet; some smothered with sulphur fumes, others strangled, scourged to death, gibbeted; sixteen of Toussaint’s officers were chained to rocks in desert islands, others in marshes, and left to be devoured by poisonous reptiles and insects. (181-182)

Here the forms of death become increasingly violent, some even ensuring multiple forms of death. The last, abandonment to wild creatures, involves the potential dismemberment and consumption of the body that finds its reversal in Phillips' assertions about Rochambeau's dogs. Phillips writes

Rochambeau sent to Cuba for bloodhounds. When they arrived, the young girls went down to the wharf, decked the hounds with ribbons and flowers, [and] kissed their necks [...] But the Negroes besieged this very city so closely that these same girls, in their misery, ate the very hounds they had welcomed. (182)

Phillips implies that the girls' role in the importation of the dogs amounts to both contributing to and enjoying the spectacle of their torture of black bodies of the insurgents. Phillips does, however, seem to offer these girls some redemption from their participation in the torture itself and the larger social norms of French colonial life by highlighting their consumption of the means of torture used against the insurgents. Here, instead of consuming the spectacle of tortured black bodies, these girls, suffering from starvation as a result of war, create a new spectacle of consumption for Phillips' readers.

While themes of torture and consumption were rampant in descriptions of the final years before independence, they built upon already existing narratives of dismemberment of the dead that had taken hold in descriptions of the first expeditions against the insurgents in 1791. LeClerc's narrative, in part because of its focus on the expedition to Limbé occurring a few months after the uprisings, is heavily focused upon the visibility of dismembered corpses. He begins by contrasting the ruins of Limbé with its former glory, reporting that "Ruins, ashes, scaffolds stained with blood, trees hung with heads that were already putrefying: that is the tableau of this, the most opulent province of the country" (Popkin 96). Here the gruesome sight of dead bodies, not

properly buried, becomes a “tableau” of past violence, particularly because of its visibility. LeClerc’s narrative focuses heavily on the visible traces left by treatment of dead bodies, noting that “long streaks of blood showed that men had died, but we didn’t find a single body. These barbarians had taken them away during the fight, in order to disguise their losses” (Popkin 96). The moving of bodies here at least denotes a particular purpose, and although LeClerc links this action to barbarity, his characterization of the insurgents declines according to their treatments of the dead. LeClerc’s narrative also describes the use of dismembered bodies as a means of terrorizing the French troops, an aspect of the treatment of the dead he links to cannibalism. LeClerc writes:

Oh what an abomination! Oh, inventive genius of cannibals! What did we see? White hands, from the wrist up, coming out of the ground, with the fingers pointing upward. We stood petrified. Did they belong to bodies buried here? Had parricidal hands torn them from living victims, these hands that I must have held in my own? Ah! No doubt they belonged to a father, a friend, a mother. They might have just signed the manumissions of some of these monsters who had insulted them in their agony, who had made killing a game. These whites had been torn apart! (Popkin 98).

LeClerc suggests that the kinship relations between people renders bodily violence more abominable. First, the notion that the hands might indeed have been dismembered from their bodies is cited as a specific source of horror. Second, the notion of parricide, the killing of a relative, implies that the abomination arises from breaching the familial, or in this case, pseudo-familial relationship between the victims and the insurgents. LeClerc internalizes this notion in imagining physical contact between himself and the hands, and characterizes the hands, as members of their owners, as capable of changing the relationships between the victims and insurgents through the act of manumission.

Finally, his reaction in this passage denotes not only the deaths themselves but also the full destruction and dismemberment of the bodies, the image of white bodies “torn apart” that he repeats throughout his narrative.

LeClerc also describes both corporeal punishment and the mutilation of dead bodies of black insurgents, first asserting that “the scaffold is waiting for” the rebel who captured large artillery, and then asserting the “grotesque form” of death on the battlefield. He writes “one black’s head had been pierced by a ball. Two hours later, the charge, which had gotten caught in his kinky hair, was still smoking; the grease from his hair kept this bizarre lamp going” (Popkin 99).²³ Here the ghastly sight of the dead body, reformulated into another object by markers of racial identification (the kinky hair), becomes symbolic of the punishment of such bodies, even after death. LeClerc reflects that “the killers should make expiation by falling at the feet of those whose blood they had shed,” but dismisses his notions of justice in favor of divine justice, which he prays for (100). Here he imagines a symbolic exchange of killers and victims as evening the moral score through an inversion of the violence.

Interestingly, one of the executions described in Barskett and Madiou’s texts also involves the mutilation of a French military leader at the hands of his own people during the early insurgencies. Colonel Mauduit, born Thomas-Antoine de Mauduit du Plessis, was a self-proclaimed *pompon rouge* who, despite his position as the commander of the regiment at Port-au-Prince, refused to carry out their orders.²⁴ Barskett asserts that in 1791, Colonel Mauduit deeply insulted the national guard by “carrying off the colours”

²³ Popkin’s translation of the word “ball” here likely refers to the kind of bullet used in a musket, in which the gunpowder was separate from the lead ball that was actually fired.

²⁴ The *pompon rouges*, a powerful faction in Saint Domingue, were planters who supported the royalist cause and considered themselves true patriots of France, opposing French revolutionary leadership.

[i.e. the standards] from one of its detachments (79). Barskett notes that at the ceremony to rectify the insult:

at the moment he turned to witness the applause of his soldiers, one of them cried aloud, *that he must ask pardon of the national guards on his knees*. Mauduit started, and presented them instead his bosom bared to their swords: - it was instantly pierced with a hundred wounds, inflicted by his own men, to whom he had so frequently shewn every kindness. The spectators stood silent and motionless; two officers exerted themselves but in vain on his behalf; and dissatisfied with mere assassination, the most horrible enormities were practiced on the dead body. (79)

At the same time as he implicitly parallels the kindnesses of Mauduit to his troops with that of the white planters to slaves, Barskett also uses to create a parallel version of the slave rebellion in which he figures Mauduit as a self-sacrificing, paternal figure who is murdered and mutilated by ungrateful masses. Barskett's rendition of Mauduit's execution is rendered in very much the same manner as Rainsford's. Rainsford's description includes Mauduit offering "his life rather than his honour," and embellishes the corporeal details of the execution and subsequent defiling of his body that ensued:

In an instant, an hundred bayonets seemed to vie with each other which should wound the deepest, and he fell, gored all over, while scarce an arm of the number he had so often made happy, was raised to save him, or a voice among those so often exerted in his praise, to bid his spirit rest. The spectators, however unfriendly they might have been to the deceased, were petrified with astonishment and disgust. Not contented with the extinction of life, this unmanly and treacherous number whose conduct is, it is hoped, unparalleled, not content with destroying his house and every thing belonging to him, gratified themselves with mutilating the dead body of their once-loved commander; and, by a thousand diabolical contrivances, rendering disgusting in death a form which, through life, has been always beloved and honoured, and sometimes respected and admired. (88)

Rainsford's description implies a competition in cruelty, with assailants vying to cause the most harm to the general. He also implies that the desecration of Mauduit's body is the ultimate extension of harm to his property, a relationship between forms of

destruction that can easily be mapped onto the early insurrectionists' burning of property and murder of planters. Finally, and what makes the execution for Rainsford particularly disturbing is the mutilation of Mauduit's "form," which he reads here as a corporeal rendering of his fall from honor.

Madiou also makes note of several instances of French cruelty in the final years of the war for independence that served to induce fear and to create templates for the kinds of horror that would later ensue on all sides of the fighting. He cites examples of the mutilation of cadavers on the part of the French. Particularly, he asserts that during the siege of Crête-a-Pierrot in March 1802, the French "massacred all the wounded. The grieving inhabitants discovered the mutilated corpses hanging from the trees that surrounded the fort. By this barbaric execution, LeClerc had believed he could frighten them, but he only embittered them, causing the final break of all ties to the Metropole" (V. II, 277). Hence the ideological and final break from France is attributed to the mutilation of the dead, a final act so barbarous and so offensive to the people that Madiou reads it as a turning point in the battles for independence.

Mutilation of the dead arises again and again in varying contexts in Madiou's history. Madiou reports the gruesome death of Louis Daure Lamartinière, identified by Madiou as "the hero of Crête-à-Pierrot" for managing to withdraw his troops safely. Madiou asserts that when Lamartinière retreated, severely wounded "Jean-Charles Courjol darted after him and discovered him stretched out on the grass, suffering from several wounds that he had received. He rushed on him, grabbed him by the hair, and cut off his head with his own hand. He paraded the head around the camp on a pike" (V. II, 386). Madiou asserts that Courjol told his companions that "he had considered

Lamartinière to be the last *bloodhound* the whites had yet to launch” (V. II. 386, emphasis original). Madiou reads Courjol’s slaughter of Lamartinière as particularly troubling; first, Courjol is identified as having killed a hero fighting for his own side against the French, second, as killing an unarmed man, and finally, by dismembering and displaying his head, repeating French treatments of the earliest insurgents, including Ogé (at least according to some accounts) and Boukman. Telling of the importance of the treatment of the body to the soldiers, Madiou reports that “Larose was distressed by the miserable death of his old comrade, but he did not feel he had enough authority over his troops to even blame Jean-Charles Courjol. He gave the corpse a proper burial” (V. II, 386).

Another form of cruelty consistent with white fears and assumptions about blackness during the era that comes up repeatedly in the histories and narratives is the rape of white women. The allegations of rape found in early accounts consistently ignore the prevalence of whites raping slaves in the Caribbean, and instead focus on a paranoid reversal of a practice so common as to be unrecognizable as a crime. The speaker of *A Particular Account* reports in one case that “the inexorable negroes assassinated the husband, and told the wife that she and her daughters were reserved for their pleasures,” and then that “a colonist was murdered by the very negro whom he had most distinguished by acts of kindness. His wife, stretched upon his body, was forced to satisfy the brutality of the murderer” (5). He later reports that “A colonist, father of two young ladies, whites, was tied down by a savage ring-leader of a band, who ravished the eldest in his presence, and delivered the younger over to one of his satellites; their passion satisfied, they slaughtered both the father and the daughters” (7). Here, the acts

of rape are made more atrocious because of their relation to other bodies; in the first, the rape takes place atop the dead body of the husband, and in the second, it involves a double act of torture – both the girl’s and her father’s, who is forced to bear witness.

LeClerc, like many of the planters who described the scenes of the early uprisings, also focuses on the bodies of white women who have survived the fighting. He likens these women to specters, “livid, starved, without stockings, without shoes, their hair undone, most almost naked, a few covered with rags, others with nothing but a scrap to cover their nudity” (Popkin 100). These women, whose bodies are exposed and bear the markings of privation, lose in LeClerc’s eyes some of their humanity, at least as much as their humanity is bound up in bodies appropriately decorated and constrained, and are likened to spirits. Upon their rescue, the women are also figured as less human because they are insane with joy, in LeClerc’s words “they laugh like crazy people, they cry, embracing our knees, our hands, throwing themselves at our feet, rolling on the ground, they go berserk” (Popkin 100). As if their affliction, that of having lost their personhood, is contagious, LeClerc adds that “We shared their deliriousness” (Popkin 100). LeClerc also adds a vignette about a woman’s body that is marked by violence associated with sexual abuse, noting that “the curé had wanted to sleep with her, when she refused, she received fifty lashes, whose scars she still bore” (Popkin 101). This remarkable example of a suffering woman’s body, which affects LeClerc deeply, was presumably committed by a white curé, and, as the wounds are described as scars, before the uprisings. Anxious perhaps to show that colonial justice was not abandoned, LeClerc notes that the curé “would be sent [to Cap Français] as a criminal, to be presented to the provost marshal’s court, which would condemn him to hang” (101). Here, LeClerc approves of a system of

justice that exchanges torture of one body for the death of another: the curé's death becomes commensurate with the suffering and scarification of the woman. It seems likely that Leclerc was affected by the sight of such scarring and mutilation of a white woman, as such violence was commonly enacted on the enslaved population of the colony.

Marcus Rainsford self-consciously refutes the kinds of testimonies that focus solely on the violence of the revolution, objecting to the violation of women, and other forms of torture, as a focal point for writers narrating the revolutionary period. He argues that "it serves of the purposes of history to describe the various modes of torture which occurred to the savage insurgents, or to relate accounts of the grossest violations of virgins and pregnant women, in the presence of their dying husbands, or parents," apparently responding to the renditions of such violence that appeared at the time, potentially including the anonymous text described above (93). Rainsford objects to the recounting of torture and violence because readers' reactions could bar them from a nuanced understanding of the full measure of violence historically perpetrated by the French. Notably, Rainsford cites the sexual abuse of slaves as a possible source of the insurgents' purported behavior towards white women, arguing that "the licentiousness of [the planters'] intercourse with the female slaves, could leave no impression to prevent a retaliation on the occasion" (93). Here black violence against white women, one of the most prevalent accusations of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Haiti and the United States, is coded as a response to the treatment of slave women at the hands of white owners, a radical parallel that was not often made in descriptions of the revolution. Madiou is clear on linking rape to French violence, noting that at the height of Rochambeau's leadership, French troops were characterized as committing the most

horrendous sorts of violence, including rape and torture. At Magnan in 1802, Madiou notes that Rochambeau's troops "sacrificed most of their prisoners, tired of carnage, to indulge in looting. Women were ravished with frantic rage, and entirely naked, were raped and flogged" (V. II, 249). Here the violence of rape is compounded by the troops' rage, their display of the women's bodies and the flogging, an act entirely symbolic of Caribbean slavery, rendering them the ultimate spectacles of suffering.

Interestingly, Madiou also recounts several instances of organized political violence against women on the part of the French, including the execution of Henriette St. Marc, a woman condemned for selling munitions to the insurgents at Arcahaie in 1802. According to Madiou, her execution was unusual because under Louverture, only three women were ever condemned to die for assassination, and his successors never executed women for any crime.²⁵ While Madiou sees this execution as excessive punishment considering the crime and gender of the accused, he also attributes a similar response to the local population. Madiou writes that:

Pulled away from the prison, she was placed between two European rifle platoons and driven, following her coffin to the market place, vis-a-vis the church. At ten o'clock in the morning, in the presence of a great number of people, a gallows was erected before her eyes. She mounted the scaffold with courage. When her corpse balanced in the air, a mournful cry and sobs broke out in the crowd. The women abandoned the market, seized with horror; the executioner and the soldiers alone stayed in the square. Rochambeau, defying the general period of mourning, gave a grand ball that night. (V. II, 394)

The spectacle of Henriette St. Marc's death is juxtaposed with Rochambeau's opulent lifestyle, and the crowd's response notably differs from the cruel reactions of the French in other executions described by historians of the time. Of course, the execution of a woman would later be ordered and carried out by leaders in Dessalines' army, who had

²⁵ See Madiou *Histoire d'Haiti Tome II*, p. 394, f.n. 1.

Charles Bélair and his wife, Sannitte, executed for treason.²⁶ Although the commission assembled for their judgment ordered the shooting of Charles Bélair and the decapitation of Sannitte, Madiou reports that after having shot Bélair in the head, “the executioner, despite his efforts, could not bend [Sannitte] to the block. The officer who commanded the detachment was forced to shoot her” (V. II, 404). Despite Sannitte’s courageous resistance to the act of execution, Madiou juxtaposes her character with that of Madame Dessalines, implying that part of Sannitte’s treason was caused by cowardice. He notes that she “did not have the courage to support the fatigue and privations” of the early insurrections, while Madame Dessalines, her counterpart “in peril of her life, was always the protector of unfortunate blacks, mulattos, and whites” (V. II, 405). The implication is that had Sannitte Bélair acted as a protector of the bodies of others, her own body would not have been exposed to such harsh penalty. Here her cowardice, much like that of Jeannot, is intimately related to both her weakness (in this case in refusing to protect the innocent) and her death.

It may be of note to consider here the intense reactions Madiou records surrounding the introduction of the guillotine to the colony. Despite the influence of French revolutionary ideas on at least some of the participants of the insurrection and the apparently frequent acts of execution in general and beheading in particular, historians argue that the use of the guillotine was extremely, and perhaps surprisingly, problematic for the colony’s inhabitants. Madiou writes that Léger-Félicité Sonthonax, the civil commissioner of Saint Domingue from 1792-1795, attempted to import the guillotine to the colony in 1793. Madiou writes that he:

²⁶ In contemporary texts, Sannitte is generally rendered “Sanite.”

Erected a guillotine at Port Republican on the site that extends from the foot of the Terrace. A few days later, a white Royalist, named Pelou from Rouen, was condemned by the court martial there. Instead of shooting him, Sonthonax wanted to try his guillotine. The people filled the square to see this instrument work. As Pelou's head fell in the basket, a cry of horror came from the crowd. This hideous machine frightened the impressionable imagination of the blacks, who rushed in and overturned it. Since that time, another has never been put up in Haiti. (V. I, 215)

Madiou is clear here that the destruction of the guillotine came at the hands of black observers, but does not attribute their intense reaction to sources other than their “impressionable imagination.”²⁷ It may, in fact, have been the clearly European-centered mode of exhibiting power over bodies to which the Haitians (although in this case it is unclear the crowd was white, mulatto, colored, or enslaved black populations) objected.²⁸

While the instances and variety of acts that have been rendered infamous as “horrors of Saint-Domingue” are nearly endless, particular modes of violence have gained culturally-specific meanings through their repetition and characterization in nineteenth century histories of the revolutionary period. The acts include, but are not limited to, dismemberment, the use of dogs for torture, the mutilation of the dead, rape and execution. Their characterization is carefully divided along lines of race and nationality; several acts of the slave-led uprisings of 1791 are coded at once as cannibalistic and as a reaction to French colonial rule and the treatment of slaves, while French acts of violence are generally linked to the spectacle of cruelty, whether it be targeted to arouse fear in the insurgents or pleasure in the spectators. The mutilation of

²⁷ Spenser St. John, whose inflammatory *Hayti, or the Black Republic* (1883) was published much later in the nineteenth century than the other works included in this study, attributed the crowd's reaction to the fact that “a man's head was chopped off instead of being destroyed in a fashion to which they were accustomed,” a reading that makes sense in light of what was already at this point a legacy of decapitation and the display of disembodied heads (47).

²⁸ The division of populations by race here presents a basic set of terminology used at the time to denote socially distinct groups in Saint Domingue.

dead bodies, a particularly ghastly component of the atrocities so often described by scholars of the period, is also attributed by nineteenth-century authors to an extension of cruelty that corresponds not only to the memory of tortured black bodies but can also be read, particularly in the cases of writers who supported colonial France and Atlantic slavery in general, as a terrifying warning. Matt Clavin notes that

at a time when the human body served as a metaphor for the new nation, skeletal remains, mangled bodies, stacked corpses, and copious amounts of spilled blood, all Gothic tropes, amplified the tenuous nature of the republic and suggested to American readers the cost in human life that would attend the end of slavery. (19)

While this seems likely in the case of white bodies, the suffering and dismembered black body takes on a very different significance in narrations of the Haitian revolution from the point of view of Haitians themselves.

Breaking on the Wheel: Ogé's Execution as the Point of No Return

While executions were common during both the early slave uprisings in Saint Domingue and the later struggle for independence, one in particular stands out in nearly every history and narrative as creating a template for methods of torture and execution that would persist throughout the revolutionary period. Interestingly, the victim of this execution was not a former slave, but rather a free man of color who advocated for voting rights for his class, and was accused of leading an unsuccessful revolt against the French. James Ogé, described by Beaubrun Ardouin as “a man of five feet, three inches, of a brown complexion, frizzy hair, an aquiline nose, large eyes, missing a tooth in the upper jaw” became the leader of a small, and by all accounts unsuccessful revolt of the mulatto population in 1790 (V 1, f.n. 148). His rebellion, torture, and execution became central

in almost every history, biography, and narrative that addresses the early slave insurrections. While Ogé's advocacy for rights for the free black and mulatto populations in the colony was certainly a precursor for later movements for liberty and independence, and perhaps his plans for insurrection were in hindsight an inspiration for the revolts, what Haitian authors routinely emphasized the most ardently about Ogé was his torture and execution at the hands of the French. The Baron Pompeé de Vastey argues that "the blood of those martyrs, Ogé and Chavanne, ignominiously shed upon the scaffold, cried aloud for vengeance and served to accelerate the Revolution" (19). This incident, about which the details vary a great deal, appears to have been foundational in the linkages it created between the figure of the suffering body in Haiti and the impetus to revolt.

Even the extremely biased author of *A particular account* recognizes the importance of the Ogé affair in establishing a genealogy of the tortured body in Saint Domingue. This speaker, however, characterizes Ogé as a victim of the pitfalls of unifying the free people of color and enslaved populations in the colony. The speaker states that:

Ogé was the was the first victim of this fatal error [the men of color encouraging insurrection among the slaves and disseminating the hope of gaining rights]; one of his brothers, misled by him, declared, on the 9th of March in his death-bed testimony, that, had not the swelling of the rivers prevented the conjunction of the conspirators, eleven thousand rebel negroes were ready to pour down upon the Cape. (21-22)

The speaker refers to Ogé as victimized by the threat of slave insurrection, or even just the rumors of it, rather than by the French, who were certainly responsible for his execution. He also figures Ogé as having been betrayed by his brother, rather than by

French authorities who refused to allow him to participate in negotiations for political rights for free people of color in the colony.

Rainsford recounts a more detailed description of the Ogé affair, the sheer length and detail of which, in comparison to, for example, his attention to Dessalines, speaks to the importance of the event in his narration. Interestingly, Rainsford's account focuses much more on the violence of the Ogé rebellion than do any of his contemporaries, noting that

his two brothers, and another mulatto, of a ferocious character, named Mark Chavane [...] commenced their unruly operations by the murder of two white men, whom they met accidentally, and by punishing with extreme cruelty those of their own complexion not disposed to revolt; one who excused himself on account of a wife and six children, they murdered, with the whole of his family. (84)

Rainsford acknowledges that this initial violence was short-lived, and characterizes what most authors of his time referred to as a conspiracy as more of a set of reactions based upon fear of retaliation. He notes that

the rebellion, though so easily crushed, excited a considerable amount of animosity against the people of colour, who, in turn, as if fearing a retaliation of cruelty, took to arms, and formed camps in different parts of the islands; each of them of greater importance than that of Ogé. (85)

Rainsford notes that the incident incited the white population to “collect themselves in force to oppose them” (85). Despite the dispersal of the camps, it is clear in Rainsford's account that the Ogé affair not only set a precedent for the violence of the insurgents, but also instigated a series of reactions and counter-reactions that continued to accelerate violence in the colony. He later argues that “the death of Ogé [...] afforded a popular subject for the theatres” in France, implying that such performances participated in a similar kind of spectacle to that of Rochambeau's (89). The performative sense of his

death is also touched upon by Wendell Phillips, in his 1861 speech entitled “Toussaint Louverture” who describes Ogé’s execution and dismemberment, morphing the “camps” Rainsford describes into Ogé’s limbs. Phillips reports that “They took Ogé, broke him on the wheel, ordered him to be drawn and quartered, and one quarter of his body to be hanged up in each of the four principal cities of the island” (166). Here, at least by implication, Ogé’s body becomes a metaphor for the spread of revolutionary ideas and actions to other, less localized parts of the colony and his dismemberment becomes emblematic of the spread of the rebellion.

Unlike Rainsford and Phillips, Sir James Barskett manages to avoid the physical aspects of Ogé’s execution, but perhaps in keeping with his sympathies for the planters, focuses more on the violence perpetrated by Ogé’s followers on the white population. He argues that prior to returning to the colony from Paris, Ogé “had been occupied in conjunction with his two brothers in spreading disaffection, and exciting revolt; but Ogé was able to allure only about two hundred followers to his standard, most of whom here undisciplined and totally averse to order” (76). Despite the seeming impossibility of a successful revolt, Barskett notes that his lieutenants “committed many murders and exercised severe despotism with unhesitating cruelty” (76). He repeats almost verbatim Rainsford’s example of the massacre of a man who would not join the cause, along with his family. Barskett notes a quick suppression of the revolt, in which “many of them were killed, about sixty made prisoners, and the rest dispersed” (77). He reports that Ogé and his brothers fled to the Spanish, who delivered them up to the French upon demand. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Barskett describes Ogé showing weakness just before the execution:

He earnestly implored mercy, promising to make great discoveries, if his life was spared: a respite of twenty-four hours was accordingly granted; but it was not then known that he divulged any thing of importance; but it afterwards appeared that he not only made a full confession of the facts already recited, but also disclosed a dreadful plot in agitation, and detailed the measures which the coloured people had adopted to excite the negro slaves to rebellion. (78).

Barskett's rendition of the confession denotes the dubious nature of its veracity, particularly in his afterthought that "for what reasons the evidence was suppressed, has never been satisfactorily explained. Such, however, was the fact; and the wretched Ogé hurried to immediate execution" (78). While his assertion of "fact" in this case seems somewhat doubtful, Barskett himself does not appear to overstate the threat posed by Ogé, as the anonymous author of *A particular account* does, but does imply that the confession, particular because of its suppression, may not have been truthfully recorded.

Rainsford also brings up the confession in a very different light. He reports that

in consequence of a resolution of the General Colonial Assembly, copies of the deposition of Ogé, given during the twenty-four hours he was respited, were obtained from the Register of the council of the Cape, but not till they had been imperiously demanded. By these it was found, that if instead of being suppressed, as beforementioned, the evidence had been promptly and decisively acted upon, all the horrors which had blackened the colony for the last nine months might have been to a great degree, if not entirely, prevented. (101)

Here Rainsford places the reactionary violence that ensued after the Ogé affair at the feet of the colonial government, which instead of taking action, facilitated "dividing the colony of St. Domingo, unconsciously act[ing] against itself" (103).

Interestingly, the first scene of dismemberment Madiou describes is, like many other authors, Ogé's execution. His description, however, contains vivid detail of the torture of his body. Madiou notes that:

At the center of the Place d'Armes was a scaffold with two wheels mounted on it. There the executioners tied [Ogé and Chavanne] with their faces to the sky and redoubled their blows with iron bars, breaking their thighs, legs, arms and kidneys. Calm and resigned, they heard not a single plea [...] The Assembly of the North, lost in the hatred they bore towards men of color, attended to the bodies of the executed like a national festivity. When the victims had closed their eyes, their heads were severed: that of Ogé was displayed on the road to Dondon, his place of birth, and Chavanne's on the road to Grande-Rivière (V. 1, 82).

In the context of the violence that would come later, Madiou's portrayal of the torture of Ogé prefigures his later descriptions of black violence; while he does not explicitly link Ogé's dismemberment to those practiced throughout the Caribbean against rebels in the period, his description is consistent with Vincent Brown's assertion that "placing the bodies of the condemned along well-traveled paths served to haunt those places with memories and narratives of crime and punishment" (136). His graphic description, his later mention of other insurgents from the Ogé affair participating in the general insurrection of 1791 speaks to the importance both he, and according to his accounts, other revolutionaries placed on this event.²⁹ Madiou also goes on to respond to Ogé's characterization in prior accounts, noting that "Many authors and planters purported that Ogé showed weakness during his captivity and the day of his execution pronounced testimony against the principal leaders while kneeling in the presence of the church. Ogé died with a rare heroism and raised the spirit [of revolution]" (V. 1, 82-3). His heroism, for Madiou, was absolutely connected to enduring bodily torture at the hands of the French just as much as to his instigation of both rebellion and political advocacy.

²⁹ Madiou writes that in 1791 during the burning of the Northern Plain, "a man of color named Candy took up arms in the area of Ouanaminthe at the head of a large number their own, many of whom had been condemned in absentia in the Ogé affair" (V. 1, 94)

Madiou goes on to cite Pierre-Gaspard Chaumette's 1802 speech to the National Convention in Paris with its eloquent remembrance of Ogé:³⁰

Ah, especially collect the precious ashes of your faithful friend, the courageous Ogé. He was the first who dared to talk about freedom, strengthened with all the force that virtue and conscience give a free man, he was the first to defy tyranny. Vanquishing without cruelty, he was defeated without showing weakness, and died a great man. Even on the scaffold, his regal bearing and strength of mind seemed to command his vile murderers. Make of him, new men, as simple a monument as your hearts; suspend there trophies of all the infamous attributes of past slavery; burn them to appease his ghost, these words which guarantee your happiness: Decree of the National Convention, which abolished slavery. And you, ashes of Ogé, dear and respectable ashes, receive from free men, just the tribute that deserves to praise your great efforts and the manly virtues you deployed; wait in peace so that the nation which you made boldly reinterpret itself, has to say about your life and your work, its judgment irrevocable (V.I, 230).

Chaumette's language here, at least as Madiou records it, asks his audience to remember Ogé as a man of strength and character, contrasting these virtues with the cruel manner in which the French colonial authorities carried out his execution. Chaumette also calls attention to the significance of Ogé's corporeality by rendering Ogé's remains, as well as physical "trophies" of slavery as symbols of the struggle against slavery in Ogé's time and in Chaumette's as well.³¹ He references the burning of the "trophies" as a means of appeasing Ogé's ghost, effectively eliciting the destruction of symbols of bodily torture in order to free the spirit of another tortured body. Chaumette further fetishizes Ogé's body here by addressing his ashes, and imagining a relationship between his audience's present and Ogé's remains. Chaumette's speech can also be read as an attempt to invert

³⁰ Chaumette was best known as a supporter of dechristianizing movements in the Paris Commune, and was a proponent of following the philosophies of Voltaire and Rousseau in formulating religious and civic policy in revolutionary France. For further discussion of his life and works, see Charles Gliozzo's "The Philosophes and Religion: Intellectual Origins of the Dechristianization Movement in the French Revolution."

³¹ Slavery had been abolished by the French revolutionary government, but was reinstated in Guadeloupe by Napoleon in 1802.

the desecration of Ogé's body; where the colonial leaders who executed and dismembered him used his body as a horrific spectacle, Chaumette suggests that his remains themselves can be used to create a sense of identity rooted in his legacy of virtue rather than his tortured body.

Ardouin, whose work consistently champions the mulatto cause, gives a detailed history of their struggle for rights up until the execution of Ogé. Ardouin situates French violence as central to that struggle, noting that "at Petite-Rivière in Arbonite, not far from Plassac, a detachment of twenty-five whites pursued a mulatto: they did not find him, but assassinated his two young children. At another house, they massacred without pity the father and his children" (V. I, 119). It is in this context that he introduces the Ogé family, noting that his brother was "killed by a white to whom his wife had extended hospitality [...] he was cruel enough to cut off his head and take it to those who had promised to compensate him for these acts" (V. I, 119). Here the cruelty Ardouin identifies is extended, not only by the killing, but by the dismemberment of Ogé brother's body and the selling of his head for the reward. Ardouin links these acts in a very bodily respect to the treatment of slaves, noting that "men of color often had prices on their heads, and the assassins were rushing to earn this honest compensation! Human blood became a sort of merchandise that was paid for in its weight in gold.. The treatment of blacks, was it not already a traffic in human flesh?" (V. I, 120).³² Ardouin also asserts that Chavanne encouraged an alignment between the movement for civil rights and the end of slavery in arguing

³² Madiou also notes several other famous examples of French and Spanish cruelties involving financial compensation in exchange for the bodies of mulatto soldiers. He notes that at during Blanchenade's reign, "the heads of the men of color massacred in the campaigns were brought to Jeremie, where the municipality paid forty gourdes for them and exposed them on spikes at Fort Lapointe " (144).

Until the end, the governor general sided with the *petit-blancs* to maintain the servitude and prejudice against all men of African descent. Chavanne proposed to him to immediately raise the slaves, to come up with them against this supreme reality, responding to the whites' hatred, their barbaric injustice, by the sudden uprisings of two hundred thousand slaves in the North" (V. I, 136).

Ardouin asserts that despite a number of attempts to organize a more widespread armed resistance, Ogé disarmed the free colored population, believing that negotiations were still possible. Ardouin argues that Ogé was arrested because "a butcher named Sicard, who was opposed to the resistance, was killed. It was an assassination. Vincent Ogé did not personally play any part; the crime was not even committed in his presence, and he was blamed for it" (V. I, 139). Ardouin also uses Ogé's own writings to dispute accusations that Ogé did not support the freeing the enslaved population. Despite Ogé's apparent plan to lead an armed insurrection, Ardouin emphasizes his peaceful surrender, implying that part of his heroism was the lack of unnecessary violence he perpetuated.

Ardouin champions Chavanne as a martyr to the cause of liberty, arguing that "Chavanne, on the scaffold, showed the courage of a martyr" (V. I, 151). He notes that Ogé and Chavanne were "sacrificed before the decrees of eternal Providence were made. But, perhaps a human sacrifice was necessary to seal these secrets. In the childhood of their liberty, the people could not remove the need to pay in blood" (V. I, 152). Ardouin notes that for Blanchelande, the French officer who demanded that the Spanish turn Ogé over, "the price of his condescension to all their cruelties, was accused of being with these terrorists and his head was dropped on the scaffold where many illustrious victims perished in 1793" (V. I, 154). Ardouin borrows heavily from Madiou's description of the means of Chavanne and Ogé's executions:

Vincent Ogé and Jean-Baptiste Chavanne were condemned to have their arms, legs, thighs and kidneys broken while still alive, on a scaffold designed for this purpose, *on the side opposite to the place designated for the execution of whites*, and be placed by the executioner on wheels, *facing the sky*, to there as long as stay as it has pleased *God* preserve their lives; this being done *their heads severed and mounted on poles*, namely, that of Vincent Ogé on the road that leads to Dondon, and Jean-Baptiste Chavanne's on the road to Grande-Rivière (V. I, 158)

Here Ardouin asserts that “they perished courageously. The traditions of the country attest that they honored their final days with a heroic resignation” (V. I, 158). Ardouin carefully notes that some reports claimed that Ogé's courage abandoned him, and he begged to exchange information for his life, but argues these claims confused Vincent Ogé with his brother Jacques from whom “the whites pretended to have received a death-bed testimony” (V. I, f.n. 158). Unlike other historians of his time, Ardouin also claims that in an act of revenge for their deaths “pitiless men replaced the heads of Ogé and Chavanne with numerous heads of whites exposed in turn on poles” (V. I, 159). Here, Ardouin stages the display of white bodies as a mirroring of the display of Ogé and Chavanne's bodies, an explanation for black on white violence that bears a strong resemblance to readings of revolutionary violence as a reaction to violence committed against enslaved populations discussed above.

The intense focus on Ogé's execution presents a number of interesting trends in the narration and embellishment of Haitian history. First, Haitian authors used the Ogé affair to establish the propensity of the French to torture and execute the heroes of Haitian history. In doing so, they also established new significations of Haitian bodies and their relationship to the revolutionary cause. Ogé's suffering becomes a rallying point upon which nineteenth-century historians have attempted to unite the factions involved in Haitian struggles for liberty and independence. This unification was both

politically and ideologically necessary, given the intense civil wars waged between the population authors referred to alternately as coloured or as mulatto and the slave insurgents (generally coded as black or African). Next, the purported strength or weakness of Ogé in resisting torture becomes a metaphor for championing or denigrating mulatto rights in these texts. Finally, Ogé's body itself at times stands in for the unified force, in cases where he is said to have shown courage in the face of torture and death, and the spread of insurrection, in cases where his body parts are distributed over the island.

“All the Atrocities of Africa”: Coding Africanness as Violence

The author of *A Particular Account* argues that the various forms of violence, torture, dismemberment and rape reported in the 1791 slave uprisings amount to “a picture of all the atrocities of Africa” that may be visited on the Europeans in the colony (12). This speaker positions Africa as a place of wanton destruction that produced slavery. He argues that

The situation of the negroes, in Africa, without property, without political or civil existence, continually a prey to the weak capricious fury of tyrants, who divide among them that vast uncivilized country, is changed in our colonies for a condition of comfort and enjoyment [...] The men who inhabit *Abyssinia*, *Nubia*, the *Galla*, and the *Fungt* from the coasts of the Indian Ocean to the very frontiers of Egypt, seem to rival, in ferocity and barbarity, the hyaenas and the tigers which nature created there. Slavery is, with them, a title of honour... (16)

While this type of argument is consistent with those of other defenders of African slavery in the United States and in Europe, it hardly presents the notions of Africanness that later Haitian and abolitionist historians of the revolution would espouse. The one parallel that remains consistent with many of the narratives included in the corpus of Haitian historiography at the time is the understanding of an African sensibility, here equated

with “hyaenas and tigers” but elsewhere also considered an internal ferociousness on the part of Afro-Caribbean leaders of the revolution.³³

Where this speaker codes Africa as atrocious, and particularly tied to the body (in most cases, the torturing body), Madiou situates the violence of the revolution very carefully within the context of what he considers African identity, rather than actions attributed to what other historians dismiss as African savagery. Instead of condemning black violence, Madiou invites his readers to consider a series of connected figures ranging from the more radical leaders of the revolution (including Dessalines and Christophe) to the founders of Christianity, uniting each in successive relationships that for him are connected through African genius:

Finally Dessalines, Pétion, Clervaux, Capois, Geffrard, Christophe, achieved our independence, and consummated the work begun by Toussaint Louverture. The history of this struggle praises African ingenuity, a result of this hearty spirit which, in antiquity, dominated the earth, that same spirit that animated Augustine, the Cyprian, fathers of the Church, whose eloquent voices were so preponderant in the triumph of Christianity. The qualities of royal Africans manifested in the midst of these major disasters. What native sensibility! How many vivid new virtues! (V. 1, X)

In a radical, and somewhat dazzling move, Madiou has here shifted the reader’s attention from the physical violence of the war, its actual cost in human lives (presumably human lives that were of great value to his readers) to an African spirit that he links with both royalty and Christianity (a common movement in abolitionist literatures of the time). Jenson argues that “Madiou positioned Dessalines in terms both of an ‘African genius’ running from Saint Augustine to the leaders of the Haitian Revolution and of harmony between different racially privileged groups, among whom Madiou himself had to

³³ For example, Dessalines is repeatedly equated to a tiger in DuBroca’s biography, discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

mediate in his own diverse political roles” (630). While the bodily violence of the revolution here has been eclipsed into a spiritual realm, Madiou ends his introduction by asserting a bodily connection to Haiti’s independence in proclaiming “May we never abandon our love of our country: we have in the Haiti that our fathers founded by their sacrifices our blood, our light and our fortune” (V. I, XII). Despite his earlier attempts to remove the violence of the revolution from the bodily to the spiritual realm, Madiou recognizes the material and corporeal significance of obtaining liberty and independence from France.

The understanding of Africanness as both a spiritual characteristic and an identity carried out through and on bodies is prevalent in the works of nineteenth-century historians. The spiritual nature of African identity, despite Madiou’s moving argument for understanding a transnational, transhistorical African identity, is almost always coded in these texts as “superstition” that takes on a particularly negative valence because of its manipulation by various parties who exercised power over the bodies of Africans. The political aspect of the African identity that gets constructed throughout these texts characterizes Africanized leaders as establishing strict internal discipline, supporting various monarchies, and participating in the selling of prisoners as slaves. The African body here becomes equated with a sort of brute strength, and often a predisposition to torture and dismemberment.

The earliest uprising coded as African in the nineteenth century histories (and generally more emphasized in contemporary histories of the revolution) was the Macandal plot, a mid-eighteenth-century conspiracy to poison planters that predates the

armed uprisings.³⁴ Madiou asserts that prior to the armed uprisings of 1791, “a conspiracy directed by a man named Macandal was almost the only attempt to stifle all of the whites” (V. 1, 35). Madiou asserts that Macandal was both descended from royalty and extremely well educated, reporting that he was an “African of illustrious birth, and had been raised as a Muslim. He was taught, and mastered well the Arabic language” (V. 1, 35). Madiou notes that Macandal was sold into slavery as a prisoner of war in Africa, and had “immense influence in the North over his peers and presented himself to them as a prophet or sorcerer” (V. I, 36). In Madiou’s rendition of the Macandal conspiracy, he had been living in maroonage, and resisting attacks by the *maréchaussée* when he was finally arrested for kidnapping women.³⁵ Here Madiou asserts Macandal’s goals as encompassing the project of much later revolutionaries, including Dessalines in arguing that “it was discovered that he designed an enormous project to exterminate the whites and proclaim liberty and independence of the black race in Saint-Domingue” (V. 1, 36). While Macandal’s goals, at least in Madiou’s history, gain retrospective legitimacy as being consistent with the final outcome of the revolution, his influence also figuratively and, in Madiou’s depiction, literally, outlasts the death of his body. Madiou writes “He was quickly judged and condemned to die by being burnt alive [...] the execution took place in the square at Le Cap, amidst a huge crowd that he continued to terrify, even though he was chained to a pole in the middle of a pyre” (V. I, 36). Here Macandal, who is characterized primarily by his affiliations to an African homeland and religion,

³⁴ Numerous contemporary histories emphasize Macandal’s role as a precedent for later uprisings, including Carolyn Fick’s *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below*, Laurent DuBois’ *A Colony of Citizens*, and *Avengers of the New World*, to name a few.

³⁵ As Malick Ghachem notes, the *maréchaussée* was comprised of units of free men of color led by white colonials that were generally tasked with apprehending fugitive slaves. See Ghachem, p. 113.

continues to terrify the planters even at the hour of his death, implying a spiritual terror that is not at all curbed by the destruction of his body.

Ardouin's treatment of Macandal constructs him as a figure already dismembered by the time he conspired to kill the white planters. He cites Moreau de St. Méry's account that Macandal "lost an arm working in the sugar plantation of Le Normand de Mézy, in the Limbé parish. Macandal went fugitive, and *it was during his desertion, that he became famous for the poisonings*. He was hunted in the woods; he avenged himself in the ways of the weak, which are always cruel" (V. I, 219, emphases original). Hence the impetus for the first slave rebellion, at least in Ardouin's text, begins with a tortured, dismembered body, which becomes a justification for inflicting cruelty on others. While Ardouin does not specify Macandal's fate, he does trace his legacy through both marooned slave camps and August 1791 at Bois-Caïman just before the 1791 slave uprisings: "it appears that the conspirators, in meeting there, wanted to be inspired by the homicidal memory of this ruthless African" (V. I, 235). Hence Macandal's figure stands in not only for an African presence in the revolution, but also for a suffering body whose weakness inspires cruelty in himself and others.

Ardouin gives a detailed description of the famous ceremony at Bois Caïman that traces the relationship between the ceremony and the insurrection as being the result of a misunderstanding of Afro-Caribbean ritual on the part of the slaves:

Boukman also had recourse to the magical influence of fetishism. He led the credulous men to a forest called *Caïman*, situated on the Lenormand de Mézy plantation. There, a priestess plunged her knife into the entrails of a black pig; the victim jumped, the blood streamed, and the conspirators drank it with avidity. Kneeling, Boukman pledged the terrible oath to lead the Company, an oath commanded by the priestess: the other men swore after him in the same attitude, to follow and obey their wills. (V. I, 229)

Ardouin attributes the slave uprisings that ensued as a result of the slaves “badly comprehending Boukman’s explanations” as a call for the deaths of their masters and the destruction of their property. He attributes the first attacks not to adherence to a belief system expressed in the ceremony, but to a nuanced understanding of the relationship between the slaves’ bodies and the masters’ properties, arguing that the slaves “began the insurrection by burning the sumptuous palaces built upon dead bodies, and the rich harvests watered with the blood of these unfortunates” (V. I, 229-230). He also links the conspiracy of the West with that of Caïman through the priestesses he argues were involved in both. Ardouin asserts that “in this isolated house there was a woman, who [...] formed the conspiracy of the West. This is a woman who served as a priestess for the [...] of conspiracy in the North” (V. I, 235). Although Ardouin implies that these women exercised influence over the men in the same way as “in all the great events in the history of nations,” his characterizing them as priestesses who connect both movements signifies the potential for a subversive African influence on both.

Despite the general consensus that the ceremonies were led by Boukman, Madiou attributes the leadership of the ceremony to Biassou, and leaves out any direct connection to religious or spiritual practices. Instead, Madiou situates the singing and dancing in the woods as African, and notes that Biassou declared his inspiration to be God (which he writes as *Dieu*). He also describes Biassou as motivating his followers with the assurance that they if they fell in battle, they would be rejoined with their African tribes:

As the excitement was reached to its height, Biassou, followed by his sorcerer, presented himself to the crowd and exclaimed that the spirit of God inspired him. He announced to the Africans that they succumbed in battle, they would be revived in their ancient tribes in Africa. So frightful cries reached far into the woods, the dark songs and drumming began again, and enjoying these moments

of exaltation, Biassou pushed his bands against the enemy he surprised in the night. (V. I, 96)

Madiou's reading of the ceremony then, even while the drumming and the mention of "sorcerers" imply the sort of religious ceremony that other historians famously recount, attributes the ceremonial aspect of Bois-Caïman to Biassou's manipulation of his troops' "superstitions" rather than to a potentially empowering ritual. The fact that Madiou cites Biassou's assurances of life after death in an African homeland speaks to Madiou's understanding of the religious aspect of the ceremony, one which is particularly tied to the death of the body and the life of the spirit. It also speaks to the ways in which Madiou recognizes the exploitation of spiritual beliefs surrounding the body and the spirit by leaders of the early revolutionary battles.

Louis DuBroca provides a detailed, if not particularly well substantiated rendition of Boukman's death in a detailed footnote which places Boukman as the predecessor of Dessalines in both spirit, and as will be discussed in the next chapter, manner of death. Although he does not, rather surprisingly, describe the ceremony at Bois-Caïman, DuBroca identifies Boukman as "the first leader of the blacks who distinguished himself in this career of crimes" and a "ferocious tiger" (f.n. 12).³⁶ He asserts that Boukman was killed near Cap Français, in an unspecified manner. DuBroca notes however that

His head was taken, on a pike, to the middle of the *place d'armes* in the city, with a placard bearing these words : *Head of Boukman, Chief of the Rebels*. Never had a decapitated head preserved such expression. His eyes were open and seemed to again give his troops the signal to massacre. (f.n. 12-13)

³⁶ "*Tigre Féroce*" was a favorite appellation of several nineteenth-century historians, including Pierre Etienne Chazotte, W.W Harvey and Louis DuBroca, who uses it repeatedly to describe Dessalines as well.

DuBroca's terrifying description of Boukman's head implies here a secondary kind of power that he acquires after death; instead of functioning as a warning to other rebels, DuBroca positions the exposure of his head as a potentially empowering sight for them, and one which seems calculated to horrify white spectators.

After Macandal and Boukman's deaths, particular leaders emerge among the insurgents who are coded by various characterizations of Africanness, including Biassou, Jeannot, Jean-François, and to some extent, Toussaint Louverture and Jean-Jacques Dessalines.³⁷ Louis DuBroca, who repeatedly refers to Dessalines as "this ferocious African," characterizes a number of the massacres inflicted by Biassou's army as being connected to cruelty and "superstition" that are, for him, specifically African. DuBroca characterized Biassou's army as particularly prone to "superstition," which in his parlance, and that of many other nineteenth century historians, including Madiou and Ardouin, stands as a derogatory term for Afro-Caribbean religious practices. He argues, "These Africans, plunged in the most profound ignorance, and consequently excessively superstitious, regarded [Biassou] as inspired and invincible" (28). Madiou also describes Jean-François and Biassou's troops as primarily African, and links their origins to both excessive discipline and cruelty. In his discussion of Jean-François and Biassou's regiments, Madiou asserts that

Jean-François and Biassou led bands composed of Congos, Mandingos, Ibos, Senegalese, etc. through their superior intelligence and superstition. They established among themselves severe discipline and showed themselves as proud and cruel to their masters as their masters had been to them. (V. I, 96).

³⁷ Historians' treatment of the bodies and identities of Louverture and Dessalines are to be included in the next chapter, and thus will not be discussed below.

Here Madiou asserts that both leaders were extremely intelligent, and their intelligence enabled them to use their “superstition” particularly well to control African troops. He also implies that the bodily forms of discipline to which the African troops were subjected under these leaders were somewhat justified because of their direct relationship to the tortures these insurgents had incurred at the hands of the French.

Madiou revisits the theme of return to Africa after death in describing the doomed attacks on Croix-des-Bouquets at the end of March 1791, in which the insurgents, poorly armed, suffered massive losses. Madiou writes that “the Blacks, not their fanatical sorcerers, ran cheerfully to their deaths, believing they would be resurrected in Africa” (V. I, 131). Here Madiou constructs the apparent practitioners of unspecified African ritual (here identified as sorcerers) as manipulators of black bodies. He also refers to Hyacinthe, the leader of the band of insurgents that attacked Croix-des-Bouquets as reviving the ardor of the troops by

waving his bulls tail while shouting ‘Forward! Bullets are dust’ At the same time facing death, he sprang to their head in the midst of bullets and shrapnel. The insurgents were seen seizing the pieces of artillery, embracing them, and get killed without letting go. Another stuffed his arm into the barrel of a cannon to stop the shots, and cried out to his peers: come come, we hold. The army parted and was swept away (V. 1, 132).

Here the insurgents appear inspired by Hyacinthe’s bravery, which Madiou links to his practice of “sorcery,” and their courage leads to what may be considered a successful assault, despite the apparent loss of lives.

Madiou’s characterization of the Africanness of the revolutionaries takes an interesting turn in his discussion of the insurgents in Cul-de-Sac, who, in 1794, were led by “an African named Halaou, of a gigantic size and Herculean strength” (V. 1, 234).

Madiou states

He reigned over his troops by superstition, holding a large white cock who passed on to him, he claimed, the will of the heaven. He walked preceded by the music of drums, conch shells and trumpets and his sorcerers or papas, chanted that he was invulnerable, that cannons were nothing but bamboo and gunpowder was only dust. His guard carried long oxtails that were said to repel bullets. (V. I, 234)

Madiou recounts that Halaou was received by Sonthonax, the Civil Commissioner, reporting that “it would be difficult to describe the joy, pride and enthusiasm of these bands of Ibo, Congos, Dahomets and Senegalese, when they saw their supreme leader almost naked, covered in fetishes, holding his white cock at his side, sitting near the representative of France, who was covered with tricolor ribbons” (V. I, 235). Here Madiou emphasizes the cultural differences between the leaders on a visual level, maintaining that Halaou’s body was marked with his Africanness, where Sonthonax’s was literally garbed in the colors of France. Madiou writes that in February 1794, Sonthonax convinced Halaou that Bauvais, a free colored military leader who was then surrounded at Croix-des-Bouquets, was the enemy of black freedom. Madiou writes that Halaou and his troops went to Croix-des-Bouquets at Bauvais’ invitation and walked into a massacre in which his “superstitions” played no small part. Halaou was held hostage and executed with a single shot, and that the battle that ensued became a massacre because his troops, believing in spiritual means of protection, were inadequately armed. He notes that

The soldiers rushed the insurgents and the bloodiest battle began. The newly free, forming dense crowds were shot point blank. They waved their oxtails they waved and shouted Halaou! Halaou! to divert, disappear, and sweep away the bullets in the distance. The newly free, poorly armed, lost entire lines [of fighters] to the bullets, and abandoned Croix-des-Bouquets where the streets and ditches were already filled with corpses. Finally, Halaou’s troops, terrified by the death of their leader who believed was invulnerable, and the disappearance of the white cock that passed, in their eyes, for a celestial spirit, took flight in all directions and scattered in the mountains. (V. I, 236)

Here, Madiou shows little understanding of the complex system of beliefs held by the African troops and highlights the inadequacy of the belief system to protect the troops just as much as he describes Sonthonax's manipulation. Rather than serving as a source of actual strength, the spiritual beliefs of the soldiers operate as a weak point through which they become vulnerable to slaughter.

The African leaders of the early insurrections also frequently supported royalist and republican causes, an affiliation that nineteenth-century Haitian historians link to political traditions in their countries of origin. Ardouin specifically asserts that African origins rendered the insurgents particularly vulnerable to exploitation by the royalist factions in Saint Domingue. Ardouin relies upon Kerverseau, a French general who arrived with the Rochambeau expedition and captured a portion of the Spanish territories of Santo Domingo, to explain the causes of affiliations between the African insurgents and the royalists in Saint Domingue. Kerverseau attributes this movement to Louverture's manipulations as well as an affinity between both parties' political beliefs:

There is one thing that is sure, that [Louverture] skillfully moved Africans, who were naturally predisposed to the idolatry of monarchy and striking in the name of a king and the brilliance of a throne, than to the majesty of a republic, an idea to which they are for the most part unable to aspire to. (V. I, 231)

The connection between Africanness, republicanism, and vulnerability to manipulation is clear; interestingly Ardouin does not particularly align Louverture's republicanism with a perception of African origins or sensibilities, but rather with astute, if misguided, political maneuvering.

Madiou also links Biassou and Jean-François' Africanness to their support of the monarchies of France and Spain, arguing that they

declared themselves and their officers the avengers of Louis XVI, the soldiers of the King of Spain, the majority of them, agitating against the Republicans, who seemed to be implacable enemies of the black race, fought to reestablish slavery, under the influence of priests, preferring the old order of things which had dominion over those who were considered murderers of the King of France, Jesus Christ, and the Virgin. They even said that the king of Congo was armed against Republicans. (V. I, 176)

Ardouin argues that the alliances between Biassou, Jean François, Toussaint Louverture and the Spanish were also attributable to the black leaders' ambitions to hold titles of royalty. He notes that "in their eyes, the quality of a *French citizen*, did not have the valor that the titles of *baron, count, marquis*, etc. which they undoubtedly believed they could aspire to" (V. II, 198). He also notes that during their service to Spain,

disorder was at its height [...]; pillage and assassination were the order of the day. All while declaring themselves the protectors of the White royalists, both chefs slaughtered and robbed from time to time. The Spanish government, afraid to lose them, pardoned it all. It retained them at great expense. (V. 1, 253)

This comment of course, situates their behavior in opposition to Louverture's, but also identifies the Spanish government as complicit in their activities. Madiou also reports that troops named for African origins, in particular "a regiment from Arbonite named *Congos tout nus*" was renowned for its violence and sold heads at the same price to the Spanish, who displayed them to terrorize the Republicans.³⁸ In both cases, the slaughters were carried out by troops of free men of color, in the second associated with an African past, and in both used as a European means of inflicting terror on domestic enemies. This

³⁸ This name denotes two potential translations. The first is literally, "the Naked Congos," the second, a possibility because the French "nous" could have been creolized, is "We are all Congos."

may well have also been related to the common colonial practice of displaying bodies in order to disrupt beliefs in return to an African homeland after death, as discussed above.

The presence of African troops of insurgents becomes more problematic in Madiou and Ardouin's accounts because they are characterized as maintaining a reactionary stance against the push for independence, which at least by implication, is read as a continuation of their propensity towards monarchism. Ardouin also recognizes the Congos as a threatening, resistant military presence much later in the battle for independence, asserting that

it was necessary to use force to obtain submission or get rid of some of them because each of them represented a kind of African tribe, and [they] did not think of organizing the insurrection in this barbaric aspect [...] The Congos and generally the blacks of Guinea, were masters of the neighborhoods in Grande-Rivière, Dondon and were just as willing to fight the troops who had abandoned the French as the French themselves. (V. 5, 262)

Ardouin's references to African nations and tribes are substantially less detailed than Madiou's, but consistent with trends that Deborah Jenson points out in the recognition of tribal affiliations, asserting that "in revolutionary-era historiography, the few identity categories that were frequently mentioned were sometimes bona fide labels for the largest demographic rubrics, but more often they were rhetorical figures for a general idea of Africanness or blackness" (619). Despite Ardouin's implication that the bands were poorly organized and "barbaric," even by his admission they presented a subversive threat to the movement for independence.

Madiou also recognizes African leadership in the battles for independence as resisting the violence and cruelty practiced on all sides of the struggle. He argues that many African fighters "refused to be commanded by creole blacks. They were indignant

at the colonial troops, who they considered the most horrible agents of France” (396).³⁹ He notes that they refused to adopt the standard military order of Dessalines’ troops, instead “they fought, as in Africa, divided into tribes and preceded by their sorcerers and the emblems of their superstition” (396). Although Madiou argues that their resistant movement within the insurgent forces slowed the achievement of independence, this group presents one example of coding Africanness as an opposition to cruelty, which he asserts that they associated with the French.

While contemporary historians of Haiti’s revolution have uncovered a great deal of evidence that points to a distinctive African presence in several of the conflicts of the Haitian revolutionary period, the corpus of nineteenth-century histories reveals that presence as one in which Africa becomes redefined in a number of surprising ways. Haitian historians of the nineteenth century, nearly as dismissive in understanding various practices associated with Afro-Caribbean spiritual beliefs as “superstitious” add the understanding that these beliefs were frequently manipulated in order to gain access to military assets, including African soldiers willing to fight at alarmingly poor odds. Hence this “superstition” is coded as a form of weakness that in some cases gave way to physical strength, which also valorizes the power of belief in some of the followers of West African religions. Setting aside the issue of religious belief, several nineteenth-century historians also characterize Africans as reactionary in terms of considering political allegiances, arguing that their alliances with republicans signaled a cultural preference for monarchy, rather than a shrewd political maneuver. In the end, the

³⁹ Madiou uses the term “Noirs créoles” in this instance, most likely to designate blacks born on the island. The terminology he uses here is rare in the history, indicating a juxtaposition between groupings of black insurgents that was neither necessary nor maintained before this point in the revolutionary period.

African fighters are characterized as powerful but divisive figures who must be alternately crushed or incorporated into the new nation in order for the final push for independence to be achieved.

Remembering and Dismembering the Body: A Haitian Legacy

In the context of the revolutionary period, where countless lives were lost due to war, famine, and disease, and an absolutely immeasurable number of bodies injured and tortured, it is not surprising that early histories and narratives would focus on the bodily spectacles of wartime. However, the history of the tortured body in Saint Domingue reveals a much more powerful pattern than simply a horrified or traumatized remembrance of war. In revolutionary Saint Domingue and in the new nation of Haiti, the tortured body becomes emblematic of the very material motivations for continuing to fight prolonged, bloody wars despite alarmingly poor odds of success. The tortured body in this context signifies not only of the violence born out through a history of African slavery, but of a series of specific acts committed by the French colonial government throughout the period that began with the execution of Vincent Ogé. The torture of black bodies under both slavery and colonial rule reaches its apex in the treatment of dead black bodies, which were often further mutilated and exhibited for various purposes. The violence of the early insurgents reappropriated the moving image of the tortured black body and made similar spectacles out of white bodies, creating a powerful “tableau” that imprinted the memory of “the horrors of Saint Domingue” throughout the Atlantic world. Horrified European audiences reacted vehemently to this tableau, especially as it was reinvigorated by the narratives of Europeans who traveled to the colony and later Haitian historians themselves. Part of this backlash was in understanding forms of cruelty as

linked to a barbaric past in Africa, even while the memory of Africa and its traditions became a source of empowerment for Haitians themselves.

While identifiable patterns of treating the suffering and dismembered black body arise in general in the nineteenth-century witness narratives and histories, the rearticulation of these patterns is much more pronounced in the historical, fictional, and cultural responses to the bodies of the revolution's most prominent black leaders, Toussaint Louverture and Jean-Jacques Dessalines. While these leaders encompass both the strength of will and weakness of the body we see foreshadowed in descriptions of Ogé, their representations in literary works and oral traditions further the relationship between suffering, dismembered bodies and a powerful legacy of liberty and independence in Haiti. The following chapter turns to examining nineteenth-century Haitian literary treatments of Toussaint Louverture's life and excruciating death at Fort de Joux, and the survival of Jean-Jacques Dessalines as a disembodied spirit in the Vodou cosmology.

Chapter 2: Re-Imagining Revolutionary Bodies: From Toussaint the Suffering to Dessalines the Disembodied

While the last chapter considered the general treatment of living and dead bodies as a means of working through notions of civilization, savagery, and freedom, this chapter turns to works written about and by Toussaint Louverture and Jean-Jacques Dessalines to examine the dual understandings of the body that arose from these leaders' writings and legacies. In *Beyond the Slave Narrative*, Deborah Jenson proposes reading political writings, including letters and proclamations as foundational to formulating a specifically Haitian literary canon. These archival documents, which Jenson argues transcend strict boundaries between the political and the literary, portray distinctive relationships between the body and the spirit that are deeply related to reimagining liberty and sovereignty in the new nations. They also serve as a basis for understanding literary treatments of the body in Haitian works. While scholarly work on documents from the Haitian revolutionary period has uncovered infamous examples of the metaphor of the body in the letters of revolutionary leaders, this chapter juxtaposes treatments of Louverture and Dessalines' own figuring of their bodies in letters and proclamations with the ways in which they are figured in the earliest writings of and about Haiti, the histories of the revolution.⁴⁰ Juxtaposing later nineteenth-century historians' and abolitionists' treatments of Louverture and Dessalines with these leaders' own writings exposes the variety of ways in which historians and biographers, many of whom established mythologies surrounding their motivations, understandings of liberty and methods of

⁴⁰ Without negating the possibility of earlier creative Haitian works, this chapter turns to archives of other genres of writing because they were much more widely read than other Haitian texts. Under the colonial system, there was no opportunity for publication in Haiti, and the system of slavery and disenfranchisement impeded access to literacy in general and made the creation and dissemination of creative texts impractical, to say the least.

establishing sovereign power. Louverture and Dessalines' own writings create an alternative set of significations of the body and its relationship to violence and independence that profoundly influenced nineteenth-century Haitian and U.S. literatures.

In the wake of British and U.S. abolition movements and the U.S. civil war, the mid nineteenth century saw a renewal of interest in Haiti and its leaders. The figure of Toussaint Louverture became a focal point for writers on both sides of the heated debates over black intellectual equality and abolition. In 1853, Joseph St. Rémy dedicated his publication of the memoirs of Toussaint Louverture, in which he included a brief history and critique and an appendix of Napoleon's thoughts on Saint Domingue, to Harriet Beecher Stowe. St. Rémy's introduction to his work creates a template for the ways in which the history of the Haitian Revolution, and particularly the figure of Toussaint Louverture, were reorganized and framed for a universal adoption into the rhetoric of U.S. and British abolition movements. St. Rémy begins to do this by offering Louverture's memoirs as an homage to Beecher Stowe, in his "capacity as a member of the oppressed race for whom [she had] so generously and happily taken up the cause," an elegy in which he alludes to racial categories as transnational, and explicitly links the end of slavery in Haiti to the abolitionist cause in the United States (5).

St.-Rémy begins Louverture's memoirs with a visual representation of Louverture in profile marked with a seal that asks "Does the color of my body damage my honor and my courage?"(2).⁴¹ The characteristics of honor and courage are ironically juxtaposed to the black body, providing a telling example of one of the ways in which embodiment played a singular role in creating a particular mythology of Toussaint Louverture. This visual representation marks a striking contrast with the author's initial recognition of

⁴¹ *La Couleur de Mon Corps Nuit-Elle a Mon Honneur et a Ma Bravoure?*

Stowe as a “daughter of heaven,” implying that while her motivations for involvement in the abolition movement in the United States are connected to her ideology, whereas Louverture’s arise from material circumstances. St.-Rémy’s text provides a clear example of the ways in the materiality and the significations of the Louverture’s body became the means through which both Louverture himself and his biographers struggled to understand his role in achieving an end to slavery and colonial rule in Haiti.

Other British and U.S. abolitionists used similar tropes in their presentation of Louverture. For example, the Reverend John Beard’s *The Life of Toussaint Louverture, Negro Patriot of Hayti* (1853) uses Louverture’s biography to champion black freedom and intellectual equality, and does so through emphasizing both his physical attributes and his purported African identity. Wendell Phillips’ lecture “Toussaint Louverture” (1861) also valorizes Louverture in much the same way. Both intellectuals were ardent abolitionists and overtly sought to dispel myths of black inferiority, but both attempts to do so created specific narratives that were intimately connected with Louverture’s body and his treatment of other bodies. Among these were an insistence on Louverture’s pure African lineage, his skills as a healer, which was often considered in relation to that lineage, his role as a protector of white bodies, and a mild critique of the execution of a member of his own family. Written later in the nineteenth century by Samuel Hazard, *Santo Domingo, Past and Present, with a Glance at Hayti* (1873), despite an apparently neutral stance towards Haitian independence, provides an interesting reading of Louverture and Dessalines as vengeful figures who, like the leaders of the early insurrections discussed in the previous chapter, abused white bodies in retaliation for French atrocities. Spencer St. John’s *Hayti, or the Black Republic* (1889), a text

notorious for its allegations of cannibalism in Vodou ritual, is heavily invested in promulgating racial stereotypes, and does so through a series of conflicting depictions of the bodies of Louverture and Dessalines and their treatment of other (generally white) bodies. Despite the clear ideological differences between these later nineteenth-century writers and their abolitionist and Haitian counterparts, these texts reiterate understandings of the materiality and signification of these leaders' bodies that had already begun to emerge, and understand the body as intimately related to Haitian sovereignty and liberty in the new nation's literatures.

Historians interested in abolition cause and in what were later considered anti-Haitian movements alike understood Toussaint Louverture as a suffering black body who in many ways emblemized the fate of the new nation. Jean-Jacques Dessalines, who was also a former slave and played a much more radical role than Louverture in asserting the independence of the new nation, was often cast by historians as ordering executions and tortures. Interestingly, as Joan Dayan points out, Dessalines' disembodied spirit later entered the Vodou cosmology as a *lwa* known as "*Ogou Desalin*," "*Dessalines démembre*" or "*Dessalines demanbre*." Dayan argues that while taken literally, "*démembre/ demanbre*" translates to "dismembered," but that ethnographers have also translated the term as "powerful." Interestingly, Dayan attributes the sense of power non-Haitian ethnographers locate in the term "*démembre/ demanbre*" to their etymological relationship to "*dénombrer/dénommer*" or to count or name, which she reads as powerful actions (31).

I would suggest here that the kind of power Dessalines gains in ascension as a *lwa* is not readily associated with the acts of counting or naming, but rather with the act of

shedding the confines of the body. Dayan points out that a number of nineteenth-century Haitian historians, including Madiou and Ardouin emphasized the events surrounding Dessalines' death and dismemberment, creating narratives surrounding disembodiment that would continue to thrive in later Haitian literary works and Vodou cosmology. The countless rituals, songs, and other forms of oral tradition emphasize Dessalines as a disembodied figure, linking his *lwa* with war, attachment to land, and an African past, which Dayan argues recall Dessalines' profound influence on notions of race, land ownership, and sovereignty. Certainly his apotheosis signals a movement away from all of the significations non-Haitians attributed to his body and his violence, and towards a non-corporeal realm where his ideological contributions become the basis for his legacy.

The literary and cultural treatments of both figures allow for a fruitful reading of embodiment in Haitian contexts that begins not only with these leaders themselves, but also with their characterization by the earliest historians and writers of Haiti. This chapter argues that Toussaint Louverture and Jean-Jacques Dessalines emphasized specific aspects of materiality and signification of the body that directly opposed those of their nineteenth-century biographers. Mid to late nineteenth-century writers created a mythology of Louverture through which his motivations arose from various relationships to the material conditions of his own body and the bodies around him; a weak child, he suffered as a slave, and translated that material experience, along with a valorized African sensibility, into his work as a healer and a leader. Conversely, Dessalines' motivations are cast as a negative response to a demonized African past and a spirit of vengeance born out of the material experience of enslavement. I argue below that despite the ways in which mid-nineteenth century historians and biographers embodied these

leaders and understood their contribution as arising from bodily experience, Louverture and Dessalines themselves understood their own motivations and legacies through formulations of disembodiment. Their unique sense of the empowerment that arises from disembodiment, or separating the spirit from the material conditions of the body, carries through into early Haitian literary texts, including the first piece of Haitian prose fiction, Ignace Nau's "Isalina" (1837), which positions the zombi as a means of resisting physical and social constraints in the new nation of Haiti.

Toussaint Louverture: From Superman to Savior to Suffering Body

While historians of the mid-nineteenth century for the most part agree on some basic aspects of Louverture's early years, at least those that were recorded in plantation registers and army records, their depictions of his body, his physical appearance and his treatment of other bodies vary a great deal. Several aspects of Louverture's personality are framed in terms of their relationships to his physical body; he is reported to have overcome his own physical frailty by sheer force of will and his lack of education by a natural inclination to acquire knowledge; his compassion is coded as a response to the suffering he endured and witnessed as a slave; his ordering and enacting violence in the final push for independence were said to have inflicted caused his own and others' bodily suffering. The characterizations of Louverture that emerge in a variety of histories, biographies, and narratives can be read as an arc of human suffering, beginning with his enslavement, moving towards his healing abilities and role as protector of the whites, a turn to inflicting suffering on others, an intense focus on his physical suffering at the hands of the French in his final weeks.

The profound influence of the body on defining Louverture's legacy can be found in his very name. Here the emphasis on Louverture's name as associated with his body, rather than his legacy, comes directly from nineteenth-century Haitian historians, and was rarely, if at all, referenced by his later biographers. Madiou asserts that Touissant Louverture was named "according to some because one of his broken incisors made an opening when he laughed" (V. I, 118). To this, Madiou adds a footnote that links the broken tooth to physical markers of slavery, commenting that "Before 1789, it was said in the Northern province, that a mouth resembled the barrier or opening of Breda [Louverture's birthplace], when it was stripped of incisors. In the Western province, one said 'barrier' or 'opening of Brâche' to designate a slave who had been deprived of his front teeth" (V. I, f.n. 118).⁴² Madiou also offers the more common explanation of his name as being attributed to his "being one of the first with whom Blanchelande made an opening in the plan for general insurrection, as we have seen: he opened a new era for his brothers" (V. I, 118).⁴³ One explanation links his identity to a legacy of enslavement inscribed on his body, and the other, to his ability to negotiate complex political relationships, a non-corporeal signification.

Ardouin makes a similar set of claims, implying that the most widely accepted narrative surrounding Louverture's name was actually disputed by eyewitness testimony of those who knew him. First Ardouin notes that "It was claimed that it after taking

⁴² Deborah Jenson also points out that "dental shaping" was a significant marker of African collective identities, including specific allegiances to tribe or nation (619).

⁴³ Philibert François Rouxel de Blanchelande was the Governor of Saint Domingue at the outbreak of the insurrections, and let French forces against Boukman. He was, however, executed by the French for treason in 1793.

Dondon, Polvérel had said: ‘This man makes an opening everywhere’” (V. I, 226).⁴⁴ He goes on to question whether Louverture may have changed his name “on humbler grounds,” noting that “Sonthonax's widow, who knew Toussaint during his enslavement, told one of our friends that Toussaint Louverture was called this before taking up arms; the nickname that had been given to him at the Breda plantation, because he was missing several teeth in the front of his mouth” (V. I, f.n. 226-227). Ardouin, perhaps following Madiou’s lead, also conflates the dual, conflicting characterizations of Louverture through his name; he is alternately defined by his enslavement and the suffering that marked his own body and by his abilities as a diplomat in the service of protecting white bodies. In 1861, Wendell Phillips, a prominent abolitionist whose speech on Louverture uses his life and accomplishments to champion black intellectual equality in the antebellum United States, also attributes Louverture’s name to his saving of French lives, asserting that after rescuing General Etienne Laveaux, the interim Governor-General of Saint Domingue, from prison “the grateful French in return named him General in Chief. ‘*Cet homme fait L’ouverture partout,*’ said one – ‘This man makes an opening everywhere,’ – hence his soldiers named him Louverture, *the opening*’” (171).⁴⁵ Phillips may have chosen this particular etymology because Louverture’s intervention on Laveaux’s behalf was well known, and posed Louverture as being identified with a positive act of mercy rather than a negative legacy of slavery; however, Madiou and Ardouin’s inclusion of both explanations, the material and the ideological, illustrate the split between the ways in which mid-nineteenth-century historians and biographers

⁴⁴ Étienne Polvérel was one of the French Revolutionary Civil Commissioners in Saint Domingue, a position he shared with Sonthonax.

⁴⁵ Madiou, Laurent, and Ardouin maintain this spelling of his name, although he is also referred to as Lavaux in some contemporary texts.

embodied Louverture and the ways in which Louverture himself chose to present his motivations and legacy to the public.

The circumstances of Louverture's birth and his years as a slave are fairly consistent among nineteenth-century historians, and while most admit that the details surrounding the first 50 years of his life are for the most part unknown, Louverture's childhood and education are subjected to particular narratives that betray at the least an intense focus on his body's "natural inclinations" as the bases for his later success as a leader. Historians emphasized, for a number of reasons, Louverture's African origins. The trend of Africanizing Louverture as a means of valorizing him was popularized after Madiou's publication, particularly in texts that were written in support of abolitionism in Europe and the United States. In 1853, only a few years after Madiou's history was published, Reverend John Beard's biography acknowledged the "hope of affording some aid to the sacred cause of freedom" as his inspiration of publishing the text (v). Perhaps in keeping with his assertion that the text is intended to serve the abolitionist cause and speak for the black community, Beard goes on to establish Louverture's racial identity and tie him to African origins, stating "We wish emphatically to mark the fact that he was wholly without white blood. Whatever he was, and whatever he did, he achieved all in virtue of qualities which in kind are common to the African race" (24). He then goes on to claim a royal African descent for Louverture, a move not inconsistent with other literary texts of the time who championed the figure of the royal African in captivity.⁴⁶ Beard also claims a more specific familial history for Louverture than Madiou, linking him as well to the Arradas:

⁴⁶ The trope of the African prince in captivity was popularized by Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko* in 1668, and was reconstituted in a number of later texts, including Olaudah Equiano's narrative, in which the author claimed to have been the son of an Igbo chief.

The Arradas were a powerful tribe of negroes, eminent for mental resources, and of an indomitable will, who occupied a part of Western Africa. In a plundering expedition undertaken by a neighboring tribe, a son of the chief of the Arradas was made captive. His name was Gaou-Guinou. Sold to slave-dealers, he was conveyed to Hayti, and became the property of the Count de Breda [...] The eldest of his sons was Toussaint Louverture. (24)

Perhaps as a further means of Africanizing Louverture, Beard notes that he “continu[ed] to speak in his own African tongue, which was used in his family” well into his formative years (25). While earlier historians, including Madiou, maintain that Louverture’s family may have been recently transported to Saint Domingue, the details Beard adds surrounding his father’s capture and his own cultural ties to Africa appear to have been added in service to the author’s stated goal of disproving theories of black inferiority.

Like other abolitionist writers, Phillips also begins by asserting that Louverture was “an unmixed Negro, with no drop of white blood in his veins” (163). This assertion creates a clear racially-based connection between Louverture and other African Americans, obfuscating differences of nationality that might present that Louverture as an exceptional figure to audiences outside of Haiti. Phillips also links Louverture to an African past in a way that most biographers of his time did not, arguing that “He had been born a slave on a plantation in the north of the island, an unmixed Negro, his father stolen from Africa” (170). Phillips also clarifies that Louverture’s literacy, which was an issue of contention, arose as a result of his association with “an old Negro [who] taught him to read,” an assertion that implies that no European intervention was responsible for his education (170). Here both his literacy and his commitment to ending slavery on the island are attributable to his African origins. While in Haitian historians’ eyes, Louverture could claim a distinctively Haitian identity in which his African ancestry was

neither exceptional nor noteworthy, U.S. and British abolitionists may have chosen to highlight it because it tended to construct Louverture as a transnational black figure, rather than one produced under specific circumstances in Saint Domingue.

This explanation also speaks to abolitionists' tendency to consider the material aspects of Louverture's enslavement key factors in the characteristics associated with Louverture as a leader. Along with citing Louverture's Africanness, Beard understands his bodily experience of slavery as the primary motivator for his entry into the revolutionary cause, noting that, while enslaved, Louverture "formed the first dim conception of the misery of servitude, and the need of a liberator" (27). Of the "grim proofs" of slavery's miseries that Beard describes, the most detailed and graphic are the "twang of the driver's whip [...] and the blood streaming from the negro's body" (27). Despite what many authors characterize as Louverture's "gentle" initiation into enslavement, Beard acknowledges that the scenes of bodily torture are both inherent in the system of slavery, and necessary in formulating Louverture's goals. Beard argues that Louverture did not attempt to buy his freedom, supposing that he "may have felt no attraction towards a class whose superiority was more nominal than real [or] he may have resolved to remain in a class whose emancipation he hoped some day to achieve" (29). Here Beard anachronistically links Louverture's goals in his early years to those he would espouse almost half a century later, suggesting a very different, and radically unlikely reading of Louverture's enslavement than any of the other historians of the early nineteenth century.

Although his work generally dismisses any notions of Haitian and black equality, St. John also suggests that Louverture's character and actions problematized notions of black inferiority, arguing that

Amid the many heroes whose actions the Haytians love to commemorate, Toussaint Louverture does not hold a high rank; and yet the conduct of this black was so remarkable as almost to confound those who declare the negro an inferior creature incapable of rising to genius. (47)

It is interesting to note that St. John implies that Haitians in the late nineteenth century did not appropriately honor Louverture's legacy, and by extension, and thus were unexceptionally inferior. The juxtaposition between the heroic Louverture and the Haitians St. John mentions renders him the "remarkable" exception to the rule in St. John's understanding. The apparent respect St. John expresses for Louverture appears for him to be related to his origins, which St. John asserts are African, rather than Haitian. St. John argues that although Louverture was "a slave from birth; it has been redoubted whether he was of pure negro race. His grandfather was an African prince, but if we may judge from the portraits, he was not of the pure negro type" (47-48). Here St. John leaves open the possibility, as other authors like Beard have claimed, that Louverture's genius was tied to noble African heritage, but also the possibility that his "impure" blood might account for his later actions.

These historians also tended to consider Louverture's presumed role as a protector of white bodies to have arisen from his experiences as a healer, which in many accounts were explicitly linked to an African past. Beard comments that Louverture's medical skills were a result of the teachings of his father, who "like many Africans was familiar with the healing virtues of many plants" (27). According to Beard, throughout

Louverture's lifetime of enslavement "he had full time to become acquainted with [slaves'] sufferings as well as their capabilities," consolidating Louverture's political goals, by implication, well before the revolution ensued (25). Ardouin makes a similar, if less direct connection between Louverture's medical knowledge and both an African and revolutionary past. Ardouin notes that part of Louverture's training in his position as a slave was

not only in the treatment of animals, but also that of men; he possessed knowledge of the simples, the plants that were used for good and also the poisons. Like Macandal, in the North, who had also known about their usage, in the eyes of many of the blacks in that province, Toussaint Louverture was considered and respected as a new *Macandal*" (V. II, 445)

Here Louverture's practice of medicine gains particular relevance in relation to Macandal's, particularly as, even during Louverture's enslavement, it granted him specific abilities to influence life and death. In Macandal's case, these abilities were directly put into use in a poisoning plot that is widely considered one of the earliest movements of slave resistance in Haiti, and in Louverture's, they become a signifier of his potential to protect bodies against the violence that later ensued.

St. John continues his focus on Louverture's practice of medicine in a number of meaningful ways, none of which are nearly as subversive as Ardouin's. Interestingly, St. John focuses on the ways in which his work as a healer taught him restraint against the actions St. John suggests are normative for black insurgents. First, he reads Louverture's practice of medicine throughout his early years in the army as having "kept him free from the savage excesses of his companions, who were acting with more than ordinary barbarity" (49). Here Louverture's well-accepted dealings with bodies as a healer are read as overcoming his propensity to less acceptable dealings with bodies in the form of

“savage excesses,” St. John attributes to the “ordinary barbarity” of his companions, presumably actions that ranged from debauchery to rape and murder. St. John also comments on Louverture’s continued attention to suffering bodies throughout the revolutionary era, noting that “even the enemies of the great black general are full of admiration for the courage displayed by him during all this important struggle, and especially dwell on his devotion to his wounded officers” (68). Here Louverture becomes not only an ideal of chastity, but his continuous attention to the care of bodies even much later in the revolutionary struggle makes him, at least for St. John, morally superior to his black counterparts, and the exception to normative behavior that St. John, and presumably “even [Louverture’s] enemies” expect from black officers.

While efforts by the late nineteenth-century biographers to establish Louverture’s moral superiority as dating back to an early age, and being almost inherent in his character from youth, they did not argue for his physical superiority as a matter of birth. Being marked by physical deformity, and the sheer force to will that overcomes it, is a frequent narrative surrounding Louverture in the nineteenth-century histories. St. John reports that Louverture overcame his own physical limitations as a “puny child” by “constant exercise and vigorous will,” furthering the overreaching sense in his descriptions of Louverture’s early life as a contest between the body and the spirit (48). Beard notes that as a child, “so delicate was his constitution that he received the descriptive appellation of *Fatras-Bâton*, which might be rendered English by *Little Lath*” (26). Beard resolves this apparent opposition by alluding, like many authors of his time, to the strength of Louverture’s will and mind, arguing that he “hardened and strengthened his frame by the severest labour and the most violent exercises. At the age of twelve he

surpassed all his equals in the plantation in bodily feats” (26-27). Beard attributes this alteration in his physical state to “the spirit of the man [that] was already working in the boy” (27). Just as Louverture’s spirit is credited with bringing about his physical superiority, Beard notes that his “reflective and taciturn disposition” resolved itself into acquiring “self-control [and] the power of concentrated reflection and concise speech” (27).

Many of these nineteenth-century historians also understood Louverture’s self-control as an assertion of his mind over the material constraints and proclivities of his body. Although certainly portraying Louverture as chaste and as a doting father were consistent with expectations of personal morality, many authors focused on his marriage and family life as corporeal expressions of his will, and as a counterpoint to patterns of kinship and courtship in Saint Domingue. Louverture’s marriage in particular was often posed as proof of his overcoming the physical inclinations of his body, and black bodies in general. St. John regards the “accusation constantly brought against Toussaint [...] of being a religious hypocrite” as “unfounded,” using as proof his choice to marry instead of living “in concubinage” (48). Here Louverture’s moral strength becomes encoded through his body; he is first able to overcome physical limitations as a weak child and then the inclinations towards bodily actions that were considered moral weaknesses as an adult, paving the way for mid-nineteenth-century authors to valorize Louverture’s character and manhood throughout their later descriptions of him.

The understanding of Louverture’s body as an expression of both his own will and his morality is clear in the physical descriptions the nineteenth-century historians were fond of including in their works. Beard focuses heavily on physical descriptions of

Louverture, arguing that “In his mature years, and in the days of his great conflict, Toussaint possessed an iron frame and a stout arm. Capable of almost any amount of labour and endurance, he was terrible in battle and rarely struck without deadly effect” (26). St. John notes that Louverture “appeared ever unwearied, whatever might be the fatigue of his companions” (53). Louverture’s physical strength becomes a marker of his military success in St. John’s account, and the very physical struggle for power of one form of energy, the unceasing energy St. John attributes to Louverture over another, the “savage” and presumably normative energy St. John connects with Jean-François. John’s description of Louverture’s physical strength is juxtaposed with the apparent physical weakness he experienced as a child, continuing the implications that his body itself becomes an expression of his moral strength.

Despite differing a great deal from St. John in terms of authorial intent and perceptions of blackness, the basis for some of St. John’s assertions can be found in abolitionist biographies of Louverture. Phillips, who spends a great deal of his speech comparing Louverture to Bonaparte, describes Louverture’s qualities as almost superhuman, noting that “like Napoleon, he could fast many days; could dictate to three secretaries at once; could wear out four or five horses” (176). In an interesting, and repeated, series of comparisons between Napoleon and Louverture, Phillips notes that:

Napoleon resolved to crush Toussaint from one motive or another, from the prompting of ambition, or dislike of the resemblance, which was very close. If one imitated the other, it must have been the white, since the Negro preceded him several years. They were very much alike, and they were very French – French even in vanity, common to both. (175)

The idea of a white man resembling a black man in 1861 must have been somewhat shocking to his audience, just as his identification of Louverture as French in

identification must have been as well. He meditates upon the comparison in increasingly physical terms, first noting that neither liked to wear uniforms. He describes Louverture as wearing “a plain coat, and often the yellow Madras handkerchief of the slave,” implying that his dress was calculated to identify him with his former enslavement (175-176). The apex of Louverture’s superhuman abilities is, for Phillips, his ability to escape death. He notes that “Three attempts to assassinate him all failed, from not firing at the right spot” (176). Phillips also argues that Louverture was known to pardon men who had attempted to assassinate him, exercising his moral fortitude in matters of life and death.

In keeping with his apparently forgiving nature, Louverture is also consistently described by nineteenth-century abolitionist writers as a protector of white bodies. It appears at this time that Louverture’s peace-keeping role in Madiou’s history becomes associated with another kind of opening – namely, the possibility of moderating the physical violence against white bodies that was, at least until this point in the history, a staple of the revolutionary effort. Madiou notes that Louverture intervened in Biassou’s rage against the white population following the colonial assembly’s rejection of a peace offering. Madiou writes that after refusing terms on the basis of the unlawfulness of the insurrection, the

Commissioners withdrew humiliated, amid boos from the white populace. When they brought this response to Jean-François, Biassou, out of indignation wanted to kill all his white prisoners. But his lieutenant, Toussaint Louverture pacified him by making him understand that future negotiations could begin with the civil commissioners, and these should not be disrupted because of anger. (V. 1, 118)

This passage introduces a role that Louverture takes on again and again in Madiou’s history: that of a protector of white bodies from black violence. He returns to this role in

positioning Toussaint as the protector of white prisoners whose freedom had been part of the negotiations of the surrender of insurgents at Michel. Madiou notes that “The captives were sent under escort; and without Toussaint Louverture accompanying them, would have been slain along the way” (V. I, 119). For Madiou, Louverture also remained a mediating force in the violence feared by and often perpetrated against the colonists on the eve of independence. Madiou notes that after the October 1797 reading of a proclamation declaring Louverture’s understanding with the U.S. government that Saint Domingue would be rendered independent from France, and the consequent departure of the Agent of the Directory

the calm was restored by Toussaint’s energetic protests of devotion to public order, and the masses of *cultivateurs* passed through to the plains, resigning themselves to the orders of their leader. Soon after, Toussaint issued a *te-Deum* with the utmost solemnity. The planters, onetime Royalists, after having rendered their homage, acknowledged him as a triumphant liberator. (V. I, 419)

Here Louverture once again mediates the threat of violence against the white population and exercises his authority over what Madiou characterizes as “menacing” black troops. He also uses a public performance of religion, a subject Madiou, unlike his contemporaries, tends to avoid, in order to win over the support of the remaining white population.

After a brief sketch of the history of Haiti before the revolutionary period, Phillips asserts that Louverture was the first to be contacted by Blanchenade and his agents when the uprisings began, a claim that is not substantially supportable through any historical record. Interestingly, at this early time Phillips places Louverture in a mediating role that he describes as “natural,” noting that

Nature made him a Metternich, a diplomat. He probably wished to avail himself of this offer, foreseeing advantage to his race, but to avail himself of it so cautiously as to provide against failure, risking as little as possible till the intentions of the other party had been tested, and so managing as to be able to go on or withdraw as the best interest of his race demanded. (168)⁴⁷

The basis for Phillips' reading of Louverture's actions here seems somewhat plausible given his rendition of Louverture's refusal of the agents' offer, but it is also calculated to ascribe particular qualities to Louverture, including patience, prudence, and an inherently diplomatic nature. Phillips goes on to note that Louverture advised Jean-François in the negotiations, and is accredited with a moving speech that Phillips implies caused the freeing of white prisoners. Phillips describes Louverture, whose religious fanaticism he likens to that of Mohammed, Napoleon, Cromwell and John Brown as persuading the crowd with the following words: "Brothers, this blood will not wipe out the insult to our chief; only the blood in yonder French camp can wipe it out. To shed that is courage; to shed this is cowardice and cruelty besides," after which Phillips notes that Louverture saved fifteen hundred lives (171). Phillips' version of the event places Louverture in a much more direct position of saving French lives, and interestingly posits which forms of bloodshed Louverture finds appropriate.

Despite most mid-nineteenth century historians' characterizations of Louverture as both having overcome his own bodily circumstances to rise to power and then using that power to protect white bodies, most of the histories include a turn towards a limited critique of Louverture that is also couched in bodily terms. Madiou notes that by 1799, "the most implacable hatred against the authority of Toussaint Louverture manifested itself in the ranks; each saw him as the protector of whites, the executioner of men of

⁴⁷Prince Klemens Wenzel von Metternich was a prominent politician and diplomat of the early nineteenth century.

color, and the enemy of black freedom” (V. II, 9). Here these roles are paralleled, and first two involve his decisions over life and death, and become related in this way to the third. Despite Louverture’s declining reputation, Madiou reports that during that year’s attacks on Jacmel, the troops, awed by a meteor shower

the frightened troops threw down their weapons; some fled the city, and others knelt, raising their arms to the sky demanding that God pardon the blood that they had shed. The devout believed that the all powerful was going to make Toussaint Louverture atone for all of the innocent blood he had shed. (v. II, 18-19).

Madiou interprets the incident as creating panic because of superstition and ignorance, characteristics he readily applies to the insurgent troops. The types of “superstition” Madiou repeatedly aligns with Afro-Caribbean religious practices, however, were absolutely repressed under Louverture’s administration. Madiou approvingly notes that “fetishism and other African superstitions were proscribed, and the principles of Christianity were preached by zealous priests. He punished by death both thieves and the impious” (V. II, 36). The characterization of Louverture here as an instigator of violence against the innocent is hardly consistent with many of the histories that glorify Louverture as a protector of both whites and the vulnerable in general, and reveals a turn from the gentleness that many, including Madiou, attribute to his earlier years.

By 1800, the patience, forbearance, and mercy Madiou ascribes to Toussaint Louverture earlier in the revolutionary period were entirely absent. Madiou, whose object in writing his history was less overtly skewed towards valorization of Louverture than his U.S. and British counterparts, did not hesitate to stage clear critiques of Louverture’s role in violence against the free colored population in the South. While

Madiou argues that Louverture often used Dessalines as a scapegoat for executions he had himself ordered, he also argues that

the domination of Toussaint was established through bloody reactions that momentarily consolidated the departments of the South. Terror reigned everywhere; one could not hear the name of Rigaud in the most innocent of conversations, and if one spoke of Toussaint, it could not be without a grand elegy (V. II, 84).⁴⁸

Madiou also notes these executions violated general amnesties, and that he neither avoided violence nor acted as a protector of bodies during his rise to power. Of the particular acts of violence ascribed to Louverture, both Madiou and Ardouin most heavily focus their critique on the execution of Moïse, Louverture's nephew. Ardouin argues that Louverture "ground out Moïse to placate the planters, and to satisfy his personal revenge" (V. 5, 106). Here the motivation of revenge, not frequently ascribed to Louverture by Haitian historians, becomes central in Ardouin's reading. Moïse's death appears to have been particularly disturbing to Madiou and Ardouin and because it emblemized a shift from Louverture's legacy of mercy and forgiveness to one of violence and revenge, one that appears even more disturbing because of the familial relationship between the two men.

While the Haitian historians were generally willing to critique Louverture's uses of violence in general, U.S. and British writers were much more hesitant to do so. They, however, also struggled to reconcile the execution of Moïse with their otherwise valorous portrayals of Louverture. Phillips notes that "the only instance in which his sternest critics has charged him with severity" was the court-martial of Moïse. Phillips allows that "his nephew, General Moïse, was accused of indecision in quelling [a] riot. He

⁴⁸ Andre Rigaud was a prominent leader of the free men of color in the Southern departments of Saint Domingue, and later, Haiti.

assembled a court-martial, and, on its verdict ordered his own nephew to be shot, sternly Roman in thus keeping his promise of protection to the whites” (177). Here Phillips is careful to position Louverture as only carrying out the court martial’s sentence, rather than instigating the execution, and turns his lack of compassion for Moïse into a measure of Louverture’s Republican integrity, and thus a positive attribute rather than an accusation of unwarranted violence or betrayal of familial bonds.

Mid to late nineteenth-century biographers had a great deal of investment in their portrayals of Toussaint Louverture. If we believe St. John’s assertion that valorizing Louverture had fallen out of fashion in Haiti by the 1880’s, it certainly experienced a heyday in the wake of the British movement for abolition in the United States in the 1850’s and the U.S. Civil War in the 1860’s. These authors’ portrayals of Louverture rely in part on engaging in discourses surrounding the black body that were at the forefront of heated debates of racial inferiority and thus did not differ much from later authors like St. John, whose participation in the denigration of Haiti in general and particularly of Afro-Caribbean cultures is clear. For these abolitionist authors, these included an insistence on an African cultural inheritance that implied that Louverture’s moral superiority could not have arisen out of a Caribbean setting, that his bodily limitations (including sexual desire) had to be overcome before he could rise to a position of respect, and that his primary use of power was to protect white bodies.

In addition to being characterized as consistently attempting to prevent and alleviate harm to the white population, Louverture was also described, particularly in his final days, in terms of his own bodily suffering. Interestingly, the turn towards characterizing Louverture as a tortured black body is consistent across a broad gamut of

nineteenth-century writings in depicting his death at Fort de Joux. Madiou is one of the only authors to submit that Louverture's bodily suffering was related to his ideological and moral positioning. Madiou reports a specific account of the bodily manifestations of Louverture's regret just before his arrest:

He crossed his arms over his chest, his head was scorching hot, and his heart was beating convulsively, his eyes were mostly hidden under his eyebrows. His past actions assaulted his memory. The anxiety and remorse seemed to shake him. He sat in a deep abyss of reflections. Blood unnecessarily shed [...] the barbaric execution of Moyse, his nephew, a fruitless sacrifice made to colonial perfidy [...] the supreme dangers to his race: all past convulsions all the horrors he saw in the distance, delivered to him a horrible agitation. (V. II, 290-291)

Here the particular instances of unnecessary bloodshed, executions, and even the justifiable violence of war become incorporated into Louverture's body, causing measurable physiological effects, including fever, increase in heart rate, and tremors. The suffering rendered in this passage prefigures the suffering Louverture will experience at the hands of the French upon his arrest and imprisonment, and Madiou characterizes this manifestation as self-imposed suffering, in which Louverture's body reacts to his own actions, rather than having been victimized by external circumstances.

Despite what Madiou describes as respectful treatment along his journey to Fort de Joux across land, he notes that "When he arrived at Fort de Joux, he was soon locked in a dark dungeon" (V. II, 333). The first few months of his captivity are described as relatively humane, with Louverture being allowed to walk in the gardens and being given a standard allowance for food and clothing. Madiou notes that, however, when winter came

his body, already weakened by age, suffered cruelly from the cold at Jura. He could not buy wood for heating, as five francs a day was barely sufficient for his maintenance and that of his servant. His dirty clothes fell to pieces, it was

impossible to renew them. Mars Plaisir [his companion], by patching them, tried to guarantee against the cold. To make matters worse, the commandant of the fortress, a hard and ruthless man, announced that Mars Plaisir would be separated from his master. Toussaint, his face emaciated by fever, with sunken eyes, stood a moment as annihilated, in hearing this order: it removed his last support and consolation. (V. II, 334)

Regardless of Louverture's efforts to negotiate for his own survival, Madiou notes that he suffered constantly from the cold, hunger, and illness, particularly after Bonaparte reduced his allowance to 3 francs per day (V. II, 336). Despite French uses of deprivation to elicit both locations of treasure and a confession of treachery, Louverture refused, and according to Madiou, was left to die of hunger on Napoleon's orders. Madiou's description of Louverture's end is heavily ensconced in physical descriptions that detail the particulars of his bodily suffering at the hands of the French. Madiou writes that upon Louverture's death "His face expressed the torments of the most horrible pain. Everything in his attitude announced a terrible crime [...] of which the honest citizens remained entirely ignorant" (V II, 336). Madiou carefully asserts that this crime was deeply inscribed on Louverture's body, not only in the starvation that led to his suffering and death, but also in the physicians who certified that his death was caused by stroke, and the French government who denied him a proper burial.

In 1861, Phillips concludes his speech with a contemplation on the death of Louverture that focuses, like many others, on the material conditions of his imprisonment. He describes the physical conditions of the Castle at St. Joux, "a dungeon twelve feet by twenty, built wholly of stone, with a narrow window, high up on the side, looking out on the snows of Switzerland. In winter, ice covers the floor; in summer, it is damp and wet. In this living tomb the child of the sunny tropic was left to die" (180). He

details Louverture's starvation at the hands of the French, noting that "the luxurious usurper [Napoleon] who complained that the English government was stingy because it allowed him only six thousand dollars a month, stooped from his throne to cut down a dollar to a half, and still Toussaint did not die quick enough" (180). Repeatedly referencing St. Joux (also known in other accounts as Fort de Joux) as a tomb, Phillips alleges that "In this tomb, Toussaint was buried, but did not die fast enough. Finally the commandant was told to go into Switzerland, to carry the keys of the dungeon with him, and to stay four days; when he returned, Toussaint was found starved to death" (181). This version is slightly at odds with other historical accounts of Fort de Joux, which cite his cause of death as pneumonia. Phillips continues to compare the exiles and deaths of Napoleon to Louverture, noting that "God grant when some future Plutarch shall weigh the great men of our epoch, the whites against the blacks, he do not put that whining child at St. Helena into one scale, and into the other the Negro meeting death like a Roman, without a murmur, in the solitude of his icy dungeon" (181). Here Louverture's death is turned into a new means of valorizing his Republicanism, even as it juxtaposes his character with that of Napoleon.

Both the Haitian histories of the mid nineteenth century and the abolitionist writings that followed framed the life of Toussaint Louverture in terms of bodily suffering. First, his birth and early years in slavery were supposed, particularly by the abolitionists, to have made him acutely aware of the suffering of others. Next, his role as a healer in his early days in the revolutionary forces position him as alleviating bodily suffering, a role that eventually gets expanded into depictions of Louverture as protecting white bodies during the later struggles. Each of these roles is juxtaposed with his

ultimate suffering and death at the hands of the French, a theme that was taken up by later Haitian writers, including Vendenesse Ducasse.

From His Own Mouth: Bodily Ties in Toussaint Louverture's Writings

Toussaint Louverture's primary method of presenting himself to what became an increasingly global audience was through letters. He stepped into a particular discourse that was very much rooted in enlightenment texts, and was often referred to as the black Spartacus to whom Raynal had famously referred, and at times, as the black Napoleon. While there is no direct evidence that Louverture had read Raynal's text before his participation in the revolts, he certainly consciously capitalized on the existing rhetoric in his dealings with colonial leaders and what Deborah Jenson calls the larger media sphere.⁴⁹ Jenson argues that through a burgeoning world of letters, Louverture "forged a dialogue of tenuous peer relationship with metropolitan and colonial leadership, and out of it an enduring foothold for critique and mobility" (47). It makes sense, then, that Louverture's writings attribute his actions to enlightened Republican ideals, rather than to a mythology of African prince turned creole healer that many of his biographers would espouse.⁵⁰ Louverture does not at all characterize himself as having been influenced by an African past (or even acknowledging one), or by a lifelong interest in healing arts, nor does he consistently characterize himself as mediating suffering or protecting either French or Haitian bodies. His late nineteenth-century biographers may well have been invested in presenting Louverture as a suffering body, rather than a savvy manipulator of

⁴⁹ Rainsford writes that Louverture was "enamoured" of Raynal, but fails to list the text among those he notes as "conspicuous in the library of Toussaint" (152).

⁵⁰ While the full corpus of Toussaint Louverture's written works was likely unavailable to his biographers, they certainly could have created very different characterizations of him out of the histories and eyewitness accounts that were available and widely read. It is likely, however, that the Haitian historians, biographers, and abolitionists who wrote about Louverture created narratives about his body and his character that best suited their specific goals and audiences.

the French and global public, thereby creating in him a parallel figure to what they saw as his enslaved and formerly enslaved counterparts in the United States. Louverture tended to characterize his relationship to the French in general, to specific French officers, and later to the Haitian people as familial, a construction heavily influenced by French Republican language and ideals. As Louverture's relations with the French deteriorated, he distances himself from the kinship ties he establishes in his own writings, and begins to understand his material suffering as a direct result of French betrayal.

In fact, the only reference Louverture makes to his own suffering is not attributable to the condition of his body, but of his written legacy. Towards the end of Louverture's life, he began to focus on the ideological betrayal of the French, rather than the material conditions highlighted in the writings of almost every historian to address his life throughout the nineteenth century.⁵¹ Madiou describes Toussaint's being mocked on the ship to France by the appellation "Papa Toussaint," a nickname implying a bodily relationship between Louverture and his subjects that had at this point been effectively severed by the French (V. II, 326). Louverture understands his suffering as intimately tied to the loss of his ability to function in public discourse. Here he formulates a mode of disembodiment that characterizes his own writings, including his letters, as extensions of his own body:

They have sent me to France destitute of everything; they have seized my property and my papers, and have spread atrocious calumnies concerning me. Is it not like cutting off a man's legs and telling him to walk? Is it not like cutting out a man's tongue and telling him to talk? Is it not burying a man alive" (Jenson 17)

⁵¹ Rainsford, Barskett, Madiou, Ardouin, Phillips, and St. John all focus on the cruelty of the French in their treatment of Louverture, and the physical details of his suffering and death at Fort de Joux, a theme that likely inspired Vendennesse DuCasse's *Fort de Joux* (1898).

Louverture thus equates the loss of the intellectual property of his writings, and the documentation of his role in governance and revolution to parts of his own living body, promoting an understanding that his written legacy is equally valuable to his survival as his physical body. In addition to considering himself “an old soldier, covered with wounds in the service of his country,” Louverture also extends these wounds to include the lack of his writings as a form of violence that had the power to substantially ruin his reputation by disallowing the opportunity to prepare a defense but also extends into physical wounds in that he will, as a result, be condemned to bodily suffering (Aristide 114). Deborah Jenson reads Louverture’s writings, particularly after his capture as “an inscribed rhetoric of protest even to his death, like a literary second skin” (13). In a sense, his writings themselves formulate a means of disembodiment in which Louverture’s legacy becomes entirely disconnected with his physical body and the significations his biographers imposed on it.

It is thus not surprising that his papers, have been treated by the French in much the same way as his body. While Louverture’s writings “represented him to Napoleonic authority and to posterity,” they have also suffered the depredations of French archiving and thus become less and less available to the public as time goes on. The Archives Nationales in Paris do not list Toussaint Louverture’s memoirs or papers with any specificity, and they are scattered, unprotected, throughout Marine Committee files, and thus their legibility is rapidly deteriorating. The treatment of his written work, as opposed to that of Napoleon, whose letters are indexed and heavily restricted, parallels the treatment of his body at the hands of the French. Unlike Napoleon, whose burial site

is one of the most opulent public spectacles in Paris today, Louverture's body was buried in an undisclosed location.

While the French archives have mistreated Louverture's written works, scholars have attempted to preserve and study his letters, which extend back to when the uprisings in Saint Domingue were scattered conflicts without the revolutionary goal of independence. Louverture use of bodily metaphors to describe his delicate political position begins as early as 1794, and are found throughout his correspondence with Laveaux. Here, Louverture stages an embodiment of Republican sympathy in describing his reactions to not only the treatment of the French but also the fate of his country in bodily terms. In a letter dated May 18, 1794, Louverture writes "My heart bled and I shed tears over the unfortunate fate of my country [...] My heart is broken to contemplate the event that occurred against a few unfortunate whites who were victims in this affair. I am utterly unlike many others who witness scenes of horror in cold blood" (Aristide 9, 10). Here, although Louverture certainly acknowledges concern for suffering that he considers exceptional among his peers, his concern is not at all constructed as having been related to his own experiences as a slave. Although the metaphor of a bleeding heart was not an uncommon usage, Louverture uses its symbolism to position himself as having a bodily connection to the white population in which their suffering is inscribed on his body, and on the body politic of the country, whose "unfortunate" fate seems tied to the suffering of white bodies.

Louverture's self-identification as a protector of white bodies is also apparent in his correspondence, and he explicitly linked to his sympathy for suffering and, at least early in his career, to French Republicanism. In this way, Louverture constructs his

interventions against specifically French suffering as a product of French Republicanism rather than of his personal experience of slavery or of the practice of medicine. In December 1794, upon entering Artibonite, Louverture wrote to Laveaux about the suffering he found there:

I'll tell you that misery and disease swirl around in Artibonite. The poor mothers of families of 3, 4, 6, and 9 children and men from whom the English have plundered their effects, find nothing to eat, are all in the greatest miseries and lack everything. I ordered my men to seek out three barrels of wine and twenty-five bttes. [sic] of flour for both Artibonite camps, for Petite Rivière for the poor families reduced to begging and without resources other than Republican humanity. I have ordered that they be given bread. There are even two white women who are sisters, one of whom is blind, who were found naked and without any relief. (Laurent 142)⁵²

Here Louverture specifically addresses his sympathy for the white and black populations alike and calls attention to his own interpretation of Republican ideals as the inspiration for his humane treatment of the survivors. He again calls attention to his humanity as particularly French, noting that on entering Petite Rivière on 22 Ventose l'an 4 (February 1796), the pleas of the women and children of color “created in me so much emotion that I could only listen in this moment to my French and humane heart; I gave them their lives, the women and all the men” (Laurent 342-343). Here Louverture appears to be defending his decision to spare the population, particularly the men who may well have participated in fighting for the enemy, on the basis of French Republican compassion. In this way, he skillfully avoids any critique of his decision.

Louverture also tended to refer to his relationships with the French in general and particular French leaders, and later, the Haitian population, in familial terms. The most

⁵² Gerard Laurent's 1953 Collection of Toussaint Louverture's written works contains the most complete printed collection of his correspondence with Laveaux, most of which has not been translated into English. All translations of Laurent's collection that follow are my own.

striking and well-preserved examples of this are found in his correspondence with Etienne Laveaux, the French Governor of Saint Domingue from 1793-1796. Most histories credit Louverture as single handedly saving Laveaux from execution at the hands of the insurgents, eventually bringing his role of loving son into alignment with his role as a protector of white bodies. In their correspondence, Louverture repeatedly and warmly addresses Laveaux as “mon père.” his understanding of the paternal relationship as a corporeal bond reaches its apex in his letter of le 28 Ventose, l’an 4 (February 1796), in which Louverture writes

It is impossible for me, my general and dear father, to find strong enough expressions to testify to you the satisfaction with which my soul received your consoling letter of the 26th. My heart has been so plain and it is again that I cannot.. but think of your without responding with tears of tenderness. There exists without doubt the purest friendships, but I cannot persuade myself that any surpass which I have for you, nor any more sincere. Yes, general, Toussaint is your son, he cherishes you; and your grave will be his, and he will support you at the peril of his life; his arm and head are always at your disposal and if he has to succumb, he will carry with him the sweet consolation of having defended a father, a virtuous friend, and the cause of liberty. (Laurent 347-348)

Here Louverture stages his own feelings for Laveaux as instigating physical reactions (tears of tenderness), and establishes a linkage between the lives of these men that reaches beyond a metaphorically filial relationship. Here Louverture’s loyalty is coded as framed as a commitment of his body (arm and head) and even his death to Laveaux’s cause.

While the kind of intense, personal loyalty Louverture’s writings depict towards Laveaux was certainly more steadfast than his loyalties and familial understandings of the French in general, metaphors of kinship were rampant throughout his writings on dealing with the French. The tumultuous relationship between Louverture’s armies and the

French is coded as one of broken familial bonds, with Louverture writing to Laveaux on May 18, 1794 “I was abandoned by the French, my brothers. But my late experience has opened my eyes to these treacherous protectors” (Laurent 104). As loyalties shifted throughout the year, and reconciliation seemed more possible, on March 22, 1795, Louverture reported to Laveaux that he spoke to the people of Verettes, who he addressed as “Brothers and Sisters,” arguing for a juxtaposition of the French, whom he encouraged them to view in terms of kinship and the Spanish, English and royalists, to whom he assigned a cannibalistic (and extra-familial role), stating “the French are our brothers, the English, the Spanish, and the royalists are ferocious beasts who only caress to suck at their leisure, until they are satiated, the blood of their women and children” (Aristide 14). Here the relationship between Louverture’s enemies and the people he addresses is described a potential corporeal nurturing, as a mother breastfeeding a child, that has been perverted into a very different formulation of bodily nourishment in cannibalizing women and children.

The metaphor of familial relations as a model for the loyalty of the insurgents, and at times the French as well, became intensely focused in Louverture’s letters as a patriarchy in which he quickly rose to a position of leadership. On February 20, 1796, Louverture was sent to quell a revolt in Port-de-Paix. In his detailing of the incident for Laveaux, Louverture describes the crowd at Port-de-Paix as acknowledging him as “the father of all the blacks,” and telling him that “it is you after God who are dearest to us and in whom we have the most confidence” (22). Louverture’s rebuttal consisted of a stern reproach to the people, not on the basis of their having rebelled and refused to work, but because of their refusal to acknowledge his role of patriarch and protector by

negotiating with him instead of rebelling. Louverture extends the patriarchal role to “the Governor General [Laveaux] whom we must all regard as our father and the defender of our liberty” but nonetheless claims the role of mediator, judge, and advocate as a patriarchal role he himself had been denied (Aristide 22-23). The resolution, at least for Louverture, only lies in the workers practicing the obedience of children and in assuming for himself a filial relationship to Laveaux. Here kinship ties are clearly not based on a bodily relation, but rather a political relationship that is ideologically, rather than corporeally based.

He also uses the metaphor of family to promote unity among the troops, and is anxious to consolidate his own patriarchal role as extending supremacy over other, presumably French leaders, who might usurp power from him and attract troops to fight for their own goals. On April 25, 1798, Louverture reports addressing the population in St. Louis du Nord, by asking

Just now you let yourself behave like blind men to your most dangerous enemies? O you Africans, my brothers, you who have paid so dearly in fatigue, sweat, labor and miseries? You, whose freedom is sealed in the purest blood, just now I will see the pain of my children fleeing on the advice of an idolatrous father! Did you forget that I was the first to raise the standard of insurrection against tyranny, against the despotism that kept us chained? (Laurent 380-381)

Despite addressing the audience as “my brothers,” Louverture also figures himself as a father who experiences bodily pain in seeing his children follow another father figure, and holds his own legacy within the revolution as the reason they should now look to him. While the patriarchal characterization of Louverture became more pronounced as he rose in power, and he often made use of familial language as a means of commanding submission to his will as governor and unity among the various groups of insurgents that

rose up against him. His 1800 ordinance requiring the *cultivateurs* to return to work establishes Haitian unity through familial ties, noting that “It is to society, this great family you are part of that you need to give your labor that at one time you sacrificed to the ambition of a master” (qtd. in Madiou, V. II, 95). In 1801, he consolidated his position as the patriarch of the family in an address to the men of color in Le Cap, whom he had some difficulty winning over to his side. He is quoted as saying “I speak to you as a father, I bemoan the pain you have suffered, I forgive you generously, I give you consolation” (Madiou V. II, 121). His understanding of the patriarchal role here is also tinged with religious sentiment, particularly within his references to forgiveness and consolation.

Louverture’s tendency to equate his own patriarchal position with suffering is also firmly tied to both understandings of familial relations as an extension of the body and Christian notions of the suffering of Christ. In May 1795, Louverture wrote to Laveaux about the rebellion of Thomas, in which the *cultivateurs* “armed themselves against me and I received for my pains a bullet in the leg, from which I still feel sharp pain” (Laurent 185). Here Louverture reminds Laveaux of the physical reminder he carries of the rebellion, along with the injustice of their violence against him. Louverture later characterizes his suffering at the loss of his own sons to France as a bodily wound, having been quoted in Madiou’s history and elsewhere as stating “My children, if you leave me, you open a wound in my heart that will never be closed” (V. II, 208). The metaphorical wound here is not inconsistent with his language of wounding involved in his separation from the French, as mentioned above. In a letter dated August 31, 1796, Louverture, a devout Catholic, exhorted Laveaux to remember “We imitate Jesus Christ

who died and suffered for us, to give us an example of a virtuous wise man is made to suffer, but, he who allows our suffering will also console us. We must put all our hope in him” (Laurent 428). Here Louverture implies that both he and Laveaux must suffer in order to maintain virtue, a theme he returns to later in his own writings.

Deborah Jenson also argues that Louverture uses tropes of bodily suffering and healing in order to consider the psychological positioning of political participation. Jenson argues that “through figures of pain and healing, he conveys a vivid psychological and physical political subject” (60). Louverture’s repeated references to the pain endured in what he saw as French colonial leaders’ betrayal present political disenfranchisement as a direct form of physical suffering, and one which could be healed through an aggressive treatment, which he also describes in physical terms. In a letter dated only “*la 24 l’an sixième de la République*” (the 24th of an unnamed month of 1798), Louverture references healing as follows:

Palliative remedies only flatter the pathology, and one must get to the source to heal it. As you do not know the colony, I fear that you are being diverted from all your good intentions with regards to the well-being of the republic, and are encouraging your subordinates who will perish a thousand times for the colony and the execution of the orders of the Directory that will be transmitted to us by you. (trans. Jenson, 60)

Jenson reads this letter as positioning Louverture himself as “not just the pained subject, but also the doctor threatening to excise the pathology at its source” (60). Here the role Louverture establishes for himself as a healer has little relation to the role his nineteenth-century biographers ascribed to him, but rather poses sovereign power as a means of resolving suffering and suggests that his own intervention may well be to heal the disruption and abuses of sovereign power in the colony.

Unlike the nineteenth-century biographers, who were intent on portraying him as a figure framed by suffering, Louverture's writings do not position bodily suffering, (his own or others), as a universally motivating factor in his actions towards the French or towards his own people during the revolutionary period. Instead, Louverture's writings show that he was adept at understanding and manipulating the already-existing discourse of suffering bodies that had been established in relation to Haiti in the first eye-witness testimonies. Louverture consistently used metaphors of the bodily relationships between family members to sort out his own complex relationship with French colonial agents, and positioned himself as a protector of white bodies when it best suited his goals. He expressed his filial loyalty and his status as a protector of bodies as an extension of French Republicanism, rather than as a remnant of his own experiences as a slave. He was also adept at using metaphors of suffering and healing to consider the state of the colony and later the nation, but did not give any indication that his use of them was at all related to either an African past, which he did not explicitly acknowledge, or any other background as a healer. He instead, understood his own political power as being intimately connected to his written legacy, a disembodied form that did indeed supercede the limits of his body, which was buried in an unmarked grave.

"In all else he was but an African Savage": Encoding Dessalines' Barbarity

"The only good quality Dessalines possessed was a sort of brute courage; in all else he was but an African savage, distinguished even among his countrymen for his superior ferocity and perfidy" (St. John, 79).

Mid to late nineteenth-century historians had a much more difficult task in establishing lasting mythologies surrounding Dessalines, whose violence and radicalism

were a far cry from the means and goals of those of the abolition movement. While most mid nineteenth-century authors argued that Louverture's experiences as a slave imbued his character with what were then considered productive characteristics (like piety, mercy, and fairness), very few discuss Dessalines' enslavement as producing anything in his character other than vengeance. In contrast to earlier Haitian historians, who tended towards a nuanced treatment of Dessalines that included acts of mercy and compassion before the massacres that ended the revolution, the abolitionists and later nineteenth-century scholars of Haiti began to produce a much more one-sided view of him that vilified him in a number of ways that they considered extremely corporeal. Writers like Phillips, St. John, and Hazard understood cruelty as inherent to his character, and by extension related to other bodily affectations that some of the later authors pushed to the point of caricaturing Dessalines. They also focused a great deal more on his former enslavement, in some cases creating narratives surrounding his experiences that were far from the historical record. In many of these texts, Dessalines is characterized as an opposition to Louverture - rather than ensuring the liberty of his former master, historians claimed that he engaged him as a servant; instead of exhibiting chastity and sobriety, Dessalines is characterized as lustful and capricious; instead of protecting white creoles, he betrayed and massacred them. While Louverture's valorization is connected with his identification of a mythologized Africa, Dessalines is portrayed as encapsulating the violence and barbarity associated with popular nineteenth-century assumptions of a very different Africa, characterized by savagery and violence.

The reputation Dessalines gained in the mid nineteenth century among authors who later recounted the revolution was based on a number of demonizing narratives that

laid the blame for the violence of the revolution squarely on his shoulders. Madiou and Ardouin allowed for a much more varied account of his character and activities. While they certainly acknowledged his cruelty towards French colonists in the final massacres on the eve of independence, they also considered a number of other aspects of his civil and military career that presented a very different set of narratives surrounding Dessalines than later authors. Many of the details of Dessalines' actions included in these historical accounts, particularly Madiou's, surround his relationships with living and dead bodies; namely, Madiou's account positions Dessalines as perpetrating a great deal of violence against the black and colored populations of St. Domingue before independence, colluding with the French to consolidate his power, and intervening on behalf of both the French and the men of color to stop their massacre by his compatriots.

Despite the representations of Dessalines as Africanized by earlier historians, Madiou notes that as the Inspector General in 1800, he "relentlessly pursued all of the secret societies in which they practiced African superstitions" and led a battalion into Cul-de-Sac to set fire to the house of worship and dispersed the practitioners (V. II, 112). This was only the beginning of the development of Dessalines' reputation for cruelty, at least in Madiou's history. Madiou notes that "he terrified the *cultivateurs* with huge numbers of massacres. One never heard a single musket discharge, the unfortunates were killed with sabers and bayonettes" (V. II, 147). The means of death, more than the numbers of dead, in this instance is what becomes so particularly horrifying. Madiou reports that "This campaign of Dessalines against the insurgents, however, horrified the colony. The people of the countryside called it a *guerre-couteaux* [the war of knives]; there one used the dagger much more than the gun" (V. II, 150). The notion of

personalized, hand to hand combat led by Dessalines himself removes from his characterization more accepted and less intimate forms of killing generally utilized in war, and links him explicitly and intimately to more presumably barbaric forms of violence. Unlike the accounts of later nineteenth-century authors, Madiou does not link Dessalines' barbarism here to the savage African past many historians and biographers outside of Haiti would attribute to him.

Despite the massacres attributed to Dessalines, Madiou positions him as gaining power and popularity during the final push for independence. Madiou argues that he skillfully manipulated hatred of the French to cement his rise to power, even while colluding with them to wipe out his competition:

[Dessalines] would protect against the French while serving them, attracting general attention and secretly preparing an insurrection through which he would proclaim himself chief. One sees his ambition develop prodigiously; he annihilated, with the help of France, all those who could dispute his role as commander in chief, and he would acquire unlimited power. (V. II, 320)

Dessalines' ambition becomes linked to a legacy of cruelty at the worst, and lack of virtue at the least, with which he had formerly been characterized in Madiou's history. His ambitions to seize command and annihilate the French are realized only through "streams of blood" (V. II, 329). Interestingly, however, Madiou points out that despite his propensity for cruelty, during the struggles for power in late 1802 among the various insurgent leaders in the North and South,

It was Dessalines' party which contained the most enlightened members, and was also the most active. It personified the principle of indigenous unity, it had already successfully fought off the French, and suppressed, at the same time, the factions that refused to submit to the central government [...] Dessalines himself, dictator with the right to decide life and death. (V. II, 470)

Despite having already established a basis of cruelty in many of Dessalines' war-time actions, Madiou also recognizes in him a form of "enlightenment," which in this case seems linked to his foresight in establishing goals of Haitian independence. Certainly Madiou's comment on Dessalines' power to decide life and death does not seem consistent with other Enlightenment ideals, his understanding of Dessalines as a visionary is clear throughout the passage.

Interestingly, Madiou positions Dessalines as having exclusive ties to the revolution, rather than to the French, an attribute that constructs him as creole, rather than African, at least in Madiou's eyes. Madiou reads Dessalines' creole identification as having made him extremely popular among the soldiers, who he asserts treated him with a mixture of fear, awe, and respect. In Madiou's eyes, however, the source of their feelings towards Dessalines was the soldiers' memory of enslavement. He asserts that Dessalines was

the terror of the soldiers, who, however, loved him. They had full confidence in him, they knew that this child of the revolution could not betray his mother country, and the triumph of the old regime had plunged them into slavery, or at least degradation. They had moaned in chains, the execration of the whites. And the implacable hatred was the greatest passion that animated them. Dessalines shared their feelings, and they forgave him his cruel severity. (V. II, 263)

Dessalines' role in the revolution is constructed here as familial; he is presented as the progeny of an ethereal parent, the revolution. While an understanding of loyalty to nation as a familial relationship bears some resemblance to Louverture's references to patrimony, Madiou's description restructures such a relationship by removing the possibility of filial relations to a coherent embodied entity.

Madiou is also careful to assert that Dessalines at times displayed mercy and respect for the dead, attributes that historians and biographers outside of Haiti rarely recognized in him. Madiou notes that during the siege of Jacmel in March 1799, “Three hundred prisoners had fallen under Dessalines’ power, and [...] it did not stop him from helping the soldiers, women, and children dying from hunger that had strayed out into the woods. He saved a great number of them” (V. II, 33). This comment juxtaposes Dessalines’ humane interventions with Christophe’s reckless slaughter of the same population. Madiou also reports that Dessalines displayed a similar respect for bodies of the dead. In a rare, personalized depiction of Dessalines, Madiou writes that, in St. Michel just a few months later, Dessalines

Found in one of the houses that had not been burned, a young woman of color exposed on her deathbed. She had been abandoned by her family when the army entered the city. He stopped in the house with a certain reverence, indignant against the mother of this young person who did not dare brave death to give burial to her daughter. He buried the body with pomp. (V. II, 53)

The inclusion of this vignette seems an odd detail to include in the history, particularly because there is so little mention of other burials. It does, however, relate an understanding of Dessalines as particularly attentive to treatments of the body after death that bear remarkable difference from the countless accounts of his cruelty towards the living and barbaric treatments of the dead.

Madiou also recalls incidents where Dessalines was said to have shown mercy to combatants who had displayed uncommon valor. He tells the story of Piverger, one of Rigaud’s colonels who had been abandoned by retreating troops. Madiou writes that

Although his arm had been shattered by a bullet, he continued to fight valiantly. He was about to fall victim of the fury of the soldiers, when Dessalines rushed to him, shielded his body, and cried: ‘Do not take his life, this is a brave man!’

Nevertheless the officers of the 4th wanted to pierce him with their swords; Dessalines took him by the arm, led him to the balcony of the house he occupied, and surrounded him with considerations and care. (V. II, 65)

Here Dessalines, presumably impressed by the enemy combatant's valor, is said to have shown mercy to his enemy, while insisting upon immediate justice on one of his own officers, who disobeyed his order and attempted to shoot Piverger after his surrender. This did not stop Dessalines' from executing Piverger some time later at St. Marc. Dessalines' recognition of valor coupled with his role in providing care for Piverger suggests that Dessalines at times was motivated by virtues mid-nineteenth century biographers and historians outside of Haiti generally attributed to Louverture. The reversal of characteristics attributed to these leaders by writers outside of Haiti is further evidence of the ways in which they created and popularized specific narratives surrounding Louverture and Dessalines.

Among these is the trope of scapegoating Dessalines for the violent massacres perpetrated during the final years before independence. Madiou and Ardouin also agree that the violence Dessalines ordered and carried out (which later authors generally ascribed to him alone) was often sanctioned by his superiors, including Toussaint Louverture. In considering the massacres Dessalines ordered in Petite-Rivière on February 24, 1800 and elsewhere during the civil wars, Ardouin challenges the reader to think about the combination of motivations Dessalines might have had, asking "How Dessalines would not have committed this crime, when his chief had ordered him to and he himself was prone to all excesses?" (V. 5, 90). While Ardouin identifies "excess" as a characteristic of Dessalines, he just as clearly implicates Louverture for ordering massacres. Ardouin also recognizes Dessalines' infamous leadership at Crête-à-Pierrot in

1802, which he asserts lent Dessalines “the greatest honor for courage, bravery and resolution” in Haiti’s military annals (V.5, 101). While certainly Dessalines’ actions come under a great deal of critique in these works, these early Haitian historians tend towards thinking about Dessalines’ violence in a number of ways, many of which were forgotten or ignored by later authors. Like Toussaint Louverture, he is characterized by Haitian historians as having the capacity for both mercy and cruelty, for skillfully maneuvering through complex relations with the French, and for being one of the first to envision the goal of a free black state. Writers of the mid-nineteenth century heavily invested themselves in only a portion of these narratives, focusing on his status and motivations as a former slave and his enactment of popular tropes surrounding blackness.

Little was known in the early nineteenth century about Dessalines’ experiences in slavery, although several conflicting narratives surrounding his early years emerged in later abolitionist writings. W.W. Harvey apparently asserts, particularly as an introduction to Dessalines’ character, that “Of that part of his life previously to his joining in the first insurrections, little more is known than that he was a slave of the lowest order, his master being himself a negro” (21). Here, despite the later condemnation of Dessalines’ character in general, Harvey implies that the development of his brutality arises from an ordinary condition of being doubly subjugated as the slave of a free black man. Harvey’s assertion of the details of Dessalines enslavement may be based on Barskett’s claim that:

Dessalines, at the time of the insurrection in 1791, was a slave to a negro, whose name was Dessalines, and Jean Jacques took that surname from him. This man was living in Cape François, to witness his former slave become his sovereign. He was a shingle, or what in this country would be called a tiler and the future emperor had worked with him at that trade. He used to say that the emperor had

always been ‘a stubborn dog, but a good workman.’ Dessalines retained a great affection for his master, and appointed him to the office of his chief butler. (194)

Deborah Jenson points out that this entirely unsubstantiated claim seems to have arisen from “a characteristic drift and embellishment after revisiting narratives of firsthand experience from an earlier period” (629). The inclusion of this detail in Harvey’s work suggests one means of reviving an understanding of Dessalines as a former slave, rather than a cruel tyrant, and Phillips’ lack of mention of his former master’s appearance in Dessalines’ court suggests that Phillips did not consider it to be either historically accurate, or useful in considering Dessalines from an abolitionist point of view.

It is interesting to note, in the end that Harvey allows that Dessalines’ “barbarity” may indeed have been “strengthened by the innumerable acts of brutal violence and cruelty which he had witnessed, sanctioned, and personally perpetrated,” again aligning Dessalines’ cruelty with cruelties he had been victim to and witnessed at the hands of the French (42). Here, without dwelling on an unverifiable history of Dessalines’ enslavement, Phillips does imply that Dessalines’ years of enslavement were formative to his later character in a way that directly opposes the often-cited influence of slavery on Louverture. Madiou makes a similar assertion in noting that “The regime of slavery had made him cruel, a victim of ruthless atrocities of his master, when he reached the sovereign power, he applied the law of their retaliation (V. II, 263). Samuel Hazard also situates Dessalines’ violence within the context of French massacres, noting that “it is not perhaps to be wondered at that, when the negroes came into power, they retaliated upon the French some of the revolting cruelties that had been practiced upon their own people by the officers and the soldiers of that nation” (146). Here while Hazard does not link the

cruelties Dessalines may have personally experienced to his own exertion of bodily violence, he does argue for a relationship between the two. Dessalines' experiences as a slave and his propensity for cruelty are both presented as bodily experiences that served as the primary motivations for his actions.

Unlike Madiou and Ardouin, Harvey characterizes Dessalines as severe in his discipline and generally insensitive to the bodily needs of his men (a clear opposition to his characterization of Louverture's role as a healer and later concerned leader of his troops). Harvey notes that Dessalines'

discipline, if it may be called such, which he established, was intolerably rigorous, corresponding with his general character. His officers, some of whom were superior to, though less successful, because less barbarous, than himself, he treated with excessive severity; sometimes offering them the most unprovoked insults; at others, degrading them for the most trivial offences; and, in some cases, subjecting them to corporeal punishment. (34)

Here Harvey allows his listeners no room for considering the merits of corporeal discipline, which were normative in martial settings at the time, instead attributing Dessalines' use of discipline to jealousy of his officers' abilities and a capricious form of tyranny. For Harvey, these attributes are substantially linked to Dessalines' "barbarity," an inherent trait that many of the less progressive historians of his time often linked to blackness in general and Africanness in particular.

Harvey seems to have some difficulty, however, in reconciling Dessalines' achievements with the barbarity often ascribed to him. Perhaps in an attempt to mediate the characterizations of Dessalines as cruel and bloodthirsty, Harvey notes that "Particular instances of his cruelty during this period [i.e. before independence], may not, from the difficulty of establishing their truth be confidently produced" but then goes on to

argue that “subsequent proceedings tend to confirm the assertion [...] respecting him, - that he was ever prepared to perpetuate deeds of the most atrocious and unprovoked barbarity” (23). Harvey is careful to argue that Dessalines’ reputation for treachery and cruelty was well deserved after his 1803 capture of Cap Français. He characterizes Dessalines as both holding the power to decide who lives and dies and carrying out the executions himself. Harvey reports that Dessalines “visited the towns in which [the remaining French residents] lived; and having secured them, either by fraud or force, caused his soldiers, contrary to his solemn pledges, to put them to the most violent death, and personally assisted in destroying them” (27). In claiming Dessalines’ personal involvement in the massacres, Harvey lays the blame for their violence and cruelty squarely on his shoulders. The massacres that ensued were by all accounts the most bloody in the revolution, and their sheer violence and cruelty became forever associated with Dessalines in the public imagination outside of Haiti.

This cruelty, for Harvey, was also linked to other undesirable (and by implication, barbarous) characteristics ascribed to Dessalines. In contrast with many of the depictions of Louverture’s personal attention to his men and their physical wellbeing, Harvey points out as well that Dessalines did not attend to needs of private soldiers (34). In fact, as almost an oppositional characteristic to having respect for his men’s bodies and persons, Harvey argues that Dessalines was unable to command respect during his rule because his actions, even in peacetime, produced ridiculous spectacles:

passionately fond of amusement, and ignorant of the real dignity of his title (as emperor), he indulged himself in the most trifling sports, and appeared most happy, and most disposed to be generous, when engaged in them. He was even delighted when, assuming some comic character, he endeavoured to represent it before his officers and the people. He was especially anxious to be considered an

elegant and accomplished dancer; and would sometimes thus exhibit himself in public, and call on the spectators for their testimony to his abilities. (35-6)

Here Dessalines' actions echo American minstrel traditions, and highlights the authors' disbelief that he might reach a level of cultural sophistication in his performances of what are presumably European dances. The author also emphasizes the performative aspect of Dessalines' character, characterizing his public appearances as "exhibits" his body for public amusement.

For Harvey, the perceived flaws in Dessalines' character – not just his cruelty, but also his interest in "amusement" became his downfall. Harvey notes that "At length, his principal officers, convinced of his inability, disgusted at his follies, and wearied with his cruelties, resolved on cutting him off, and electing another chief in his stead" (39).

Although admittedly ambiguous on the details of Dessalines' death in 1806, Harvey alleges that his officers were certainly behind it, and comments that "so universally was he hated by the people, and so violent were their detestation of his character, and their aversions to his government, that his death was the cause of general rejoicing" (40).

Harvey ends his discussion of Dessalines but making another implicit comparison to Louverture in arguing that "Perhaps his courage may be considered, not as the calm, undaunted resolution of a brave spirit, but rather a species of thoughtless, daring hardihood, caused by the desperate circumstances into which he was frequently thrown" (42). Here the implied "brave spirit" may well be Louverture, but the bravery of Dessalines is linked to a carnal, bodily characteristic of "hardihood".

Later nineteenth-century historians like Hazard and St. John were much more heavily focused on Dessalines' cruelty. Samuel Hazard, however, provides a much more even characterization of Dessalines' treatment of French bodies. Despite his earlier

recognition that black violence in this case may have been merely a reflection of or response to French cruelties, Hazard notes that during the 1803 French occupation of Cap Français, “the negro chief of the besiegers, Dessalines, gave an idea of the character which he was later to develop into brutal bloodthirstiness” (147). Hazard here vacillates between attributing violence to Dessalines’ character and to retaliation in war, in particular noting that Dessalines’ execution of 500 French officers was a direct response to French execution of prisoners. Despite his accusation of bloodthirstiness in Dessalines’ character, Hazard acknowledges his “liberality and kindness” in allowing the French to leave the city as part of the terms of their surrender, and attributes these characteristics to the care of French bodies, noting “the sick and wounded were to be left in the hospitals, to be taken care of by the blacks till they were sufficiently recovered to be sent back to France” (147-8). This is the last act of war Hazard describes, painting Dessalines in what is actually a much less brutal light than many of his mid nineteenth-century counterparts. He does, however, end his brief attention to Dessalines with a depiction that, oddly enough, points unknowingly towards Dessalines’ apotheosis into the Vodou cosmology. Hazard writes:

Dessalines has become one of the most prominent characters in the history of Hayti; and his indiscriminate slaughter of the whites in the island, to whom he had promised protection, would cover his name with eternal infamy, where he was otherwise a god. On the contrary, he was a rude, uncultivated, illiterate negro, who, by force of circumstances, strong physique, and undoubted bravery, came to have the power of life and death over thousands of human beings, the lowest of whom was perhaps his superior in those feelings which are but the natural adjuncts of man. (149)

Here Hazard defines Dessalines’ legacy through his treatment of French bodies, despite his cryptic allowance that “he was otherwise a god,” presumably in the eyes of the

Haitian people. Despite his allusion to the potentially powerful disembodied version of Dessalines that does emerge in the Vodou cosmology, Hazard diminishes Dessalines' legacy by couching it in corporeal terms.

While Dessalines was characterized as barbarous and unusually cruel by mid-nineteenth century historians and biographers outside of Haiti, Haitian historians emphasized the excessive cruelty of the manner of his death and the treatment of his body after death. Madiou writes that Dessalines finally died at the hands of General Yayou, who stabbed him three times after he had presumably survived several rounds of gun fire at the hands of Yayou's troops on October 17, 1806. He was then shot again by General Vaval, and:

He was stripped; they cut off his fingers and removed the jewels adorning his hands. Yayou ordered a few grenadiers to remove the corpse. The soldiers obeyed only because the constraints of strong discipline that, even in these terrible circumstances, reigned in the army: they said he was a sorcerer. Yayou, placing his arms next to the stretcher, cried out: "Who will say that this miserable little man, who has been gone but a quarter of an hour, can make all of Haiti tremble!" (V. III, 405)

In Madiou's rendition of the assassination, Yayou contrasts the pitifully small body of Dessalines with his former power, highlighting the ways in which his embodiment was literally incomparable to his influence. Madiou's description of Dessalines' dismemberment here becomes the basis for Joan Dayan's famous readings of Dessalines' entry into the Vodou cosmology. Dayan references various histories that recall the scattering of Dessalines' dismembered body among the crowds in Port-au-Prince, arguing that his profoundly influential role in Haitian history and culture culminated in Dessalines becoming the only revolutionary leader to ascend, in a disembodied form, into Haitian religious systems of worship.

While Dayan argues that Dessalines was certainly affiliated with other leaders famous for the practice of West African religions, including Biassou, he is most well-known for his rejection of French social and political customs, which she argues may well have been why nineteenth-century historians outside of Haiti had little to say about his role in achieving independence. For Dayan, Dessalines' radical notions of race and land redistribution and his assumption of creole identity gave him a unique role in the revolution itself and in the Haitian imagination. This role, for Dayan, is best identified by the dual meanings associated with the figure of *Dessalines démembré*, a term for the *lwa* Dessalines became in some oral traditions that date back to the revolutionary era.⁵³ While the term "démembré" recalls dismemberment, beating and battering, Dayan argues that Haitian ethnographers translate it as "powerful," a meaning that seems inconsistent with its bodily associations.⁵⁴ She notes that other practitioners argue that "*démembré*" may well have come from the term "*denambre*," or to name, number, or from the root word "nam" meaning spirit. Thus the defining legacy of Dessalines becomes not only the beaten or dismembered body, but also the body stripped of its spirit and the possibility of an empowered spirit that has shed its bodily confines.

"Il y a des zombies dans ceci...": Dessalines, Disembodiment, and Early Haitian

Literature

The legacy of Dessalines takes on a very different set of meanings than that of Toussaint Louverture. Perhaps because he was such a radical figure in the history of Haitian independence, mid nineteenth-century historians outside of Haiti had a much

⁵³ Dayan cites a song included in early twentieth-century compilations of oral traditions that is said to date back at least a century, although as with any oral text, these are difficult to authenticate.

⁵⁴ See Dayan's discussion, p. 31

more difficult time characterizing Dessalines or creating stabilizing narratives about his role in Haitian revolutionary history. It is clear, however, that historians inside and outside of Haiti defined him, albeit negatively, through his relationship to living and dead bodies. While Dessalines' radicalism and unique creole identity undoubtedly played important roles in his apotheosis as a *lwa*, there is a great deal of evidence in his proclamations and the eyewitness accounts of his spoken words that his own beliefs about the relationship between the body and the spirit were consistent with the belief system into which he entered after death. A close reading of these texts reveals a radical understanding of the relationship between his own body, the bodies of the insurgents, and an unceasing spirit of resistance that culminates in his disembodied spirit's incorporation into the Vodou cosmology, and that imbues Haitian literature of the early nineteenth century.

Dessalines' proclamations portray a distinctive attitude towards the role of the body in establishing liberty and sovereignty in Haiti. Dessalines, despite his characterization by many mid nineteenth-century biographers and historians as ferocious and cruel, was anxious, particularly before independence, to characterize himself as showing mercy towards the French and extending his protection over French colonists who had already submitted. Dessalines, also famous for reimagining boundaries of race, relied upon racial distinction as a means of garnering support for his efforts, eventually considering it a basis to reject the metaphor of familial relations Louverture so frequently used. His attitudes towards bodies, both alive and dead, may set some precedent for the appearance of *Ougo Desalin* in the Haitian Vodou cosmology; he understood the body

both as a weapon and a vessel to be respected, and, at times, his proclamations alluded to a connection to the disembodied spirit that we certainly see later in his legacy.

In November 1803, Dessalines outlined a treaty with Rochambeau for his withdrawal from Cap Français in which the fifth article specifically gave amnesty to the French soldiers who were too injured to be moved, noting that they were “specially recommended to the humanity of General Dessalines” (Madiou V. III, 118). Here Dessalines establishes a sense in which his capacity for mercy towards suffering bodies is cast as humane, enlightened, and reasonable. He makes a similar move in addressing the people of Cap Français after its capture in 1803, again citing his personal protection as their means of safety:

I, without distinction, give my protection and security to the inhabitants of all conditions, and, on this occasion, you see me following the same line of conduct. The manner with which the inhabitants of each town, Jeremie, Cayes, Port-au-Prince have been received and treated, is for you guaranteed by my good faith and honor. (Madiou V. III, 120)

Here, Dessalines notation of “without distinction” can certainly be read as alluding to distinctions of nationality and race and hence may be read as keeping up the appearance of the appellation Madiou ascribes to him as “Jean-Jacques the good” (V. III, 142).

Despite his self-fashioning as merciful and honorable, Dessalines also understood his own body as both a source of power and a weapon in the fight for independence. He also expected his troops to consider the power they might derive from their own bodies.

Madiou reports that the 1803 Battle of Croix-des-Bouquets

Dessalines saw the soldiers of the 8th flinching and rushed into the midst of them, reviving their courage. At the same moment, two regiments of the four fired the deadliest barrage. The shaken *indigenes* again lost ground. “Forward! Forward” cried Dessalines, braving death with the front lines. The soldiers responded to his

voice “General, we have no powder.” Dessalines, boiling with anger: “Take them with your nails and teeth!” (V. III, 87)

Dessalines’ physical presence is figured as inciting courage in his soldiers, and his references to the body as a form of weaponry speak to an understanding of the body that is radically removed from the figure of the tortured black body discussed above. The soldiers’ bodies become a source of power that had hitherto been unrealized, particularly in terms of its potential to resist French control of the colony.

On the eve of independence, however, Dessalines began to rely upon racial difference as a rallying point to unify the black and colored populations against the French. After Louverture’s arrest in 1802, Dessalines spoke to a crowd of African bands of rebels which is said to have included Jean Zombi, attempting to unify them on the basis of race and creole identity:⁵⁵

No! No! We will never make peace with the whites! Look at my face! [...] Am I white? Do you not recognize the hero of Crête-a-Pierrot? Was I white at Petite-Rivière in Arbonite, when the expedition arrived? Ask these hills covered with French bones. Will they name Dessalines the hero of these trophies? (Madiou, V. II, 441)

Here Dessalines points not only to race as the unifying factor in rallying the armed forces in the final push for independence, but also refers to the bodies of the French as his trophies, or corporeal proof of his victory. He stages a direct relationship between his own body as representing a triumphant modality in which various forces might be unified, and the remains of the French, who are figured as testifying to his power. Here Dessalines’ use of his own body is in no way related to his former enslavement, and thus

⁵⁵ The quote is my own translation of Madiou, but the claim that Jean Zombi, for whom she argues the zombie figure took its name, is from Dayan’s description of the scene, p. 22.

bears little resemblance to the ways nineteenth-century historians and biographers treated his body and his legacy.

Dessalines also uses this understanding of the body in the proclamations in which he severed all ties with the French. Here Dessalines uses racial difference as a basis for rejecting the ties of kinship and loyalty Louverture so carefully constructed in his letters. Dessalines also employs specific theories of race as corresponding with climate in calling for a rejection of the French. In one of the longest proclamations included in Madiou's history, Dessalines is reported to have asked his audience "What do we have in common with these murderous people? Compare their cruelty to our patient moderation, their color to ours, the extent of sea that separates us, our savage climate, we say enough that they are not our brothers, that they will never become so" (V. III, 147). Dessalines relies upon the material conditions commonly associated with race (including climate and geography) to construct the Haitian people as distinct from the French. In doing so, he argues for a radical break from not only the French government, but also the assimilationist position Louverture often supported towards French culture.

Like Louverture, at least in his later writings, Dessalines also relied upon metaphors of kinship to unify the black and colored populations in Haiti. Dessalines' understanding of kinship, however, extends beyond death in a way that is very much consistent with West African systems of belief. He begins by asking the audience to:

Cast round your eyes on every part of this island; seek there your wives, your husbands, your brothers and your sisters – what did I say? Seek your children – your children at the breast, what has become of them? I shudder to tell it – *the prey of vultures*. Instead of these interesting victims, the affrighted eye sees only their assassins – tigers still covered with their blood, and whose terrifying presence reproaches you for your insensibility, and your guilty tardiness to avenge them – what do you wait for, to appease their manes? Remember that you have wished your remains to be laid by the side of your fathers – When you have

driven out tyranny, will you descend into their tombs, without having avenged them? No: their bones would repulse yours. (Rainsford 263)

Dessalines' own words speak to the connection between the independence of the nation of Haiti and the dead, who here present disembodied figures that have the power to accept or reject the living citizens of Haiti. The dead here are posed as an integral aspect of citizenship in the nation of Haiti and belonging in a national, creole identity.

Dessalines' proclamations reveal an interesting genealogy of his own treatment of bodies that promotes the kinds of understandings of the relationship between the living and the dead that are central to West African and Haitian systems of belief. While earlier in the revolutionary struggles, Dessalines struggled to fashion himself as particularly invested in showing mercy to the French, he later began to move away from the language framing Louverture's early relationship to the French and towards a radical understanding of Haitian independence expressed through metaphors of the body and the spirit. First, he began to understand the black body in itself as a source of resistance to colonial power. He consolidated this understanding in radically rethinking notions of nationhood in order to constitute an alternative understanding of the relationships between the bodies of the Haitian people and their conception of nationhood. Finally, he drew on alternate understandings of the relationship between living and dead bodies in demanding that the Haitian people answer to the bones of the ancestors. Here he sets the stage for the modes of disembodiment that would later stage forms of resistance in Haitian culture and literature.

Joan Dayan proposes that Dessalines' entry into the spiritual world of the Haitian imaginary signals a genesis that began in the 1791 ceremony of Bois-Caïman and

continues today. While Dayan traces the path of the disembodied Dessalines into modern oral cultures of Haiti, very little scholarship considers the role of disembodiment in early Haitian creative literature. Scholarship on Haitian literature tends to largely ignore Haitian prose contributions in the nineteenth century, and generally begins with the vast literary movement of the 1920's and 1930's, much of which attempted to reinvigorate Haitian culture as a response to the 1915 U.S. occupation of Haiti. In the shadow of this wealth of poetry, plays, and novels, are the works produced in Haiti in before the US occupation, many of which creatively reimagine the complex relationships between the body, the disembodied subject and liberty and sovereignty in the new nation of Haiti. Among these works are Ignace Nau's "Isalina," a novella published in 1837 that describes a young woman's experiences with zombification and local ritual practice and reshapes modes of thinking about the relationship between the body, the spirit and liberty.

Very few critics have responded to "Isalina". The Nau brothers, Émile and Ignace, were well known in Haiti in the 1830's for their publication of *Republicain*, a literary magazine that was censored by the Haitian government (Underwood, n.p.). Ignace Nau, born in 1808 and educated in New York, published several poems and short stories, including "Isalina" that sought to portray the lives of rural Haitian populations. Anna Brickhouse notes that "Isalina" was published in the *Revue des Colonies*, a publication created by a small group of Caribbean intellectuals calling themselves the *Société des Hommes de Couleur* (86). Brickhouse notes that Émile Nau had briefly run a literary newspaper in Haiti, but had been shut down by the Boyer regime in 1835. "Isalina" was published in serial form in 1836 and 1837, and is largely thought to be "the

first known work of prose fiction in the Haitian literary tradition” (Brickhouse 116). While it is difficult to pin down the circulation of “Isalina” in particular, Marlene Daut notes that Nau gained international notoriety in the mid nineteenth century.⁵⁶ The fact that Nau and other Haitian writers of his time were read in the United States speaks to the possibility that Haitian literary and political texts influenced mid-nineteenth century U.S. cultures.

In the only substantial contemporary study of “Isalina,” Anna Brickhouse reads the novella’s picturesque setting and emphases on clear markers of rural Haitian culture, including ritual practices, as answering the call for indigenous literatures in Haiti. Nau’s identification of such rituals as central to rural life and Haitian identity can also be read as a critique of the Boyer regime’s recent criminalization of non-Western ritual practices.⁵⁷ While Brickhouse argues that the role of ritual in “Isalina” is to restore the balance of social structure, I assert that it also presents forms of disembodiment as powerful means of resisting the confines of that structure. The story itself employs a means of disembodiment not unlike that of Dessalines, suggesting that the modes of thinking about the relationship between the body and spirit in local ritual practice contain the potential to resist political and social restrictions to liberty.

In short, “Isalina” is the story of a love triangle mediated by ritual practice. Isalina, the daughter of the owner of a sugar cane processing plant, is promised to Paul, another worker there. His baptismal brother, Jean-Julien sees her at a festival and later

⁵⁶ Daut quotes an July 9, 1853 *The Albion* article entitled “Mulatto Literature” as referring to Nau as “one of the cleverest of the negro novelists” qtd. in Daut p. 50, f.n. 1).

⁵⁷ For further discussion, see Kate Ramsey’s *The Spirits and the Law: Vodou and Power in Haiti* pages 58-62

attacks her in a cemetery when she refuses his advances.⁵⁸ After the attack, Isalina is not herself, and the villagers suspect she has been bewitched. On the advice of his mother, Paul seeks out the help of Galba, an oungan, or ritual specialist, who determines that Isalina has been attacked by Jean-Julien and bewitched by Marie Robin, a local practitioner of “la science” with substantial powers.⁵⁹ Galba prescribes a set of rituals aimed at freeing Isalina from the trance and eradicating Jean-Julien’s love for her. The ritual works in curing Isalina, and the story ends with their formal betrothal.

The story suggests a number of ways in which the freedoms of the entire community, and the eponymous character have been curbed both by law and social custom. First, Nau begins with a detailed description of the sugar refinery. Despite Nau’s assertion that “Indeed, is there nothing more animated, more varied or more picturesque” than the sugar refinery at Roulaison, it is clear throughout the story that working conditions are far from optimal (28). Nau asks the reader to

Imagine a workshop, more than a hundred workers, divided into groups and spread throughout the building, each handling a special task supervised by a driver who monitors their progress. Each group conducts its work without interruption from morning to night, chatting - this one marveling at some fantastic tale of sorcery or some extraordinary feat of a dancer. (28)

Here the brutal conditions of work are juxtaposed with quaint scenes of culture that urge the reader to consider both aspects of the community. Nau is careful to point out that the position of “driver” rendered in French as “*conducteur*” is a more or less equal status with the other workers, that entailed ensuring the smooth operation of the machines and

⁵⁸ The term “*frère de baptême*” in the most literal sense indicates children baptized together, but in Haitian traditions, the term also implies extended kinship ties.

⁵⁹ Here Nau carefully refrains from using the pejorative “*sortilège*,” but it is clear within the text that Marie Robin’s acts of malicious magic are neither sanctioned by the narrator nor treated with the same specificity and respect as Galba’s.

avoidance of accidents, the most common task of his being “quickly rescu[ing] the arms of the unfortunates who sometimes get caught in the cylinders” (28). Nau’s choice to include the refinery in the story at all can be read as a backdrop of daily life in the countryside that pits culture against the reality of working conditions. The settings Nau provides – the inside of the factory, and the communal and private spaces of home, the countryside, and the cemetery offer a divide between the embodied and disembodied components of the story. The factory, which the reader experiences through rich sensory descriptions, is thoroughly defined by the bodies of the workers, while the story’s other settings, including the graveyard, the countryside, and Galba’s home, are associated with the spirit world.

The reactions of the young people to each other in the story also portray a series of social constraints that appear difficult for Isalina to overcome. The reader becomes aware of the novella’s central conflict when Paul warns Isalina about the attention she has been receiving from other young men. He specifically tells her that he overheard men talking about her during a performance of the Calinda, a public dance that would have been more recognizable to readers outside of Haiti than the descriptions of private rituals included later in the text.⁶⁰ When Isalina responds, she asks Paul “hesitantly” whether one of them was his baptismal brother, Jean-Julien. While Nau is not explicit about the reasons for her hesitation, it is clear that the response, while logically consistent with what she has been told, upsets Paul. Paul responds, interrupting her “I’m not sure, he

⁶⁰ The Calinda was the most well-known dance readers outside of Haiti and was a widely known marker of Haitian culture. This is largely because of Moreau de St.-Méry’s inclusion of a description of the Calinda as an erotic performance in which male dancers compete for the attention of a single female dancer. While St.-Méry does not comment on the religious and spiritual meanings of the Calinda, he does note impression of the “power” of the dance as associated with African or creole origins. For further discussion, see Médéric Louis Elie Moreau de Saint-Méry’s *Description topographique, physique, civile, politique et historique de la partie française de l’isle Saint-Domingue*, Volume 1, p. 55.

would have been punished for insolence but he is my baptismal brother” (31). Isalina later wonders if Paul means to “reproach” her, signaling again the stringent social codes she is being accused of breaking. Paul’s allusion to punishment makes clear the potential ramifications of crossing social and kinship boundaries, and his intense reaction to Isalina and Paul’s management of the situation instigate a power struggle over the body and love of Isalina. When Jean-Julien attacks Isalina in the cemetery, she is forced to choose, at knifepoint, between Paul and Jean-Julien, a choice that pits ensuring her own physical safety against guarding her social reputation. Choosing the latter, she is pushed into a gravestone and injured. The reader finds out that at some time after, she was “bewitched” by Marie Robin, a practitioner of malicious *maji*, at Jean-Julien’s request.

The language with which Nau describes the attack and Isalina’s injuries is troubling, particularly considering the material reality of what has happened. Paul hears of the attack from some workers traveling through the area, who report that “No, but the situation was mysterious, and all the old villagers believe there is witchcraft involved” (41). They give a scant description of what they know about the attack, to which there were no witnesses, and end their conversation with the question “There are zombies involved in this, don’t you think?” (42). While a lack of evidence (here only the unconscious Isalina and a knife that has apparently not been used) may indicate a mystery of sorts, Nau’s readers may well have questioned why zombification might come into play at this point in the story. One possibility is that the zombies here imply the presence secret societies within the community to reinforce social control. In his seminal study of the Haitian zombi, Wade Davis asserts that secret societies, including what later became known as Bizango, modeled upon similar groupings in West Africa, were a vital

component of maroon communities. Citing Michel Laguerre, Davis asserts that secret societies, saw themselves as “arbiters of culture,” intervening in social matters (221). He also notes that such societies “had frequently been linked to the creation of zombies” (238).⁶¹ In light of Davis and Laguerre’s research, the villager’s question of whether “zombies” are involved denotes multiple meanings. Whether the villagers refer to the intervention of secret societies or of individual practitioners of zombification, the implication is that the attack on Isalina is a form of control exerted over her from outside sources.

Although there is no mention of these zombies throughout the remainder of the text, the reference stands out in light of Dayan’s assertions about the duality of the Haitian zombi, which can refer to “both spirit, and, more specifically, the animated dead, a body without mind” (37). Both meanings are reflected as the story unfolds. She is repeatedly referred to as having been murdered (“*a été assassinée*”) despite the text’s insistence that she is very much alive, and the practitioner who eventually returns her spirit to her body recognizes that her inanimate body is under partial control by a competing ougan. There is also the possibility in the text that, due to a lack of evidence, the villagers suspect a disembodied spirit has in fact attacked Isalina. Here, Isalina’s disembodiment arises, at least on a material level, out of her unwillingness to speak against her betrothed and defy social constraints on her choice in lovers, and her body becomes what Dayan calls “mindless” not only because of the ritual but because she becomes an object over which the men battle through the ougans they employ.

⁶¹ While Davis’ later participation in commodifying Haitian culture for American audiences makes him a fairly controversial figure, his study of the use of zombification as social control is particularly useful here as it opens a potential for thinking through Nau’s mention of the zombi in a way entirely unrelated to the spiritual practices at the center of the text.

Interestingly, Isalina's condition can be registered on multiple levels within the text. First, as the other characters' treatment of her implies, she has been rendered a zombi by an outside power. Second, as Brickhouse argues, "the narrator suggests in the first section of the story that Isalina's delirium and her rejection of Paul have an empirical source, one that readers see firsthand in her fall and the injury to her head" (116). Finally, the text lends itself to the implication that her "illness" reflects her inability to pursue her own romantic choices. This final possibility considers her ultimate powerlessness within the context of the story; she can neither voice her choice in lovers nor protect herself from the very real physical and social dangers she faces.

Considering Isalina to be bewitched, Paul seeks out the help of an ougan, Galba, in freeing her. Galba himself is a figure whose description merits some attention, particularly given the ways in which his power and his Haitian identity are literally written on his body:

Galba is a man whose musculature announces an extraordinary strength considerable for his being almost in his sixty-eighth year. His hairy, large head bears no resemblance to the true African type, which is greatly improved in our country. His nose is slightly flattened over an insensitive upper lip, and is bordered by wide arched eyebrows. His arms are massive and open, and his shoulders square. His figure is tall and well made. He is a little bandy-legged, and consequently his knees hinder and delay his progress. (46)

Here Nau's focus on physical strength as a marker of spiritual power is evident and his comments that Galba's physiology does not resemble an African claim his body as particularly Haitian. The mention of his disability also marks him as an inheritor of the legacy of tortured bodies discussed in the previous chapter.

Along with the physical limitations Galba faces, Nau also alludes to the presence of strict legal enforcement of the ban on ritual practice under Boyer's regime. He

describes Galba's home as being guarded by a serpent described as "obedient to the instinct or the magic of his master, as it should be, [that] stays exclusively on the hill overlooking the cottage to sniff out strangers" (48). The narrator intervenes to let the reader know that the snake is there "to defend against any charge by concealing him from rural police surveillance. We cannot forget that without doubt justice imposes punishments for disobeying its laws" (48). Galba, as a practitioner of recently criminalized rituals associated with Vodou and Ginen, faces very real material consequences as a result of his spiritual practices.

Before accepting Paul's request for his services, Galba asks a number of questions that betray an awareness of several possible causes of Isalina's illness, the most telling of which is when he asks Paul how Isalina reacts to Jean-Julien. Here, Galba's investigation asserts the possibility that Isalina's conduct may be caused by unfaithfulness rather than being bewitched, but goes on to perform an investigatory ritual that involves several layers of disembodiment. To begin the ritual, Galba "went into his secret room and stayed there a long time in total silence. All of a sudden, they saw a claret illuminate the chamber. They heard voiceless moans and convulsive sighs, and like boiling water, the snake's shrill whistling" (53). Galba returns from his trance "with a singular expression of knowing" and asks Paul to gaze into a series of cards he has placed on a board. The cards reveal the figures of Jean-Julien and Marie Robin through a means that implies that their disembodied spirits appear there. The narrator writes "a shadow passed over the card and settled there for a moment. The features were the facsimile of a real person" that Paul recognizes as Jean Julien (55). Galba then asks Paul to gaze into a basin of water, which reveals the image of Isalina, kissing Jean-Julien's hand. The enraged Paul moves

to shatter the basin, and Galba reminds him that what he is seeing are “only images” (56). Despite the immateriality of the vision, Galba sprinkles powder into the basin, and assures Paul that “Isalina is saved” by his actions, asserting that he has been able to affect her bodily illness and the discomfort of her mind through the images themselves (56). Here Paul asserts a disembodied control over Isalina’s body on a number of levels; first, he acts through Galba, removing his own body from the equation, and second, through Galba’s intervention, affects Isalina’s physical and emotional states. Brickhouse reads Galba’s intervention as one which resolves the central crisis of the story, Isalina’s rejection of her betrothed. Brickhouse argues that “the end of the tale established a new genealogy – and effectively restores what is salvageable from the old, disrupted one – through the paternal figure of the *papa-loi*, to whom Paul ultimately offers himself as his son” (116-117). Galba’s role here as a practitioner is entirely consistent with conceptions of Vodou practice outside of Haiti, which Kate Ramsey notes are frequently thought of as “the entire range of spiritual and healing practices undertaken within extended families and through relationships with male and female religious leaders, called, respectively, *ougan* and *manbo*” (7). Nau’s reluctance to specify such rituals as part of what many of his contemporaries outside of Haiti would term “Vodou” can be read as portraying a more nuanced and particularly Haitian understanding of the term that Nau did not assume his readers would share.

Despite the patriarchal tone of the story, the character who suggests the greatest potential for resisting the strict social structure is Marie Robin, a practitioner of *maji* who never actually appears in the story. Paul’s mother brings up Marie Robin’s power as a means of listing Galba’s accomplishments in noting that “Galba is even feared by the

famous Marie Robin,” implying that she is well known enough to present a substantial threat to Isalina (44). Paul recognizes Marie Robin in the Queen of Spades card Galba uses in the ritual and his startled reaction “What! Marie Robin! Eh! My God! I am so lost” implies a profound respect for her power within the community (54). Marie Robin is herself entirely absent from the story, but her disembodied intervention in the plot contains a great deal of power to threaten the established social order.

Brickhouse’s reading centers on Nau’s story as answering a call for indigenist literature in Haiti’s newly accessible public sphere, and begins to address the complex layers of patriarchal power at stake in such a tale. This chapter argues for extending Brickhouse’s reading by focusing more specifically on the ways in which established and alternative formulations of patriarchy are inscribed through the disembodiment of Isalina and Marie Robin. I would argue here that Isalina’s disembodiment exposes her subjugated position in the face of particularly gendered systems of power presented through the villagers, the institution of marriage, and the men who use her body and her spirit as sites of masculine struggle. Her disembodiment at the hands of Marie Robin allows for an even more complex reading of the text; despite Marie Robin’s role as a hired intermediary, the power to disrupt the genealogy Brickhouse identifies here does provide a force of disruption within the text that is enacted and recognized through Marie Robin’s disembodiment. While nineteenth-century creative Haitian works were rarely widely disseminated, “Isalina,” often cited as the first piece of Haitian prose fiction, was both published in a forum that facilitated a relatively large reading audience, and was thought of, at least by its author, as presenting a uniquely Haitian text. Certainly its focus on disembodiment as means of both exerting and subverting social power establishes in a

literary context the importance of the relationship between the body and the spirit in disrupting power dynamics in the early nineteenth century.

From Tortured to Unencumbered: The Shedding of Haitian Bodies

With the advent of Haitian prose fiction, creative writers began to reconfigure understandings of the body and of power in unique and interesting ways. As the previous chapter had shown, the tortured body enjoys a strange legacy in writings about Haiti. The tortured black body became a focal point for those who justified the violence of the revolution and those who condemned it. In many of the early eyewitness accounts and histories, black bodies in Haiti were defined by legacies of slavery and colonial abuse, powerless, abject figures that barely merited personhood. As Haitian writers and to some extent later British and U.S. historians and biographers revisited the Haitian revolution and its leaders in the mid nineteenth-century, understandings of black bodies in general and specific black bodies began to take on new meanings in Haitian contexts. In Madiou's and Ardouin's histories of the revolution, we see for the first time nuanced, detailed treatments of the revolution's leaders and its violence that no longer equated blackness with inherent disposition towards barbarism and violence, and no longer emphasized black bodies' powerless and sub-human status. In abolitionist writings, Toussaint Louverture's biography was used to illustrate the movement from one tortured black body to a superhuman leader, a journey that was consistently centered on the body. Louverture was portrayed as a weak body overcome by a strong spirit, a protector of bodies, and, in the end, a suffering body at the hands of the French.

Interestingly, Dessalines' own written work emphasized the role of bodies in forming movements of resistance in many ways that Louverture's did not, and consolidated understandings of disembodiment that certainly preceded him in oral traditions, but had not been publicized in international forums until his proclamations became objects of focus in U.S. and European newspapers. Dessalines' radical understandings of race and vision of a politically and culturally independent Haiti certainly left a lasting legacy on the political sphere, but his uniquely creole vision of the empowered spirit as a mode of resistance profoundly influenced early nineteenth-century Haitian literature, including "Isalina".⁶² In the following chapters, I will trace the modes of resistance made possible by the ability of the white creole subject to reimagine his or her embodiment and potential for disembodiment in U.S. works about revolutionary Saint Domingue.

⁶² The same can certainly be argued for Haiti's first novel, Émeric Bergeaud's *Stella*, as well as some of the spirits and bodily metaphors common to nineteenth-century Haitian poetry, including Arsène Chevry's and Oswald Durand's.

Chapter 3: From Haiti to the U.S.: Migrating Bodies, Spirits and Identity

While I argue in the previous chapters that notions of the body as a source of suffering and the disembodied spirit as a source of freedom arose and developed in revolutionary-era Haitian settings, I turn in this chapter to fiction writers who traveled back and forth between Saint Domingue and the United States, carrying understandings of the body and the disembodied that were heavily influenced by what would become Haitian culture to audiences outside of Haiti. The authors and the texts themselves are deeply tied to multiple locales, and hence connect bodies and ideas from across the Atlantic. Although there are certainly a number of authors, including Pierre Faubert and Martha Meredith Reade, who might be considered part of this category, this chapter examines the works of Leonora Sansay's *Secret History, or the Horrors of St. Domingo* (1808) and the anonymously authored *Mon Odyssée* (circa 1799).⁶³ Both texts creatively reimagine the authors' experiences in revolutionary Saint Domingue, and I argue that both authors understand the body as a means through which white creoles and black subjects might gain freedom not only from bodily danger, but also disrupt categories of class, gender, and sexuality.

The anonymous author of *Mon Odyssée* has been identified as the eighteen year old Jean-Paul Pillet, the son of French planter who owned property in Saint Domingue,

⁶³ The text was discovered in the Puech Parnham family papers, and an abridged English version was published under the title *My Odyssey: Experiences of a Young Refugee from Two Revolutions by a Creole of Saint Domingue*. Portions of the original manuscript have been translated into English and included in Jeremy Popkin's *Facing Racial Revolution*. The passages cited from *Mon Odyssée* are my own translations of the full text of the French manuscript, "*Mon Odyssée : L'Épopée d'un colon de Saint-Domingue, par Jean-Paul Pillet* » ,édité par Anja Bandau et Jeremy D. Popkin, Collection "Lire le Dix-Huitième Siècle" Paris: Société française d'étude du Dix-Huitième Siècle 2014 (publication forthcoming at the time of this work. I am deeply indebted to Jeremy Popkin for providing the contents of the French manuscript and his and Bandau's annotations. Unless otherwise noted, the excerpts included in this work are my own translations of the manuscript.

and traveled there in July 1791.⁶⁴ The text itself presents a mixed genre of poetry and narrative, and spans the author's travels to Saint Domingue, his active duty in the colonial armed forces, his escape from Saint Domingue, his arrival in Louisiana, and his eventual move to New York, where the manuscripts were compiled. In many instances, Pillet's prose accounts are absolutely consistent with other late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century eyewitness narratives, and are written in very much the same style. For example, he reports that "The slaves, seduced by French emissaries, had set fire to the plantations of Le Cap, after having murdered the owners, without regard for age or gender" (44). Both his allegations that the slave rebellions were instigated by French revolutionary ideals that had spread to Saint Domingue and his description of the slaughter of women and children bear remarkable resemblance to his contemporaries' descriptions of the early uprisings. Among the horrors Pillet describes are scenes typical of other eyewitness literature of the period and make use of a number of motifs aimed to drive home the devastation, including scenes of rape, cannibalism, and the murder of children that are more or less word for word the same as other accounts. As if aware of these accounts, and his participation in a new but popular genre of literature, he adds "These scenes are not exaggerated, and I, myself, more than once, I saw these sad spectacles. Oh how painful were the sensations I felt [...] so different than those I had felt before" (45).

While Pillet is certainly aware of and participates in many of the conventions of eyewitness literature in the context of the Haitian Revolution, his self-conscious framing of his experience is unique to the genre. His text is also unique in using a mixed genre approach, combining prose and poetry in order to describe his individual experiences and

⁶⁴ Bernadette and Philippe Rossignol recently identified the author through their research in the French archives, and published their findings in *Genealogie et Histoire de la Caraïbe*.

perspectives on the events he describes. In both his poetry and his prose, Pillet also provides a remarkably malleable perspective on his own body and identity, and those of the insurgents he encounters. He thus presents a complex reimagining of the significations and confines of the bodies, and the ways in which culturally-specific formulations of disembodiment might serve to disrupt bodily significations and resist the confines of class, nationality, and gender that were normatively associated with the body.

In thinking through the various formulations of disembodiment and embodiment found in these texts, we might be tempted to ask whether these authors were indeed influenced by Haitian cultures and/or literary traditions. Pillet, despite his overtly colonialist and often racist views of the colony's black population, certainly recognizes several allusions to the kinds of disembodiment considered in the case of Jean-Jacques Dessalines in the previous chapter. While Pillet himself does not recognize the disembodiment of the spirit, or the related embodiment of other spirits within Haitian bodies as intrinsically related to imagining novel forms of liberty, his descriptions and uses of possession allude to an understanding of the culturally-specific modes of disembodiment we see in Dessalines' proclamations. They also stand against the example of Pillet's own understandings of the ways in which his own body acts to register and sometimes resist cultural and sexual normativity. For example, Pillet describes his experiences in being mistaken for a cross-dressed woman with a flexibility and enthusiasm that are still remarkable today.

Leonora Sansay's *Secret History* is a much more widely studied text. Written as an epistolary novel, the text details the experience of two sisters, Mary and Clara, who travel to Saint Domingue in the middle of the revolutionary period. While the text also

includes vignettes of war-time violence, it centers much more clearly on the social lives of creoles in Saint Domingue, the violent relationship between Clara and her husband, St. Louis, Clara's coquetry, and the women's eventual escape from the colony. I argue that the text grapples with the confines of women's embodiment, and highlights the sexual power of women's bodies as means of resistance to patriarchal and political power. I suggest below that both authors present, through their emphases on women's embodiment and power, specific attributes of white creole and mulatto bodies, the ability to alter the body through dress and fashion and spiritual possession, an understanding of re-embodiment that recontextualizes the discourse of suffering bodies and liberated spirits that took root in revolutionary Haiti's written and oral cultures.⁶⁵

I begin this chapter with a look at the kinds of power Sansay attaches to women's bodies and sexualities, suggesting that women's bodies become a means through which they can gain access to social and political power. While women's bodies are coded as the site of struggle and one means of resistance to the encroachment of male domination and wartime violence, both Sansay and Pillet also explore the particular kinds of embodiment associated with creoles, alternatively suggesting the suffering and access to social power. As part of their discussion of creole bodies, Sansay and Pillet both suggest that subjects can reimagine their own embodiment through manipulating dress and fashion in order to make visible on the body markers of particular forms of identity. While this kind of reimagining of the body can be read as participating in the same performative aspects of embodiment found in the United States and Europe, in the cases

⁶⁵ Sansay and Pillet's texts use the term "creole" to denote white creoles, I find it clearer to use the system of racial categorization in place in Saint Domingue at the time in order to differentiate between the specific usage of the term "creole" in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and our understandings of the term in contemporary scholarship.

of these texts, it is also heavily influenced by the local culture in Saint Domingue. These texts' reimagining of embodiment constructed by both authors does not stop at using already-established formulations of embodiment in creole contexts, but goes on to suggest that the kinds of ritual possession found in revolutionary Haiti pose a substantial means of accessing forms of liberty from physical and epistemic violence.

Bodies as Battlegrounds: Marriage and Empire in *Secret History*

Sansay's text itself provides a means of disembodiment Sansay herself that frames her authorship as a whole. In *Out in Public: Configuration of Women's Bodies in Nineteenth-Century America*, Alison Piepmeier considers the ramifications of binaries surrounding what she terms the public embodiment of women in the nineteenth century. Her usage of the term embodiment denotes the a growing fascination among U.S. writers with publicizing the movement, materiality and sexuality of women's bodies, creating a grounding of femininity in the body itself and asserting a number of meanings through the body that sought to construct nineteenth-century womanhood. Piepmeier argues that particular female authors use forms of public embodiment to "shape not only their corporeal identities but also the available options for women and the larger public culture" (15). While Piepmeier does not specifically address the work of Leonora Sansay, her understanding of public embodiment is absolutely relevant to thinking through Sansay's treatment of the body. I would also argue that Sansay's treatment of bodies in general, and of specific women's bodies, also suggests that through the casting of her novel as fiction and through manipulating specific aspects of embodiment, women like Sansay can access modes of resistance to social control and the encroachment of political power that were otherwise unavailable to them at the time.

Secret History is an epistolary novel taking the form of letters to and from Mary, her sister Clara, and Aaron Burr. At the time of the novel's publication, Leonora Sansay, the novel's author, also called in the original title page "a Lady at Cape Francois," was known as "a public coquette" who most certainly had a relationship with Aaron Burr.⁶⁶ She was born Mary Hassal, and although little is known about her life, she was referred to as Leonora Sansay in her archived correspondence that does provide a record of the author herself. Critics like Elizabeth Maddock Dillon note that the fictionalized Mary, in addition to bearing the same birth name as the author, is characterized as a "close friend of Aaron Burr's and most likely his lover as well," a biographical detail of Sansay's life that is certainly suggested by Burr's correspondence (77). The question becomes, then, why Aaron Burr appears throughout the novel under his own name, while the novel's "Mary" is not the name Sansay used to refer to herself as the author. The novel is also presented as a work of fiction, despite the overwhelming parallels between the novel's plot and Sansay's life. I propose here that Leonora Sansay creates in *Secret History* a largely autobiographical novel told from the point of view of a protagonist who at once embodies many of Sansay's characteristics and activities, and simultaneously removes that embodiment from the author herself.

One interesting insight to the kind of re-embodiment Sansay may have been working towards in her protagonist, Mary, is to consider whether Sansay was, like her contemporary Sarah Hale, using a "print body [as] a representation of and a surrogate for [her] own body" (Piepmeier 173). This surrogacy, made more complicated in Sansay's text by the layers of removal present between the author and the protagonist, and the presence of Mary's sister, Clara, allows Sansay to explore new possibilities for female

⁶⁶ See Michael Drexler's introduction to the text.

embodiment, including resistance to social control, male domination, and sexuality.

Through Mary, Sansay disputes social norms surrounding gender and sexuality just as often as she upholds them. Through Clara, Sansay suggests that women can gain access to social and political power through capitalizing on their own embodiment, and through embracing forms of alternative embodiment, like possession, that are linked specifically to Saint Domingue.

The presence of very real historical figures within the text unsettles a simple reading of Sansay's work as fiction. Among the figures Sansay characterizes are Aaron Burr, General Rochambeau, and Pauline Leclerc, three public figures with whom her audience would have been familiar. In choosing to address a majority of the novel's letters to Burr, Sansay parallels Mary's connection to extramarital love to Burr's political status in the United States as well, suggesting that there is something revolutionary in these women's actions and reactions to male domination. Gretchen Woertendyke notes that "for her contemporary readers, the title would have evoked a series of unsettling events with uncertain implications for the future of the Early [U.S.] Republic" (257). The parallel between the "secret history" of the extramarital affair and the revolution in Saint Domingue becomes even more subversive in light of Sansay's own role in carrying messages for Burr during his 1805 plot to assume control of Western territories.⁶⁷

Interestingly, rather than simply casting herself in the novel as Mary, the character who bears her given name, Sansay's novel focuses on the lives of two women, Mary and her sister Clara. Elizabeth Maddock Dillon also notes that

⁶⁷ Gretchen Woertendyke asserts that "Despite increasing suspicions about his plots in the west, Burr was able to secure the aid of a very successful building contractor, who could marshal, as needed, over five-hundred Irish migrant Laborers. The messenger who carried papers between Burr and Latrobe was Leonora Sansay" (258).

the most apparent fictionalized aspect of Sansay's own history as redacted in the novel is the split between Clara and Mary – a split that enables Sansay to refashion her persona in the form of two characters rather than one. While this split is clearly fictional, it also derives from what is apparently a rhetorical ploy within Sansay's own correspondence with Aaron Burr, in which she describes the exploits of a figure named "Clara" (presumably a code name for herself) in Saint Domingue. (78 f.n. 2)

In this way, Sansay's use of the text creates, as Piepmeier asserts about Sarah Hale's, provides "a space which can create syncretic, multivalent embodiment" (175). This embodiment, for Sansay allows a means to explore potentials for sexual freedom and resistance to domestic oppression that Sansay could not or would not attribute to her own personal history.⁶⁸ In his introduction to the text, Michael Drexler also suggests that by "writing herself as another, Sansay reverses her own objectification by the male gaze. If Clara is the object of desire, it is Sansay as author who renders her so compelling" (29). Thus Clara's character, whether taken as a creative recontextualization of Sansay's wishes or desires, or as a satire of creole culture, still becomes an alternative embodiment through which Sansay is able to assume control of a popular, and often male-dominated, discourse surrounding women's roles.

In Saint Domingue, and for the majority of the novel, the only voice the reader hears is Mary's; hence characterizations of both Mary and Clara arise from Mary's point of view. Clara, much more than Mary, is described throughout the text in terms of the subjectivity of her body – to disease, domestic violence, and social control. At the start of the novel, Mary predicts that Clara "will be wretched" as a result of her marriage (61). Clara is also a victim of yellow fever, a disease that intimately connected the situation of

⁶⁸ Here, it is more likely that although her relationship to Aaron Burr was fairly public, Sansay as an author would not have wanted her work to be considered entirely autobiographical, as she was most certainly subject to public scrutiny.

Saint Domingue with that of Philadelphia, suggesting that Clara's body in a number of ways becomes the site of a series of contagions, including that of marriage, that plague both locales. Mary does, however, attribute Clara's survival to her husband's "unceasing care," while at the same time arguing that Clara "attaches no value [to her life] since it must be passed with him" (63). Here Clara's husband, even while acting as her caretaker, exerts unwanted control over her body.

Mary's critique of Clara's husband, implicated here in spite of the positive light in which his care of Clara is initially cast, is absolutely scathing, and Mary attributes Clara's consistent unhappiness to a justifiable aversion to not only her husband's character, but the inescapability of the marriage. Interestingly, however, Mary does not code every heteronormative relationship as being as undesirable as Clara's marriage. The text invites the reader to contrast the abusive marital relationship Clara endures to the deep, meaningful relationship between Mary and Aaron Burr, the addressee of many of her letters. Despite Mary's unwillingness throughout the text to bring that relationship under scrutiny, the text as a whole is framed by it, and the novel would have little content without the lively correspondence Mary shares with Burr. The one comment she makes about that relationship is coded in bodily terms, and appears to describe a loving, caring relationship upon which Mary depends for sustenance: "Cast on the world without an asylum, without resource, I met you – you raised me – soothed me – whispered peace to my lacerated breast!" (79). Mary characterizes her relationship with Burr in terms of the healing of bodily wounds, and this relationship becomes an ideal against which Clara's marriage is measured. Clara is of course, suffering emotional wounds as a result of her

unhappiness that morph into the material reality of the physical abuse she endures at the hands of St. Louis.

Mary's intense focus on the misery of Clara's marriage, and the novel's eventual revelation of domestic violence can be read as a litany of suffering to which there seems to be little social escape. Clare Lyons notes that domestic violence was rampant in 1790's Philadelphia, and that such abuse was more often tolerated than prosecuted.⁶⁹ Lyons argues that the prevalence of domestic violence was one of the reasons that Philadelphia's women asserted "their right to individual happiness and sexual choice," (276). Mary also proposes a similar notion in blaming Clara's coquetry on St. Louis in arguing that "the torments which his irascible temper inflict on his wife [...] force her to seek relief in the paths of pleasure" (80). Instead of suggesting that Clara's "wounds" could be healed by an extramarital affair (a possibility Mary discourages throughout the text), Mary suggests that a reunion between her and Clara will provide the same healing. When Mary begs Clara to return to her from Cuba, she uses nearly identical language to describe her ability to heal Clara, writing "I will remove from your lacerated breast the thorns which have been planted there by the hand of misfortune" (151). At this point in the novel, Sean Goudie argues that Sansay reunites the figures of Mary and Clara through imagining that they could both experience the same relationship with Aaron Burr (214).

Sansay's treatment of marriage as a whole suggests that relationships outside of marriage can be one means through which women can resist male domination, particularly inasmuch as they offer women alternatives for surviving what Sansay clearly considers an oppressive system of gender. In her discussion of mid to late eighteenth-century Philadelphia, Lyons links female sexuality to the negotiation of political power in

⁶⁹ Lyons cites it as "the most common cause of arrest in Philadelphia" in the 1790's (275).

the new Republic, noting that “for many of the most vocal architects of the new nation [...] active female sexuality expressed outside of marriage threatened the Republic” (289) I would also suggest here that the context of revolution, both in the United States and Saint Domingue, provides the particular conditions in which white creole women can resist gendered violence and gain access to sexual and social freedoms.

In fact, Saint Domingue becomes a locale in which the social structure seems driven by elite women’s access to extramarital flirtations. Elizabeth Maddock Dillon notes that “a surprising effect of the revolution is thus to enable white women to escape from the power of men; when Mary and Clara flee Saint Domingue for Cuba, they repeatedly find themselves in the company of un-husbanded women who appear to blossom in the absence of the men who previously controlled them” (92). Sansay also links the revolutionary setting of Saint Domingue to the necessity for revolutionizing marital relations through specific deployments of the language of empire in describing marital and extra-marital heterosexual relationships within the text. Mary’s rendition of Clara and St. Louis’ escalating conflicts parallels St. Louis’ control of Clara to colonial control in Saint Domingue. Mary describes St. Louis’ attempts to prevent Clara from going to balls, to which of course Clara objects. Mary writes that “the first public occasion there will be a contest for supremacy, which will decide forever the empire of the party that conquers” (81). Here Mary’s allusion to conquest relates the restriction of Clara’s movements and social encounters to colonial control asserted over empires, a theme consistently hovering in the background of the text in terms of attempts to exert French colonial control over the colony of Saint Domingue.

Sansay's use of the language of empire is not limited, however, to the control St. Louis tries to assert over Clara. In describing Clara's flirtations with General Rochambeau, Mary's rendition of events is also rife with metaphors of conquest. Like Aaron Burr, General Rochambeau was also a powerful contemporary of Sansay's, and while there is no clear evidence that she knew him during her time in Saint Domingue, his military and political reputation was certainly well known. Rochambeau was sent to Saint Domingue to quell the uprisings, a fact that Sansay accurately represents within the text. He was also well known in his time for his cruelty towards black insurgents and towards rebels throughout the Caribbean, a reputation with which Sansay would have been familiar.⁷⁰ The text of *Secret History* does not discuss much about Rochambeau's military career, but notes that after leaving Cap Français to attend to military matters had "shewn some symptoms of a disposition to tyrannize since his return which were never remarked in him before" (98). Here the tyranny to which Mary refers is overtly related to his courtship of Clara, which in the text also parallels his colonial conquest in Saint Domingue.

While the presentation of Clara and Rochambeau's relationship is filtered through Mary's narration of events, Mary's use of dialogue emphasizes the voices of Clara and the General and details their use of the language of empire to describe romantic involvement. At the height of their flirtation, Mary reports that Rochambeau "told Clara that he would twine a wreath of myrtle to crown her, for she had vanquished the General" (79). Here Mary positions Rochambeau as alluding to Greek traditions of presenting myrtle wreaths as symbols of love and military conquest. Clara's witty reply also alludes

⁷⁰ For further discussion of documentation of Rochambeau's reputation for cruelty, see Chapter 1, pages 44-60. Mary does note, however, that "the arrival of General Rochambeau seems to have spread terror among the negroes" (73).

to both love and military achievement in retorting that “she would mingle it with laurel, and lay it at his feet for having, by preserving the Cape, given her an opportunity of making the conquest” (76). Here Clara directly connects her conquest of the General with his anticipated conquest of the colony, alluding to an inversion of normative understandings of sexual conquest. One way to read Sansay’s treatment of Clara’s sexuality here can be found in considering the ways in which Clara’s flirtations relate to the new social terrain Clara encounters in Saint Domingue. Clare Lyons argues that “when men and women entered into intimate relationships wholly outside of marriage, they stepped into a social terrain where the gender rules were largely uncharted” (244). Part of the novelty of extramarital sex in this context involved pushing the limits of liberty and male dominance, and bringing up questions of whether men could be expected to “control the sexual behaviors of the women they bedded” (244). In the context of Sansay’s novel, control of the women’s sexual behaviors and control of the colony are both very much at stake, although neither form of control appears entirely possible.

When tables turn, and Clara is forced by St. Louis’ violent threats to end the flirtation, the language Rochambeau and Clara use to argue their positions turns away from imperial conquest to allusions to uses of disembodied figures that are particularly relevant to the novel’s setting in Saint Domingue. As tensions with her husband rise, and, according to Mary, Clara was “now convinced of [her flirtation with Rochambeau] being highly dangerous and improper,” Clara begins to reject Rochambeau’s advances (100). Rochambeau literally brings a battalion that “appeared like a horde of Arabs” to seek out Clara (101). In describing Rochambeau’s arrival this way, Mary evokes the

savagery associated with north African populations in French colonies and the potential for their violent resistance to colonization.⁷¹

Clara realizes that her chaperone, Major B-, has been reporting her movements to the general and confronts him by asserting “you have a familiar spirit who informs you of my movements!” (101). Here, Clara refers to Major B.- as at once bodily and disembodied; while his physical presence is certainly a visible reminder of the general’s power, his role as a “familiar spirit” also places his intervention as one in which the men are ideologically related. Rochambeau responds to her with a similar claim, asking “Why not, [...], are you not an enchantress, and have you not employed all of the powers of magic to enslave me?” (101). Here the references to magic, while common in describing love in other contexts, may also prefigure Clara’s access to local forms of spiritual power that help her disrupt his attempts to monitor and control her movements. After the affair has ended, largely due to St. Louis’ violence against Clara, Mary notes that “the heart of Clara acknowledged not the empire of general Rochambeau,” collapsing his conquest of her love with his conquest of the colony, and prefiguring the idea that Clara may come to identify more strongly with its present colonial status.

Clara, however, is not the only woman in the text whose body and sexuality lend her specific abilities to resist both violence and the encroachment of political power over the population. Sansay also produces embodiments of women of color that function in similar ways. Mary includes a vignette of Zuline, a “girl of colour” living with an American in Saint Domingue who intervenes when he is attacked by a “ruthless mulatto” (131). Mary writes that the young woman, addressing the mulatto as “dear brother” first

⁷¹ At the time of Sansay’s publication, the French had recently captured Algiers; her readers would have easily recognized her reference to a “horde of Arabs” as an obvious allusion to French colonial expansion.

attempted to dissuade him by offering both the ransom he demands and “all of her trinkets, which were of considerable value”(131). While the attacker does not at all seem swayed by promises of payment, he does respond to her “beauty in tears, which has seldom been resisted” (131). Mary writes that she continued her pleas “in caressing tones” until he “soften[ed] all at one” and agrees to spare the American for the sole price of the woman’s affections (132). Here Zuline’s body becomes at once the agent of commodification and the commodity itself, a series of roles that she later reverses in convincing the mulatto to take the ransom money and depart.

Interestingly, Zuline’s intervention is also paralleled with the complex political situation of her American lover. Well after the mulatto has left, Mary adds, almost as a sidenote, that the attacker’s continued pursuit of Zuline stops because the American “had great weight with Dessalines” (132). Since Zuline has already effectively removed the immediate danger posed to the American, in the context of the novel, the power the American accesses through his relationship with Dessalines is secondary to Zuline’s ability to intervene in the attack. Her power here arises from her embodiment, rather than from what would appear to be significant political affiliations.

The intersection of the kinds of power accessed through women’s bodies and through colonial conquest is also apparent in Mary’s use of the language of empire to describe Clara’s romantic relationships. Without going so far as to condone Clara’s coquetry, Mary does acknowledge Clara’s power in the “empire of love;” a power that, while troubled, allows her the potential to exert both resistance to her husband’s control and to the complex political situation in Saint Domingue. Clare Lyons notes that in late eighteenth-century Philadelphia, “women who were boldly sexual put their sexuality to

specific uses – they specifically deployed it. Passion no longer took control of women as it did in the colonial era: it was men who were at the mercy of uncontrollable passion” (Lyons 293).⁷² Clara’s very conscious uses of her own sexuality grant her access to new means of obtaining autonomy even when male sexual desire puts her at increased risk of violence.

Trading Places: White Creole Internalization of Suffering

While women’s bodies in *Secret History* become sites on which the struggles for colonial power can be read, the bodies of white creoles in general also occupy troubled spaces in both *Secret History* and *Mon Odyssée*. White creoles, in both texts, are staged as being marked by the colonial lifestyle and by struggles to maintain colonial power. They are also, interestingly, often coded as the opposites of the black insurgents, and hence internalize the suffering of the enslaved and formerly enslaved populations as a kind of negative reflection. That is, the suffering of the white creole body is inversely proportional to the success of the insurgents in Saint Domingue.

This opposition is first and most clearly expounded in Pillet’s discussion of attitudes of the French towards white creole planters. Pillet drolly notes that upon arriving in Bordeaux (on his way to Saint Domingue), he met with a number of “*petits maîtres*” there, among whom he was “quite bored, because we were talking about freedom, equality, human rights etc” (28). He then switches into verse to describe the reversal of roles he claims French Republicans suggest for the planters:

⁷² Interestingly, the “uncontrollable passion” of men can be read as the kind of excessive volition that characterized sleepwalkers in both eighteenth and nineteenth-century novels and medical literature. For further discussion, see Chapter 4 of this work.

They told me: Sandis, my dear,
 quite a long time you were a master;
 in turn you must be a slave.
 This is natural. And because the irons
 wiped out an entire race
 these planters have grown large,
 Negroes must become white,
 and put you in your place. (28)

Pillet's tone in these verses is clearly mocking, particularly in the context of his recognition of the hypocrisy of the men he asserts "made their fortunes from colonial commerce" (28). He also pokes fun at the fear of role reversal in the colony, rendering the idea that the slave population could in turn enslave the planters ridiculous in his verse.

Despite Pillet's rejection of both Republican support for the slave insurrection and French fears of black rule on the island, upon contemplating the situation after his participation in the fighting (on the side of the colonial troops), Pillet understands the end of slavery as producing more suffering than it alleviates. Despite his ridicule of the idea of reversing master/slave relationships, Pillet positions the white creoles on the island as suffering as a result of the end of slavery.⁷³ First, however, he codes creole participation in the system of Atlantic slavery as an extension of abuse handed down politically, generationally and geographically, referring to it as "an abuse that extends from princes to subjects/ from our forefathers to us, from the west to the east" (66). Here Pillet begins to position the creole planters as having been subjected to an abuse that they did not create, but in a sense were forced to participate in. He does however acknowledge for the first time here that slavery is "an abuse where evil is surrounded by benefits" (66).

The characterization of slavery as an abuse presents a change of heart for Pillet, as he spends a substantial portion of the first book of his text defending the system of

⁷³ Here the term creole implies, as was common at the time, whites who were born in the colonies.

slavery in the colony, and characterizing it as completely humane in terms of living conditions, labor expectations, and discipline. Pillet may well have been playing to his audience here, as he clearly expresses conventional pro-slavery attitudes and tropes in his descriptions. He notes upon his arrival in Saint Domingue that “I see everywhere, fat negroes, well dressed and joyful” (38). He carefully describes conditions of housing, food, and medical care in glowing terms, perhaps answering to a discourse of reform already present in discussions of colonial slavery. He also makes several comments about the working conditions of the slaves, implying that the system does not exploit their labor either. Pillet writes that “I see them, by the hundreds, occupied with work that twenty Europeans could achieve in much less time [...] I often met groups of idlers, and they told me that the convalescents, nursing and pregnant women, and the elderly, were exempt from work” (38). Finally, he argues that the means of discipline used on the island are also less abusive than those established for other forms of labor in France, noting that “As for discipline, it is certainly not more stringent than that observed for soldiers or sailors” (39). Given his defense of the system in general, and his insistence on its fairness and, at times, benefit over systems of labor in France, Pillet’s later characterization of slavery as an abuse is surprising, and may well reflect a shift in thinking caused by his participation in the fighting. Pillet’s comments on the fairness of slavery may also be read as the same kind of satire with which eloquently uses classical poetry forms to describe mundane objects and trivial enoucneters throughout the manuscript.

While Pillet's recognition of slavery as an abuse is inconsistent with his initial defense of it, he also understands creole suffering as the inevitable result of the end of slavery on the island. Pillet writes that

the remedy is dubious, cruel in its effects
 what, it is not still better
 to groan if you want, but to suffer in peace?
 but no, everyone cries out, coldly delirious:
 The African is free and that his master expires!
 this is what happens when your wishes have been answered.
 Well, dear friends of the Africans
 Go through these bountiful plains
 whose treasures were carefully amassed
 by trade, dispersed
 what spectacles will your eyes now see?
 bloody corpses in terrible numbers;
 scattered rubble; the safe havens in ruin;
 formerly happy mortals;
 today the overwhelming misery. (66)

The bountiful life formerly enjoyed by white creoles is juxtaposed to the devastation Pillet sees throughout the fighting, and the suffering of the creole population becomes the only possible outcome of the revolution. Within his prose, however, Pillet also implies that white creole suffering is the only outcome of the end of slavery.

Interestingly, while Pillet's assessment of the situation of the white creoles here is certainly affected by his experiences of the violence of war, he also implies that the white creole population is already pre-disposed to suffering in his characterization of the planter class. Pillet attributes part of this suffering to the climate itself, which he argues demands that "Europeans pay, on their arrival, the tribute of a malignant fever" (61). He goes on to note, however, that the physical weakness of the creoles after that can be attributed to "indulging to a point of excess, harmful everywhere, but deadly in the islands" (61). Pillet, while enjoying the luxuries of the planter class, does point out that they contribute

to a kind of creole degeneracy that becomes coded as a source of suffering, if not of the body, than certainly of the mind. Pillet, who vacillates between self-identification with white creole culture and with France, goes back and forth between considering “the creole” as a figure outside of himself, and counting himself within the category. He does, however, blame particular forms of creole degeneracy on upbringing, rather than on climate or heredity. Pillet notes that

the Creole is generally very lazy, a little vain, prodigal, profligate and inconstant, but these flaws are redeemed by the essential qualities that are cherished and estimable . He is good-hearted, honest, generous, brave to the point of rashness [...] One does not accuse us of excelling in science, as we do in physical exercises and leisure arts: I do not think it’s lack of intelligence or judgment. Raised in France, away from our parents, we have been abandoned by indifferent preceptors whose care choked our happy dispositions, by the indolence and lightness that are natural to us. Then, the idea of wealth is left to awkwardly take root in our young minds, making us overlook studies that we imagine to be useless to people who have money in both hands. (55-56)

Here, Pillet self-consciously examines the means through which creoles might acquire particular forms of weakness, and perhaps the situation through which they are rendered susceptible to suffering at the hands of the insurgents. Pillet’s inclusion of commentary on creole participation in the sciences also speaks to his own awareness of the political difficulties faced by the white creole scientists in Saint Domingue, and an understanding that participation in the scientific discourse by exiled white creoles was often viewed with suspicion in the United States⁷⁴.

Interestingly, while much more politically attuned to the challenges faced by white creole intellectuals than his contemporaries, Pillet’s understanding of white creole characteristics are fairly consistent with those of Moreau de St.-Méry, who gives separate

⁷⁴ Chris Iannini notes that “Saint-Domingue exiles such as Baudry, on the one hand, or associates of Toussaint L’Ouverture, on the other, employed the discourse of natural history to divergent ends;” hence colonial scientific inquiry was often linked in the U.S. imagination to undesirable political ends (31).

accounts of female and male traits among the creole population.⁷⁵ In general, he notes that creoles experience a “rapid development of physical qualities” that “separate them from the rest of the universe” (11). He also considers creole characteristics of “caprice” to be tied to a childhood in which “they are placed among young slaves who are condemned or flattered” at their will (11). He also recognizes, with a great deal of sympathy, the situation of white creole children brought back to France for education, and here his depiction of their relationship with their parents is consistent with Pillet’s. Moreau de St. Méry argues that when white creole children go to France, “nobody incites or encourages them. Incapable of desiring success for the sake of success, with boredom, they pass their days of exile from the family home,” undersupported, and, in contrast with “the abandon” of their childhood, have little care or hope for the future (14). Despite the clear shortcomings Moreau de St. Méry finds with raising children in the colony, he does note that they are “honest, friendly, generous, sometimes ostentatious, trustworthy, brace, sure friends and good fathers,” characteristics he reads as making them “exempt from crimes that degrade humanity” (16). Here white creole men are read as suffering because of their upbringing, and abnegating responsibility for their crimes (which presumably include coerced and/or violent sexual relations), while white creole women are prone to suffering for much more physiological reasons. Moreau de St. Méry writes that white creole women are both more physically beautiful because of the climate, and more indolent. He writes that

⁷⁵ Moreau de St. Méry’s writings comprise some of the earliest anthropological texts on Saint Domingue. They have never been translated in their entirety, so unless otherwise noted, the translations are my own. St. Méry’s comments are divided into distinct categories labeled “*Des Européans qui habitent Saint-Domingue*,” “*Des Creols Blancs*,” and “*Des Creoles Blanches*,” separating Europeans living in Saint Domingue from white male and female creoles (i.e. those born in the colony).

the state of idleness in which creole women are elevated, usually because of the heat they perpetually experience, the indulgence of which they are the constant objects, results in a vivid imagination and a precocious development; all of these produce an extreme sensibility in their type. This is the same sensitivity that still makes their indolence [...] in a temperament which is at its core a little melancholy. (18)

Here, the women are both overindulged and subjected to extreme climates, both of which render them susceptible to a form of emotional suffering that Moreau de St. Méry codes as “melancholy.” This kind of susceptibility is perhaps considered by the author to be less dangerous than the kinds of weakness displayed by the unambitious creole men, but still exposes an underpinning of creole suffering that we certainly see in Sansay and Pillet’s works.

The kinds of creole suffering Sansay describes are quite different from those of Pillet, who of course was more intimately connected with wartime violence, but they do allude to similar forms of degeneracy. Assumptions of creole degeneracy in North America had, in Sansay’s time, an interesting history. Sean Goudie points out that

Many North American colonists – particularly in the Northern colonies – recoiled from the prospect that they had “degenerated” from the European “norm” like the West Indians in the “torrid zone”... Thus central to the political propaganda during the Revolutionary and post- Revolutionary periods was an effort to renounce any affiliation with the pejorative classification “creole.” (9)

Despite the tendency of the novel to point out negative characteristics of creoles, Goudie reads the figures of Mary and Clara as a doubling of each other that centers upon defining creole identity. He argues that “Mary functions within the novel to a significant extent as a foil, a caricature of creoleness against whom Clara is cast in creolizing relief” (212).

The creolizing relief Goudie discusses here is a formulation only made possible through Mary’s embodiment of Clara. For Mary, Clara’s “charms” are firmly rooted in her

physical being, which Mary seems quite taken with. Mary writes that “Those who have not seen Clara walse know not half her charms. There is a physiognomy in her form! every motion is full of soul. The gracefulness of her arms is unequalled, and she is lighter than gossamer” (75). She is figured here as the embodiment of a “soul,” one whose lightness and beauty becomes almost ephemeral. Clara becomes a figure whose relationship to embodiment and disembodiment lends her both the power to influence other men (some of whom, like Rochambeau, are politically powerful as well) and to escape the confines of marriage in new and unexpected ways.

Clara’s ephemeral beauty, which Goudie argues links her to “Ezili/Erzulie, [who] like Aphrodite, is known for her otherworldly beauty, precisely the sort of bewitching beauty that Clara seems to possess” also appears within the text to link her to Mary’s descriptions of white creole women (212). Mary describes the white creole ladies she meets in Cap Français as combining specific bodily features with particular cultural markers that, at least in her eyes, render them attractive. Mary’s descriptions of white creole women are strikingly similar to Moreau de St. Méry’s. Mary writes that

The Creole ladies have an air of voluptuous languor which renders them extremely interesting. Their eyes, their teeth, and their hair are remarkably beautiful, and they have acquired from the habit of commanding their slaves, an air of dignity which adds to their charms. [...] They have a natural taste for music, dance with a lightness, a grace, an elegance peculiar to themselves. (70-71)

Here their embodiment seems to expand the natural characteristics Mary ascribes to these ladies, and their involvement with slavery appears to heighten their charms. While Clara, of course, differs from these ladies because she lacks the languor and dignity they acquire through their social positions, her features and physical grace link her embodiment to theirs throughout the text.

Despite the novel's conclusion of Clara's embracing of a creole identity and the blurring of lines between Clara and Mary, the sisters' comments on the creoles they meet in the West Indies are initially not so different from Pillet's, and certainly participate in the same accusations of creole degeneracy that Pillet often makes. With less of a thoughtful explanation than Pillet's, Mary describes white creoles in very similar terms, noting that "The Creole is generous, hospitable, magnificent, but vain, inconstant, and incapable of serious application" (70). Instead of justifying the bases for this characterization, Mary goes on to note that these characteristics, particular to the colonial culture of Saint Domingue create an "abode of pleasure and luxurious ease, [in which] vices have reigned at which humanity must shudder" (70). Despite this condemnation of "vices," Mary at times long for the luxurious lifestyle she clearly associates with colonial rule and in this context makes her sole comment on the outcome of the war. Mary contemplates:

I wish [the negroes] were reduced to the order that I might see the so much vaunted habitations where I should repose beneath the shade of orange groves; walk on carpets of rose leaves, and frenchipone; be fanned to sleep by silent slaves, or have my feet tickled into extacy by the soft hand of a female attendant" (73)

Here her desire is not particular to reinforcing colonial rule as such, but to returning the island to a place where she can derive bodily pleasure. Interestingly, the fanciful scene Mary contemplates here recasts an earlier scene of leisure and pleasure she recollects between Pauline Leclerc and General Boyer, Pauline Leclerc reclines on a sofa "amus[ing] General Boyer who sat at her feet, by letting her slipper fall continually, which he respectfully put on as often as it fell" (64). Boyer here assumes the same

position of the female attendants Sansay later fantasizes about, suggesting that his relationship to Pauline Leclerc might parallel that of a mistress and slave.

While white women's amusement at this point in the text seems central to Sansay's concerns in Saint Domingue, her treatments of colonial society are so extreme as to warrant the possibility that she is deliberately putting pressure on colonial social expectations and the tendency of the white planter class to dismiss the revolution itself. In her description of these interactions between Pauline Leclerc and General Boyer, two powerful figures whose connections to white military conquest in Saint Domingue are impossible to ignore, Sansay's focus on trivial acts of leisure and pleasure formulate a subtle critique of colonial culture that is driven home much more directly in the very real scenes of wartime violence and suffering she later narrates.

Interestingly, in the cases of Pauline Leclerc, and Madame G., another character identified specifically as Parisian, failure to embrace a creole identity becomes directly linked to specific forms of suffering. Sansay's description of Madame Leclerc is both interesting for its basis in a very real historical figure with whom Sansay was certainly familiar and for its encapsulation of the cultural difficulties faced by foreign women of the island who have failed to embrace creole culture. Pauline Leclerc is seen as suffering because of this failure because she is "accustomed to the sweet adulation, and the intoxicating delights of Paris" and cannot rise to the "emergency" of the lack of amusement of colonial life. (67). Certainly the one amusement she does find marks her as participating in the "vices" of the island, including a suggestive relationship with General Boyer. Mary reasserts the idea of Madame Leclerc's participation in extramarital relations in her comparison of Madame Leclerc to the Ephesian matron of

Petronius' *Satyricon*, a figure who ended her mourning for her husband by being seduced by a soldier who guarded his grave.⁷⁶

Indeed, for most of the novel, the war itself seems to become, rather than a firmly rooted political struggle, a nuisance that disrupts the social life of the colony. Upon General Leclerc's death and the struggle to maintain discipline in the army and order on the streets, Mary notes that "All of this bustle would be delightful if it was not attended with such melancholy consequences. It keeps of us from petrifying, of which I was in danger" (69). Without the war, that is, the comings and goings of the Cap Français are staged as saving Mary from the most immediate danger she sees, which Elizabeth Maddock Dillon points out is "dying of boredom on the island of Saint Domingue" (82). Sansay's focus on the disruption of the pleasures associated with white creole social life stands in stark contrast to the material and bodily suffering of white creoles at the hands of insurgents in the latter portion of the text.

Pauline Leclerc, and to some extent Mary, are not the only European women suffering on the island, nor is the suffering of white creoles solely linked to the dearth of social life in the colony during wartime. Sansay writes that Madame G, whose husband has been killed, "languishingly reposes on a sofa placed opposite the door, and seems to invite by the gracefulness of her attitudes, and the negligence of her dress, the whole world to console her" (91). The only difference between Madame G.'s repose and that of Pauline Leclerc seems to be a difference of dress; otherwise her repose mirrors both Pauline Leclerc's and that of other creole women mentioned in passing in the text. Madame G.'s suffering, however, transforms when she becomes the immediate victim of wartime violence. She is later seen by Mary "chained to her eldest daughter, and the two

⁷⁶See Michael Drexler's footnote, p. 67.

youngest chained together, thus toiled, exposed to the sun, from earliest dawn to setting day, followed by negroes who, on the least appearance of faintness, drove them forward with whips” (124). After refusing to trade her oldest daughter’s body for her freedom, Madame G. is hung, and her daughter, still opposing the commander’s advances is given “to his guard, who hung her by the throat on an iron hook in the market place, where the lovely, innocent, unfortunate victim slowly expired” (125). In *Madame G.*, Mary creates an arc of creole suffering that begins with the denial of pleasures and ends in not only the death of the original sufferer, but also the torture of her daughter.

Becoming creole in both texts is an intensely bodily experience. Pillet, clearly an outsider to creole cultures, identifies himself with the Parisian metropole throughout the first book of his text, and spends a great deal of energy presenting creole cultures from the point of view of an outsider. The suffering he sees throughout his military career, and his intense identification with the fate of the creole population in Saint Domingue, mark shifts in his own identity that are only realized through his experiences in the colony. Clara as well comes to understand herself as creole through surviving violence at the hands of her husband and using her own body to establish an empire of sorts throughout the Caribbean. The Europeans, and to a lesser extent the Americans, become disempowered as result of their inability to embrace creole identities.

Staging Embodiment: Dress and Disguise as Reimagined Identity

If assuming a white creole identity is a bodily experience, marked by violence and expression, one of the ways in which a person embraces and rejects identity is through marking his or her body accordingly. Of particular concern to both authors are the kinds

of dress that figure a body as gendered, creole, colonial, and/or metropolitan.⁷⁷ In both texts, the authors' attention to dress as markers of gender and locale presents an aspect of particular forms of embodiment that are deeply related to the incursion of colonial and patriarchal power on the body and, at times, the means through which resistance to these forms of power becomes possible.

In Sansay's text, dress becomes an apparent and obvious marker of identity for white creole and mulatto women living in the colony. Mary is acutely aware of the colonial laws governing dress that served to make visible a person's race and class. In her discussion of the strict divides between white creole, mulatto, and colored women, Mary writes that before the revolution "No woman of colour was to wear silk, which was then universally worn, nor to appear in public without a handkerchief on her head. They determined to oppose this tyranny" by not appearing in public and effectively slowing the local economy (95-6). Mary recognizes here the significance of the silk as a marker of race in Saint Domingue, where boundaries of class and race between white creole women and the free women of color were not necessarily recognizable. Her use of the term "tyranny" to characterize sumptuary laws is also a recognition of the incursion of colonial power over women's bodies, and she seems to approve of the women's resistance to them, noting that their refusal to participate in the local economy as consumers was "singular but effectual" in prompting the merchant class to have the law reversed (96).

Mary also recognizes particular forms of dress, which are directly related to the sumptuary laws, as having been reclaimed by women seeking specifically creole

⁷⁷ By metropolitan, I assert that dress constituted a body's allegiance to either the colony or the metropole, particularly in the case of Pillet, whose attention to dress even in France makes much of this distinction.

identities. Mary repeatedly mentions the madras headscarves of white creole women, an article that Maddock Dillon argues

bears a significant iconographic history in its wake: the madras headscarf was, by law, worn by women of color in the colonial West Indies because of sumptuary codes that forbade them from wearing silk or keeping their heads uncovered - codes created to prevent women of color from competing sexually with white women. By design, however, the madras headscarf became something of a symbol of sexuality rather than a cloaking of it. (89)

Interestingly, Mary describes Pauline Leclerc as wearing a madras headscarf, a symbol she reads as a marker of both white creole identity and sexuality. She tells stories of other women who survived the early uprisings because of faithful slaves, noting in one instance that in another instance that a woman's slave saving her madras handkerchiefs "seemed to console her for every other loss" (70). Mary's inclusion of the detail of the handkerchiefs serves to present the object and the apparent symbolism it contains as equally valuable to this woman as her own life. Maddock Dillon also asserts that "this anecdote begins with a scene of interracial violence between blacks and whites but ends with a scene of interracial alliance focused around the créole marker of the madras handkerchief" (Dillon 91). In both cases, the intense focus on this particular piece of clothing as meaningful to women's identities portrays the sense in which clothing became a way of reading identity and value on the female body.

Dress also becomes in both texts a means of refiguring the body in order to escape the violence in Saint Domingue. Several characters use clothing to disguise their class and gender in order to leave Saint Domingue, and Mary's passing mentions of the phenomenon imply that disguising the body was a relatively common means of escaping war-time Saint Domingue. Mary reports that St. Louis escaped Cap Français "disguised

as a fisherman,” presumably because the associations of wealth and political allegiances implied by his clothing would have made him a target (116). Mary also approvingly reports that the daughters of a Madame M. escaped Saint Domingue “disguised in sailor’s clothes, and carrying baskets of provisions on their heads” (130). Here, Mary calls attention to the girls cross-dressing specifically in noting that “the supposed boys were suffered to pass” (130). The fact that Sansay puts little emphasis on the social implications of re-dressing the body to disguise gender and class tells us that such practices were common and went unquestioned by her readers.

Pillet provides a very different set of identifications and reactions to cross-dressing. While still traveling in France, Pillet describes some interesting experiences involving dress that suggest that he derives at least some measure of his identity from the ways in which his body and its trappings are received by others. The first, and most interesting of these, involves other men mistaking Pillet for a woman dressed in men’s clothing. Pillet writes that he was mistaken for a cross dresser because of particular aspects of his body:

I was taken for that which I was not... You know my build is slightly feminine, the sound of my voice fairly light and my hair naturally curly. Some young fellows imagined that I was a woman in disguise. The blush which covered, uncontrollably, my cheeks, still beardless, and the awkward efforts which I made to dissuade them, only served to confirm their doubts” (Popkin trans. in *FRR* 62-63)

Here, the issue at stake is not Pillet’s dress (he is not actually dressed as a woman in this episode), but rather his body itself that leads his traveling companions to this assumption. What is most interesting about this episode, however, is Pillet’s reaction to the presumably awkward position in which he is placed. It is apparently not the first time

this has happened, as Pillet situates the scene as occurring “In Angoulême as at Tours”.

Pillet follows this description with a poem that describes his own shifting identifications with regard to gender and sexuality:

Their eyes, their flattering remarks
 so tickled my soul,
 I took so much to the taste of sweetness,
 a quarter of an hour I believed myself a woman
 But when I saw the lovely object,
 to whom I had given an apple;
 It came to me with a smile
 despite being flattered, at this moment
 I knew well that I was a man. (26)

Popkin reads this scene, along with others in which Pillet participates in as evidence of the author’s fluid notion of identity (*FRR* 63). The last of Pillet’s cross-dressing scenes is apparently necessitated by violence. Pillet reports that after his corps of volunteers is defeated by troops of mulattos at Cap Français, he saved himself by entering the house of a young woman of color, who took pity on him because of his youth. He writes that “she disguised me as a woman, and with her help, I found a way to get back to the armory, where our troops had gathered” (135). Part of the fluidity with which Pillet reacts also engages in an understanding that dress, be it for fashion or for disrupting gender norms, creates a scene of re-embodiment where a person can shift external and internalized identities through altering the body.

Notably, Pillet’s identification with femininity does not end with his cross-dressing. He describes a brutal scene in which he hid under a bed during the attempted rape of a woman trapped in a house during a 1794 attack on Fort Dauphin which the

author states was led by Jean-François.⁷⁸ From his hiding place beneath the bed, Pillet sees two of his companions literally torn to pieces and the insurgents' preparations to rape a woman hiding in the house. He describes the insurgents as specifically monstrous in their appearance and their intent, making specific mention of their "flaming eyes" and "hands steaming with carnage" (31). The attackers are stopped by their leader, who orders them to commence with killing in the streets, and the woman manages to hide. What is remarkable about Pillet's reaction is his intense identification with the woman who has just narrowly escaped being raped, and is unable to communicate with him because of the danger of revealing themselves to the men who periodically enter and leave the room. He writes that "Sometimes I shuddered with horror. Sometimes I cried in despair. Fear and hope took turns penetrating my heart. There were times when it seemed to me that I wanted death" (31). Here Pillet's references to penetration parallel his own fear of physical violation with that of the woman whose attack he has witnessed. Like her, he is forced to remain hidden in a room without the benefit of help or company. He eventually finds it safe enough to call out to the woman, who is still hidden in a closet in the same room "I called to her in a weak and supplicating voice and told her everything that had happened to me. I witnessed your dangers, I told her, reassure your frightened soul, you are still pure" (35). Pillet's act of witnessing here and his reassurances to the woman imply not only that he believes he has experienced this act of violence more coherently than she has, but that he also assumes the right to determine female purity.

⁷⁸ As noted in Chapter 1, Jean François was a prominent leader of the early insurrections who was well known in early Haitian historiography because he assumed leadership of the black insurgents after Boukman's death, and was Toussaint Louverture's superior officer.

Cross-gender identification is certainly not the only area in which dress becomes important to establishing identity. During his travels in France, Pillet is acutely aware that his clothing associates him with the metropole (Paris) and visually differentiates him from the local rural population. Pillet describes going to the theater and being confronted by several young local men, who he describes as “consider[ing him] from head to feet” (27). Pillet, concerned that they are mocking him describes walking up to them and asking “if they took me for a curious beast” (27). He then relates that the young men apologized and noted that “the elegance of my dress had struck them: they especially admired the new shape of my boots. Suspecting that I came from Paris, they graciously asked me to allow their shoemaker to take them home the next day to rectify his work with new designs from the capital” (79). Pillet recognizes his dress as singling him out as a Parisian, and appears proud of the influence he has had on these men. What makes this scene even more, telling, however, is the poem that Pillet rounds it out with:

Despite their Gascon accent
 I saw they were talking in earnest,
 And at first I changed my tune
 Because, even if we are proud as Hannibal
 I still think it in poor taste
 To fight about boots. (28)

Here, Pillet highlights the geographical differences between the young men, from Gascony and himself, but also aligns himself to Hannibal, a North African figure widely respected in the ancient world for his military prowess. In this way, Pillet equates the spread of his Parisian fashions to military conquest, suggesting that, through altering dress, one might assert particular forms of power over other, less fashionable and less powerful people.

The role of fashion as a marker of the metropole also extends beyond clothing itself. During his military exploits, Pillet remarks on a militia sergeant “whose enormous mustache had earned him the nickname Carabi” (79). Pillet calls the sergeant “the terrible Carabi” because of the respect and fear his men had for him, and because he forcefully represents creole interests in the military ranks. Pillet recalls Carabi’s accusation that “The troops on the front line, brave, without doubt, probably because they are French, but who until now have had no opportunity to make us admire their courage, dare launch their sarcasm at the intrepid Creoles, whose numerous exploits illustrate their valor” (79). The soldiers, objecting to Carabi’s attempts to discipline the troops, create a fraught scene in which his superior challenges both his youth and his status as a citizen of the metropole, saying

a bourgeois, a young upstart from the city is not made for walking at the head of the old soldiers on the front lines [...] Carabi, we praise your courage, your address, your classmates will obey you without scruple because they believe you are their superior. Well, get out of the ranks, if you dare. Ceasing to be your leader, I will stoop for a moment to become your rival and in front of the entire army, challenge you with your favorite weapon” (79)

Pillet reports that instead of responding to the challenge of a duel, Carabi threw down his weapon in cowardice, and submitted to his superior, stating that “The future will prove that Carabi is a true French soldier, and, may I lose my moustache, if you ever have complaint about me” (79). The scene highlights tensions between white creole and French identities, but also the importance of the physical markers that distinguish Carabi as a bourgeois youth from the metropole. Carabi here highlights his willingness to shed an obvious identification with the metropole in order to embrace a French colonial identity. Pillet ends the vignette by poking fun at Carabi, ending the vignette with the comment that “Soldiers have the greatest veneration for a leader who braved the

formidable moustaches of Carabi” implying that the youth’s fashionable appearance, perhaps along with his representation of the French metropole, were ridiculous in a colonial war-time setting.

For both Pillet and Sasany, the body in Saint Domingue becomes a means creating, expressing, and defining identity. Dress and fashion presented a way of making these identifications visible and recognizable for both authors. For Sansay, women of color and European women alike use dress as a means of protesting the tight social controls present in the colony: European women don the madras handkerchief as an assertion of creole identity, while women of color use their economic power to assert their rights to fashion and access to social mobility. Pillet also suggests that clothing and hair can be used to manipulate the visible body in order to alter identifications associated with nation, region and gender. Staging embodiment through dress removes the body from a site of physical vulnerability and suffering, giving people a means through which to negotiate restrictive categories of national and sexual identity.

Devils, Demons, and Monsters: Presenting Possession to Non-Haitian Audiences

While neither Leonora Sansay nor Jean-Paul Pillet openly assert belief or even clear understandings of the kinds of disembodiment particular to local religious and spiritual practices, both authors allude to an assortment of spirits, devils, demons, and monsters that in their minds may have been related to the practice of non-Western rituals. In the individual contexts in which they do so, they display both an implicit recognition of the possibility of possession and an explicit recasting of that recognition to make it comprehensible and meaningful to their respective audiences.⁷⁹ Pillet likens scenes of

⁷⁹ While Sansay’s publication of the novel implies a U.S. audience, Pillet’s imagined audience is more elusive. His manuscript’s citation of other well-known texts suggests a demonstration of intellect meant

ritual he witnesses to controversial French religious practice, and his descriptions of references to possession bear remarkable similarity to those of Moreau de St. Méry, a contemporary of his who wrote the most extensive descriptions of local culture available in the late eighteenth century. Leonora Sansay's repeated references to devils and demons entering the bodies of both women and men who commit specific acts of violence signal a recognition of at least the possibility of an otherworldly explanation for otherwise inexplicable acts, albeit one not explicitly linked to the practice of spirit possession in Haitian systems of belief. While these references alone may not substantiate a reading of her text as presenting a full understanding of possession as a means of accessing power, her treatment of Clara as embracing local modes of religious practice in Cuba certainly invites a second look at them as presentations of white, colonialist views of ritual possession to audiences outside of Saint Domingue.

The first of Pillet's treatments of local culture can be found in his description of the celebration held in his family's honor upon their arrival to the colony. Pillet's interest in the cultural markers of the colony, including music and dance appear to appeal to his aesthetic sensibilities. Pillet includes in his description of the Calinda, a local dance, the following description:

groups of Congo Vestris
 struggled like their ancestors
 or played demons
 on the tomb of St. Paris.
 To make the performance complete
 the festival minstrels
 oddly grouped, sitting on their heels
 rolled their eyes, shook their heads
 made cry their discordant banjos
 or beat on large drums with a vengeance. (43)

to impress a reader, and his dedications imply that he intended the manuscript to be read, even if by a small, intimate circle of family.

His description of the beating drums to a frenzied dance is certainly consistent with colonial descriptions of Vodou ritual. Pillet struggles to interpret the scene, which is certainly the first he has witnessed as an adult.⁸⁰ Pillet describes a scene that to him seems entirely foreign, and struggles to understand what he sees through his own experiences in the French metropole. Despite an apparent lack of awareness of the culturally-specific meanings of the Calinda (which are indeed distinct from even Moreau St. Méry's description of "the dance of Vadoux"), Pillet's configuration of the dance a combining of performance, religious fervor, and vengeance can certainly be read as demonstrating a greater understanding of the relationship between local cultural rituals, spiritual beliefs and a Eurocentric belief that slave revolts and the ensuing violence were motivated by vengeance than his perspective as a newly-arrived planter might otherwise indicate.

In his footnotes to the text, Jeremy Popkin points out that the author's references to the Vestris tie the dancers to popular performers in France, and that his allusion to St. Paris refers to a cult of convulsive Jansenists in Paris in the early eighteenth century. According to Brian Strayer, whose work on Jansenism comprises the most thorough contemporary study of the sect, the Jansensits were ascetic Catholics whose most extreme practices included public séances that "often featured babbling in unknown tongues, writing in convulsions, and alleged healing miracles" (1). Strayer argues that Jansenist interventions in religious debate played an important role in the "rift between the monarch and the magistrates (of mid-seventeenth century France) that helped cause the

⁸⁰ Pillet describes his travels to the colony as a return to his place of birth, but does not refer to specific memories of the colony. It is likely that, like most creole children, he was sent to France for education as a child, and thus experiences colonial life for the first time as an adult.

French Revolution” (5). Pillet’s references to convulsive Jansenism link the bodily movements of the dancers to forms of religious ecstasy and to the revolutionary potential of local cultural practices.

In addition to presenting one form of embodiment of a specifically French revolutionary context, Pillet also ties the dancers to local resistant cultures. Carolyn Fick argues that in most pre-nineteenth century accounts, descriptions of Vodou tended to relegate Vodou ritual to “the romanticized and denigrating category of ‘fanaticism’ ‘orgiastic frenzy,’ ‘collective hysteria,’ or just plain superstition” (42). Although his discussion of ritual is not overt here, Pillet’s allusion to the Jansenist movement links what he observes to other forms of religious practice in France. Pillet is not the only author to liken such cultural practices to the phenomenon of convulsioners. Kate Ramsey quotes Pluchon’s use of a document labeled “Arrêt du 16 Mai 1786” that asks “Who knows and who could say where either the initiators or the ‘convulsioners’ of the class of Macandals, could one day take the fanaticism and delirium” (qtd in Ramey p. 38). In the context of French awareness of the linkages between local cultural and religious practice and the history of slave rebellion in Saint Domingue, Pillet’s reference to convulsionists can also be read as signaling a linkage between what would have been relatively new cultural practices (at least in his eyes) and the tense political situation in Saint Domingue.

Pillet, while not overtly giving any respect or sensitivity to the various religious beliefs of the African population of the colony, does in fact recognize and complicate their appearance throughout the text. Pillet describes an encounter with a black insurgent that undermines both the popular narratives of the time surrounding loyal slaves and emphasizes allusions to Afro-Caribbean cultural and religious practices. During the first

instance of his face to face encounter with a black insurgent, Pillet records the that he captured an insurgent whom he believed to be a leader of the revolutionaries:

I was preparing to crack his head open with a sword, when he fell to his knees, kissed my boots, and with tears in his eyes, told me he was the godson of my mother, that he had held me in his arms more than once; he begged me not to kill him, saying that he was a good negro and had always loved the whites. His tone disarmed me. (51)

Here Pillet begins his reporting with a trope common to witness accounts, fiction, and biographies written about the revolution: the loyal slave. We see a similar move in several of the nineteenth-century biographies of Toussaint Louverture and Jean-Jacques Dessalines, in later fictional works like *Theresa at San Domingo*, and, to a lesser extent, the histories of the revolution published outside of Haiti.⁸¹ The tale of the loyal slave saving his white owners became a stock narrative in these texts, perhaps as a means of reinforcing assumptions of black submissiveness and loyalty. Interestingly, Pillet disrupts this narrative by noting that “a slight noise made me turn away, and I saw that the miserable hypocrite had cocked his gun again and had me in his sights” (51). Here the author highlights both the fallacy of such narratives and, perhaps unknowingly, points out the rebels’ manipulation of assumptions of paternalistic relations between the slaves and the planters.

The most widely cited passage of Pillet’s text, which contemporary critics cite as proof that Afro-Caribbean spiritual beliefs played a prominent role in the revolutionaries’ motivations, also begins by Pillet’s pointing out the same trope.⁸² He writes that he encountered a black soldier who “had the impudence to maintain to me that he too loved

⁸¹ While fictional accounts are rife with sentimental scenes of slaves rescuing their former masters, a number of biographers and historians also include similar tales of rescue, including Marcus Rainsford, Wendell Phillips, Sir James Barskett, and the Reverend John Beard.

⁸² A number of scholars, including Laurent Dubois and Nick Nesbitt have cited this passage as proof of the revolutionary potential of religious practice in their work on the Haitian Revolution.

the son of his godmother too much to want to kill him” (54). Here, the repetition of exactly the same story can be read as emphasizing both the pervasiveness of the trope of the loyal slave and the willingness of revolutionaries to capitalize on it. In this case, however, the implausibility of this narrative is also disrupted by Pillet’s account of the same soldier’s more public claims to possession by a devil. Pillet argues that once the soldier found himself surrounded by white troops, he radically changed his story. He quotes the captured insurgent as saying “It is the devil who has entered my body. I am a good negro, but for the devil being too strong” (52). Pillet’s reaction to this statement is interesting, as he allows “His excuse made me laugh, and despite my anger, if I had been alone, I would certainly have allowed him to be saved” (52). Here, while Pillet does not at all recognize the subversive reaction of his prisoner in claiming a sort of possession, even one which plays upon European understandings of possession in Catholic belief, he is inclined, for reasons that are not particularly obvious to his reader, to grant clemency. In this sense, the prisoner’s mention of possession does result in affecting some control over the situation, despite its ironic presentation.

Pillet is not the commanding officer, and reports that despite his own reactions, his troops executed the prisoner. The interaction becomes much more complex at this point, as Pillet describes the prisoner’s seemingly bizarre reaction with an air of respect that questions his own ideological relationship to the revolutionaries: “When he saw that his fate was sealed, he began to laugh, sing, and joke. At times, however, reviling us in a furious tone, at times jeering at us in mockery. He gave the signal himself and met death without fear or complaint” (FRR 79). Jeremy Popkin uses this passage to demonstrate Pillet’s ability to “portray a black man as a fully rounded human being, capable of

courage and resourcefulness and able to maintain his dignity even in the face of death,” a trope extremely common in literary depictions of slavery (ACE 37).⁸³ Pillet’s depiction of events here juxtaposes the prisoner’s seemingly inconsistent and erratic reactions with the courage and calm he displays upon execution, which even Pillet seems to find laudable.

An alternate reading of the scene suggests that the laughing, singing and joking Pillet describes could also be read as an invocation of religious ceremony. Moreau de St. Méry described the ritual possession of a practitioner of Vodou during the dance he calls Vaudoux as “possessed by God. She shakes, her whole body convulses, and the oracle speaks through her mouth. Sometimes she flatters and promises happiness; sometimes she thunders and utters reproaches” (trans. Spencer, p. 5). Where Pillet reads the prisoner’s earlier assertion of “a devil inside” him as humorous, the prisoner’s later reactions are not at all inconsistent with late eighteenth-century descriptions of spirit possession. Pillet’s dismissal of the incident as humorous is likely associated with the kind of assumption Moreau de St.-Méry asserts in his descriptions of newly arrived African slaves in Saint Domingue as “incapable of grasping ideas of religion” (*Description* 35).

Pillet also makes a notation that has since sparked a great deal of scholarly interest in the roles of French revolutionary writings and spiritual practice in inspiring the Haitian revolutionaries. Pillet recalls:

We found in his pocket pamphlets printed in France, filled with commonplaces about the Rights of Man and the Sacred Insurrection; in his vest was a large pack of tinder and phosphate of lime. On his chest he had a little sack full of hair, herbs, bits of bone, which they call a fetish; with this, they expect to be sheltered

⁸³ We see a similar scene in Aphra Behn’s *Oroonoko* (1668) and in several literary works about slavery since.

from all danger; and it was, no doubt, because of this amulet, that our man had the intrepidity which the philosophers call Stoicism (FRR 79)

Pillet's oft-cited recognition of the fetish as signifying the prisoner's adherence to Afro-Caribbean religious beliefs is interesting because he attributes the man's bravery to his belief. Pillet also apparently at least partially understood and was interested in the meaning of the fetish itself; his interest and attention to detail here implies that he values culturally-specific understandings of local religious and spiritual practices. In linking the use of the fetish to stoic philosophy, Pillet, ironically, also equates the allusion to Vodou with other philosophical practices that were certainly more widely known and respected among his peers.

Pillet's text points more than once towards disembodiment, as a concrete, recognizable practice that enabled its practitioners to resist a range of colonial power structures. Here the groups entranced outside of the Calinda dancers disrupt the celebration of Pillet's arrival on the island, and Pillet himself debunks the myth of paternalistic relations between the planters and the rebelling slaves by recognizing the violent resistance that was often surrounded by allusions to religious ritual. While these examples begin to explain the particular modes of disembodiment that traveled with Pillet from France to Saint Dominuge and then to the United States, they are certainly not the only means of disembodiment and reimagining the body as a site of resistance that we see in works about Saint Domingue written for audiences outside of the colony.⁸⁴

Leonora Sansay also uses formulations of possession to describe otherwise inexplicable acts, many of which involve the display and manipulation of social power.

⁸⁴ Although the manuscripts have never been uncovered, we do know that Pillet addressed the text to several of his family members in France, and may well have sent them across the Atlantic to his mother and the other specific parties to whom he dedicated individual portions of the text.

While Sansay's discussions of demons, devils, and monsters are not usually related to local spiritual practices, they do portray understandings of otherworldly embodiment that are worth exploring. At the height of domestic tensions between Clara and her husband, St. Louis, writes that "He was trembling with rage, transported with fury, and had more the air of a demon than a man" (84). He then tells her "I shall find means of punishing you, and of covering with shame the monster who has sought to destroy me" (84). Here her references to St. Louis' demonic air could be read as having little to do with Haitian understandings of possession, but the idea of a monster destroying St. Louis, whether he refers to her monstrosity or his own rage, implies the presence of external influence not unlike the kinds of external control and excessive volition recognizable in American sleepwalking novels, as will be discussed below.

Sansay also references a number of other devils and demons as potential sources of social power in the cases of several black and creole ladies Mary writes about. In one vignette, Mary describes an anonymous woman who "ordered her slaves to cut off the head" of a "beautiful negro woman" who she suspected her husband of desiring. Mary writes that the woman then served the head to her husband "with the air of a demon" at which the husband immediately returned to France "in order to never again behold such a monster" (70). Mary here implies that the wife's dismemberment of the other woman had demonic qualities, but it is unclear to which "monster" the husband refers. While leaving the wife and husband unnamed in this anecdote, Mary does mention the name of the girl as Coomba, a name at that time was associated with Mandingo origins, at least in popular literature. The name itself may well have implied not only the girl's physical

beauty, but also the violent resistance associated with the Mandingo tribes.⁸⁵ The question in the text, however, becomes whether the husband found his wife or the head of Coomba monstrous; in either case, the inclusion of the vignette signals Sansay's awareness of the presence of white creoles' sexual abuse of the local black population. Sansay's inclusion of the "monstruous" head also points to her understanding of dismemberment and display as means of asserting social control in the colony. As in the cases of Macandal, Vincent Ogé and countless other rebels in the colonies, Coomba's head becomes a gruesome warning to others of the dangers of disrupting systems of power.⁸⁶ What Sansay codes here as demonic then, is not Coomba's actions or her dismembered body, but the violence with which the planter's wife's reenacts typical forms of colonial violence.

This formulation of monstrosity as resulting from violent attempts at social control can also be seen in Sansay's treatment of St. Louis. While Sansay's text contains a number of descriptions of black on white violence that are coded as monstrous, the most unsettling and central act of violence in the novel is the final scene between St. Louis and Clara, which the reader only hears of towards the end the novel. From Cuba, Clara tells Mary, in a letter, that

the night before I left him he came home in a transport of fury, dragged me from my bed, said it was his intention to destroy me, and swore that we would render me horrible by rubbing aqua-fortis in my face. This last menace deprived me of the power of utterance; to kill me would have been a trifling evil, but to live disfigured, perhaps blind, was an insufferable idea and roused me to madness. (138)

⁸⁵ Coomba was the same name given to the beautiful Mandingo bride of Joseph, an explorer in B. Mayer's *Captain Canot ; or Twenty Years as an African Slaver*, published in 1855. Mandingo resistance to the system of Atlantic slavery was also well known during Sansay's time.

⁸⁶ In light of the specific Mandingo origins Sansay alludes to, her dismemberment can also be read as an attempt to disrupt spiritual beliefs in a return to Africa, a motive Vincent Brown also attributes to planters in Jamaica.

Here Clara figures her own “destruction” as an act that erases and cripples the sources of power she has: her body and her voice. She refers to the loss of her beauty as insufferable, and acknowledges the possibility that St. Louis will render her voiceless, obliterating her sole means of resistance to St. Louis, one which, throughout the novel thus far, has been enacted through Mary. She writes that “The only thought I dwelt on was, how to escape from this monster, and, at break of day, I was still sitting, as if rendered motionless by his threats” (138). Clara’s inability to react, her silence, becomes, at least in her rendition, the reason she is raped by St. Louis. In describing the scene, once she has escaped and hence regained her power of utterance, Clara writes that St. Louis “always finds my person provoking,” an allusion to her body, rather than her spirit, as she does not record uttering a single word to him (138-139). What becomes truly “monstrous” about the scene is not an act of disfigurement, but St. Louis’ power to silence her voice and abuse her body, and in that sense his monstrosity is far more dangerous within the text than that of the insurgents with whom he is equated in Mary and Clara’s letters. Interestingly, however, Mary also recognizes that power as having the potential to release Clara from St. Louis in noting that “St. Louis, above all, is in the greatest danger, for he has the reputation of being rich, and [has] excited the aversion of general Rochambeau” (104-105). It seems that for Mary, monstrosity in all its forms can be productive in uprooting the devastating situation of Clara’s marriage.

Sansay’s descriptions of monstrosity also work to establish parallels between St. Louis, Coomba, and the monstrosity of a local commander whom Sansay refers to as Nero. Sansay tells the story of a creole named Feydon who was ordered to deliver twenty thousand dollars to the Cap Français treasury on short notice. Upon failing to come up

with the sum, Feydon was taken to a grave, and the captain of the guard, also a creole and friend of Feydon's was ordered to shoot him. The sentence was carried out even though at that point his brother had delivered the money, and Mary alleges that Nero suppressed the reprieve that had already been granted. She notes that "everyone trembles lest he should be the next victim of a monster from whom there is no retreat" (104). Here, Nero's monstrosity here is not figured as being related to the kinds of barbarity attributed to insurgents in nineteenth-century histories, but rather the abuse of sovereign power over the local inhabitants.

The theme of devil possession in cases of jealous women reappears later in Sansay's text in the case of a woman she calls only a black general's wife.⁸⁷ Interestingly, Sansay argues that this woman had been "a very devil" in policing her husband's sexual trysts. Sansay also refers to the "same fury in female form [who] killed with her own hand a man who had been her husband's secretary" (92). Here, Sansay's references to possession by a devil or by a fury call to mind Catholic notions of possession that appear entirely unrelated to the kinds of spirit possession found in the practice of what many outside of Haiti call Vodou.⁸⁸ Sansay's description of her execution, however, does allude to a deeper understanding of spiritual beliefs surrounding death. Sansay writes that "she refused to have her eyes bound; and turning to the soldiers who were to execute their sentence, said 'Be expeditious, and don't make me linger'" (92). Standing in front of an already prepared grave, the anonymous woman could not, in Sansay's account,

⁸⁷ Sansay may refer to Charles Bélair and his wife, Sannitte, who, according to Thomas Madiou, were executed at Dessalines' orders for insubordination in 1802. For a full account, see *Histoire d'Haiti, Tome II*, p. 404.

⁸⁸ As Kate Ramsey notes, "Ginen" is a more accurate term for the Haitian practice of serving the spirits, while "in Haiti the word Vodou has traditionally referred to a particular mode of dance and drumming, and has generally not been figured as an inclusive terms for the entire range of spiritual and healing practices" to which it is often used to refer (7).

been worried about the lingering of her body, but rather can be read as asking for the soldiers to release her soul from her body through death. Like Pillet's anonymous soldier, the woman's bravery here can also be read as arising from her religious belief system, a system which understands spiritual life to extend beyond the living body.

While neither Pillet nor Sansay may not overtly recognize this possibility, their inclusion of these vignettes and these utterances implies that both authors recognize and value the words of these insurgents and their power to influence white audiences.

Sean Goudie argues for another overreaching connection between the novel's characters and the influence of local religious practice in the West Indies. Mary and Clara, vulnerable to first the whims of St. Louis, on whom they depend for financial support, and, less importantly in the novel, wartime violence, both seek what Patricia Saunders has labeled in examining women's writing in the Anglophone Caribbean as alter/native realities, or the "altering [of] discourses of identity in the interest of arriving at an indigenous (or native) articulation of the experience of colonialism" (5). Unable to find solutions to escaping the colonial and patriarchal power structures that drive the novel, the novel's characters turn to alter/native sources of power found in the indigenous cultures of the West Indies. While Sean Goudie's readings of the novel's treatment of spirit possession centers on Clara, Mary and the other women she encounters also seek indigenous sources of power in subtle ways.

When Mary and Clara are first offered the chance to leave Saint Domingue, Mary suggests that they are seeking a protective power outside of the two protectors already identified in the text, Aaron Burr and St. Louis. Mary does not, as a reader might expect, offer prayers for protection for the women on their dangerous journey, but instead asks

“What power shall I invoke to grant us favorable winds? Whose protection solicit to conduct me speedily to my native shores, and to the society of my friends?” (86). Here the text hints at the notion of alter/native power without naming it, at least at this point. Later in the sisters’ journeys, Mary describes another woman whose life is subjected to the whims of her father and a powerful viceroy who falls in love with her. This woman, Angelina, occupies the precarious position of rich widowhood, and finding no other way to escape her father’s control finds “an asylum to which she could retreat from their tyranny; that asylum was a convent” (135). Here the convent, the only religious institution Mary mentions in a positive light, becomes not a source of religious inspiration, but a means of resisting social control.

While Sansay’s references to devils, demons, and monsters as means of explaining male violence and, at times, empowering women through acts of violence may not be directly related to the kinds of ritual possession we find in Vodou culture, her treatment of Mary’s conversion to local religious practice certainly does. Despite the text’s conspicuous void of allusions of Christianity, Clara does find both a means of resistance to St. Louis’ power through embracing a specifically creole religious understanding. Clara’s escape from St. Louis, and from Rochambeau, is also figured in the text as being related to her ethereal embodiment. Sean Goudie reads her entry into creole society as prefiguring her later initiation into the distinctly creole religious life discussed below. When Clara first meets Rochambeau, Goudie points out Mary’s detailed attention to “the image of the Virgin, fancifully adorned and reposing on a bed of roses” (qtd. in Goudie 212). Mary describes Clara’s dress as including a rose in her hair that Goudie reads as the text’s first allusion to “Clara’s initiation in the temple

devoted to Mary/Erzulie at Bayam” (212). Towards the end of the novel, after Clara has fled to St. Jago (in what is now Cuba), to escape her abusive husband, St. Louis, Mary alludes to the combining of Catholic and West African religious practices as soon as they arrive in noting that Clara “complained some days ago of a headache, and a Spanish lady gave her a ribbon, which had been bound round the head of an image of the Virgin, telling her it was a sovereign remedy for all pains of the head” (112). Clara later writes to Mary about her fascination with a church in the village at Cobre, a location well known at the time because of its 1731 slave revolt.⁸⁹ Clara describes the experience of traveling to the secluded church at Cobre in moving terms that imply a favoring of Saint Domingue over both Europe and the United States. Clara writes that “the silence was broken only by the melodious voice of a bird, who sings only at this hour, whose notes are said to be sweeter than those of the European nightingale” (140). Clara describes her pilgrimage as seeking out “in this abode of wretchedness, a magnificent temple, dedicated to the blessed Virgin” (142). Here Goudie argues that the temple “is not merely a shrine to Catholic deities” and hence the letter implies “Clara’s ‘conversion’ as a devotee to Mary/Erzulie” (212). Goudie reads Clara’s conversion, paired with her condemnation of the local colonial government, as suggesting that Clara has embraced a fully creole identity, and one which is strongly linked to her connection to local cultures of possession. Clara has certainly gained a much stronger identity and ability to negotiate the complex social terrain of the Caribbean, and her empowerment does seem intimately tied to her spiritual experiences.

⁸⁹ Michael Drexler notes that the tradition of resistance to slavery there persisted well after the revolt, as the local maroon population surviving after the revolt continued to welcome runaways (139, f.n.1)

While neither Pillet nor Sansay openly discuss the resistant potential of alter/native systems of power, their presence in the background of both texts is striking, particularly because of their influence on these authors' treatment of the white creole, mulatto, and black subjects they describe. On various levels, Pillet and Sansay both recognize something subversive in the figures who suffer and benefit from notions of possession. From the revolutionary soldier who claims a devil is inside him to the jealous lover who performs decapitation, each figure described above asserts a form of agency that stands out as remarkable to the author who writes about them. That agency is firmly rooted in a culture of disembodiment that cannot be ignored, and these authors often treat them as productive of registers of liberty and autonomy that are not otherwise available to the subjects themselves.

Crossing Borders: Disembodiment in U.S. Contexts

Writing in the United States, authors like Pillet and Sansay sought to convey their experiences in Saint Domingue to readers who had not personally experienced colonial and local culture at the height of the Haitian revolution. Unlike many of the nineteenth-century historians and biographers who wrote about the Haitian Revolution in France and United States, Sansay and Pillet carve out creative new spaces for thinking about the legacy of Haiti in the developing American literary imagination. While they both participate in many of the conventions of eye-witness testimony in Saint Domingue, their attention to creole and black cultures departs a great deal from the writings developed in and about Haiti in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. While Sansay's text is presented as fiction, and certainly Pillet's as a literary, rather than historical, undertaking, both make historically centered claims about their roles as survivors of the

revolutionary period. Sansay's use of very real historical figures, and her identification of the protagonist as "a lady of Cape François, ties her text into the tradition of witness literature already well-established at the time of *Secret History*'s publication. Pillet's assertions of what he saw "with my own eyes" also root his text in the same tradition. Both authors depart from the norms of witness literature, however, in their choice of genre and their treatments of creole culture, which perhaps could only be considered outside of Haiti as formulations of fiction.

The impact of the Haitian Revolution on what scholars now call the Atlantic World was absolutely undeniable. The possibility of black self-rule in the Americas was a particularly threatening concept that eyewitnesses, historians and early nineteenth-century biographers outside of Haiti were heavily invested in dismissing in any way available to them. Nothing of value could be recognized, especially not a worldview that radically altered the ways in which readers outside of Haiti viewed their own subjectivity. Writers of fiction, however, were able to recognize the specific cultures and values found in revolutionary Saint Domingue without appearing to endorse the insurgents' goals. Instead of thinking about the era in terms of the various forms of violence perpetrated, these writers were able to emphasize the lived experience of Saint Domingue, and, couched as fiction, the possibility that Haitian systems of belief could be used to formulate the kinds of resistance to social control they experienced outside of Saint Domingue. Outside of mid-nineteenth-century writers overtly invested in abolition movements and disproving notions of black inferiority, authors who wrote about the Revolutionary period outside of Haiti were constrained by their audiences and worldviews into treating the period as an exceptional example of colonial rule gone

horribly wrong and the epitome of white fears. Writers of fiction who chose to address the revolutionary period, despite the violence they undoubtedly witnessed, were able to resist such constraints.

Despite both authors' treatments of the bodily violence during the varying conflicts they describe, neither limits their discussion to the kind of intense, traumatic, heavily stylized tropes often included in witness literature of the period. Yet, both authors are intensely preoccupied with the ways in which embodiment played a substantial role in asserting various formulations of liberty in the colony. In Pillet's narrative and poems, French, creole, and black bodies become malleable; that is, they can be altered, abandoned, and changed in order to achieve escape from immediate violence and the more subtle epistemological violence of larger social constructs like class and gender. For Sansay, women's bodies in particular become both the subjects and sites of struggle: Sansay herself, Clara, and the various French women in the novel can only escape male domination through capitalizing on Haitian systems of culture and belief in which the female body can access both sexual power and alternative formulations of power accessed through possession.

Particularly in the case of *Secret History*, which was written for a broad U.S. audience, these authors exported a productive, fascinating discourse on embodiment from Saint Domingue to the larger Americas. While the paranoid discourse of black on white violence discussed in earlier chapters comprised the first wave of presenting the Haitian revolution to the world, and the writings of its leaders comprised the second, these authors offered a third means of thinking about the revolution that, even while participating in the same discourse of black violence as their counterparts, also

introduced new means of thinking about bodies and spirits as means to escaping violence and resisting social control. I suggest in the following chapter that notions of refiguring the body absolutely influenced the ways in which U.S. writers considered the relationship between the body and liberty.

Chapter 4: Vulnerability and Volition: Somnambulistic Threat in *Edgar Huntly* and *Dred*

Texts about the Haitian Revolution were certainly not the only early American novels that featured disruption of the relationship between the mind and body or the formulation of resistant subjects. Emphases on embodiment and on the disruption of the normative relationship between the mind and body were common in fiction of the early republic, many of which negotiated complex political terrains where issues of sovereignty and liberty were still very much at stake. Below I have chosen to examine the phenomenon of sleepwalking, or somnambulism, in Charles Brockden Brown's *Edgar Huntly, or Memoirs of a Sleepwalker* (1799) and Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Dred: A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp* (1856). Sleepwalking was thought, in both authors' times, to arise from the disruption of the relationship between the subject and his body. This disruption became a point of concern for medical researchers and fiction writers alike because it challenged scientific, political, and moral sensibilities of the period.

The specter of Haiti was certainly an important factor in the literary landscape of Stowe's and Brown's writings. Charles Brockden Brown was acutely aware of the influence of Haiti on the United States, and the presence of Haiti lurks in the background of his most well-known work, *Wieland, or the Transformation* (1794), written in the midst of the yellow fever epidemic in Philadelphia. Brown himself also wrote and published political pamphlets on Haiti after the publication of *Edgar Huntly*. Harriet Beecher Stowe was also deeply interested in the influence of the free nation of Haiti on the American South. Carolyn Berman points out that a substantial portion of Stowe's most well-known novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, "neither in the North or the Old South, but

in the formerly French and Spanish lands of Louisiana” (147). Berman argues that Louisiana is framed by Stowe as a “hell” in which Simon Legree receives “West Indian training in torture” and enacts them in Louisiana, the primary “port of entry for French-speaking colonials from the West Indies” (152). Cassy, a French-speaking slave who Tom befriends, is situated within the text potentially violent (in threatening to attack white men who threaten her, kill her child, and incite Tom to kill Legree). She also manipulates Legree through impersonating his dead mother, successfully using white fears of disembodied ghosts to eventually cause Legree’s death. Berman argues that, through Cassy and through the novel’s other characters associated with Saint Domingue, Stowe situates Haiti as a threat to the American slave-holding South on a number of different levels.

Russ Castronovo argues that the linkages between the eighteenth and nineteenth-century popular imagination’s fascination with occult phenomena, in which he includes animal magnetism, begins with the relationship between white interiority and the subjugation of black bodies. Tracing this relationship through investigations of clairvoyance and communications with the dead, Castronovo argues that the abolition movement found common ground with mesmerism and spiritualism through an “insistence that the entities regarded as objects – such as tipping tables or black chattel – were invested with personhood” (24-25). This happens because believers in spiritualism understood that if a soul could be liberated from the body (as was supposed in the case of several different kind of claims of occult phenomena among enslaved and free blacks), then it stood to reason that that body must house a soul and therefore be considered a person. Unfortunately, “for many liberal activists, parapsychology seemed an advance

over political commitment in the crusade for universal liberty. Many would-be emancipators believed that mesmerism and spiritualism addressed the origins of inequality in contrast to antislavery activity, which treated only its symptoms” (45). Hence, popular interest in parapsychology did little to forward abolition activism in general, or to address the lived experience of black subjects. Castronovo notes a few reversals of this trend, particular in terms of black authors’ uses of disembodiment and in as discussed in Chapter 2. In considering the contributions of Charles Poyen, who he credits for popularizing Caribbean forms of mesmerism in New England, Castronovo argues that “vodun’s oppositional potential [...] was] submerged when Poyen exported somnambulism to the United States as a treatment for white mental agitation” (44). I would argue here that other uses of somnambulism in the mid nineteenth century, particularly in the Stowe’s work, still explore some of that oppositional potential.

I have chosen here to examine works that are not explicitly related to Haiti in order to show some of the more subtle means of influence Haitian thought had on these canonical American authors’ treatments of the body and the kinds of power associated with disembodiment. The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries saw the parallel formation of a number of scientific and political discourses that were both interrelated and interdependent in terms of establishing understandings of the human body, the human subject, and the political subject in the Americas. The formulation and limitation of political rights rested (and to some extent still do) on defining who is capable of and eligible for political subjectivity. Late eighteenth-century American fiction portrays the struggle to understand political subjectivity in the Americas just as often, and often in more complex ways, as the period’s overtly political writings. Political participation was

not thought of only as an aspect of the subject's psyche, but rather as part of the psyche which could not be considered separately from the body. This understanding in part arises from eighteenth-century considerations of medical science, in which the psyche was thought to affect the body every bit as much as the body affected the psyche. In her exploration of the rise of nervous disorders in the nineteenth century, Justine Murison points out the "basic assumption" of "an embodied mind and a thoughtful body" in late eighteenth-century medical texts (2). Murison contextualizes this understanding as laying the groundwork for the fusion of moral issues with health issues, a conflation that through which late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century American literatures that deal with scientific phenomena can be productively understood.

Among the scientific phenomena that became sources of public fascination during both periods are sleepwalking and its related abilities, including mesmerism and magnetism. The appearance of these phenomenon in canonical U.S. fiction is particularly fascinating because of the ways in which authors not only interrogate scientific understandings of the relationship between the body and the psyche, but also use those assumptions to constitute modes of reinforcement and subversion of the encroachment of political power over geographic spaces and the bodies that inhabit them. Specifically, I argue that somnambulism in *Edgar Huntly* and *Dred* serves as a metaphor for the vulnerability of human bodies to territorial encroachment and, simultaneously, the potential for human subjects to assert their political will over others. In *Edgar Huntly*, this nexus of vulnerability and volition centers around encroachments on Native American territories and the rule of law on the frontier. In *Dred*, the combination of vulnerability and volition expressed through the sleepwalker proposes a novel means of

black resistance to territorial encroachment and to the system of African slavery in more general terms. Even while using explicitly non-Caribbean formulations of medical science to work through the phenomenon of sleepwalking, Stowe and Brown rely upon similar uses of disembodiment described in this work's previous chapter, hence portraying the influence of Haitian thought on the U.S. literary imagination.

I begin with a look at theories of somnambulism circulating in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century with particular attention to issues of volition and vulnerability, two key concepts with which medical researchers and political theorists were very much concerned. In the late eighteenth century, very little medical literature was being published or written in the Americas. There is ample evidence, however, that American researchers and authors of the time read their European counterparts and, beginning with Benjamin Rush, entered into the European scientific discourse of the day.⁹⁰ Volition, in eighteenth-century medical parlance, was akin to will, in the sense of voluntary impetus, or a subject's conscious desire to perform an action and control over that action. Since volition meant that a subject asserted control over what were normatively considered voluntary movements of the body, the concept became problematic in disorders where the subject appeared to experience consciousness but was unable to exert their will over bodily movements that were generally considered voluntary, or requiring volition in their performance. Many disorders that were considered diseases of volition, meaning that the patient had no conscious ability to resist the bodily actions caused by the disorder (for example, epilepsy or hiccups), baffled

⁹⁰ US-based medical education did not formally consolidate until the late 1780's, and research opportunities were limited on the North American continent. Physicians like Rush were educated in Europe, and their work directly responds to their European counterparts.

medical experts, who then struggled to determine whether volition necessarily relied upon consciousness.

Sleepwalking, alternately referred to throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as somnambulism in what appears to be an attempt to institutionalize the disorder, became a source of confusion for experts because it not only fell outside of the standard assumptions about sleep and waking, but also because it threw into question long-held beliefs about volition and bodily movement. The sleepwalker, who lacked the necessary consciousness for volition, but still appeared to engage in voluntary movements, embodied several troubling concerns surrounding volition and vulnerability in late eighteenth-century medical literature and fiction. Vulnerability, at least as it is considered in terms of the medical literatures of sleepwalking, refers to susceptibility to physical and emotional harm as a result of a lack of volition during somnambulatory episodes and to the susceptibility of the mind to external influences during somnambulatory states. Magnetic sleepwalking, a phenomenon linked to mesmerism, although less substantiated by the nineteenth century, is characterized by the intervention of a somnambulist, a person capable of extending his or her own volition over another who is rendered vulnerable through a sleepwalking state. This particular form of sleepwalking displays a sense of vulnerability with which U.S. authors like Charles Brockden Brown and Harriet Beecher Stowe were extraordinarily concerned, the idea that medical science could render a subject helpless against external control of their body.

In all forms of sleepwalking, the sleepwalker experiences a non-normative relationship between the psyche and the body. In medical literatures and fiction alike, sleepwalkers are figured as either lacking their own volition or lacking the moral sense

that keeps their volition in check. In contrast, somnambulists were believed to control others in their sleepwalking states, to extend their volition over other bodies. For this reason, both sleepwalkers and somnambulists experience forms of disembodiment: the sleepwalkers' bodies, or at least their bodily movements, are disconnected from their own volition, and somnambulists exercise their own volition over other bodies. For both figures, the combination of volition and bodily function that unites the physical body with the political subject via the embodied mind, is ruptured. The appearance of sleepwalkers, whose bodies are both vulnerable and volatile, in the works of canonical authors of late eighteenth and mid nineteenth-century literatures present imaginative approaches to understanding the encroachment of political power over bodies and spaces in the early Republic and in the wake of its division. I posit here that the modes of disembodiment of the sleepwalker found in the fictionalized accounts of sleepwalking in Charles Brockden Brown's *Edgar Huntly, or Memoirs of a Sleepwalker* and Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Dred: A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp* not only explore the potential of scientific understandings of sleepwalking, but employ its particular concerns about the body's vulnerability and the subject's volition to negotiate complex terrains of political vulnerability and resistance to formulations of power exercised over bodies and territory in late eighteenth and mid nineteenth-century U.S. settings.

The Dubious History of Sleepwalking

Sleepwalking, alternately referred to as somnambulism and later as oneirodynia, boasts a remarkable history in late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century scientific discourse. A matter of some fascination in Europe and the Americas, the phenomenon was defined and redefined by shifting meanings. Of particular concern to the medical

community was the sleepwalker's ability to control voluntary motions and respond to some stimuli, while remaining in an apparently unconscious state in which they appeared unable to recognize other stimuli. Researchers also struggled with understanding whether or not a patient who can control reactions and movements to a great extent could be functioning under their own will, or volition, despite the seemingly inconsistent behavior sets that were witnessed during sleepwalking. The patients' inability to respond to external stimuli provided by researchers was often coded as a form of vulnerability, as was the loss of memory associated with sleepwalking. This vulnerability coexisted with notions of volition as expressed through sleepwalker's ambulatory motions, creating a scenario in which researchers attempted to resolve what they understood as a fundamentally paradoxical state – one in which the sleepwalker is both unconscious and performing seemingly voluntary motions. The earliest medical texts discussed here (and in general, produced) originate in Europe; in the late eighteenth century, U.S. medical schools were just being founded, and there is ample evidence that the United States' earliest formally recognized physicians were both trained in Europe, and widely read the only available research at the time, which was published in Europe. I argue here that the work of Benjamin Rush, the first published medical researcher in the United States, marks a definitive shift in medical understandings of sleepwalking in American contexts. Concerns about excess volition and bodily vulnerability reach their apex in the sleepwalking novels of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, where fears of excess volition become coded as posing a political threat to the control of American territories, legal systems, and inhabitants and bodies and subjects recognized as being particularly vulnerable to foreign influences.

One of the more well-known medical analyses of sleepwalking in the late eighteenth century can be found in William Cullen's *Lectures on Materia Medica*, delivered at the University of Edinburgh in the 1770's. Cullen here identifies the phenomenon of sleepwalking as occurring in a stage between waking and sleeping, arguing that "the body can be in any degree of waking; and it is thus we must account for the *Somnambulantes* " (329). He goes on to argue that "The steadiness of motion in such cases depends on the mind not being sensible to other impressions, or stimuli, because there is a total absence of fear, and therefore a more exact and undisturbed attention to the action we perform" (329). Here Cullen's primary concern raised about sleepwalking has to do with "sensibility" or the ability to experience sensation. As discussed below, nearly every substantive analysis of somnambulism after Cullen's returns to grappling with the issue of the subject's "sensibility" in one form or another.

Despite their general categorizations as pseudo-science today, the late eighteenth century medical establishment also considered somnambulism in terms of what it saw as related phenomena, like magnetism and mesmerism. Jean-Francois Fourmel's 1792 "An Essay on the Probabilities of Electrical and Animal Somnabules, or Sleepwalkers" defines somnambulism as "that particular state when the senses are suspended between sleeping and waking; partaking of both, and is also productive of many phenomena of which both are strangers to" (5). This type of somnambulism is uniquely productive of a state which neither normative sleep nor waking can produce. Fourmel delineates two categories of somnambulism. The first he labels as natural somnambulism, in which "sleepers execute things impossible for any man awake to perform," noting that this phenomenon was widely accepted as a valid medical condition (22). However, he goes

on to defend the less generally accepted phenomenon of what he calls magnetic somnambulism, a state which can be produced in a patient (in this sense more akin to hypnosis or mesmerism). In his defense of the possibility of magnetic somnambulism, Fourmel argues that external stimuli to the senses (light, sound, taste and smell) have been proven to produce sleep, and because “it is agreed that, generally speaking, there is but only one sense, which is feeling, and that the other four are only a modification of it,” feeling in its unadulterated form can be used to produce sleep (19). He goes on to assert that although many imposters and deceivers who purport to practice magnetism, magnetists can most certainly also produce sleep and sleepwalking through manipulating external stimuli (18-21). Fourmel also defends the concept of “animal magnetism” as the means through which the “Magnetifer” can place himself in affinity with the somnambulist, and rather than controlling the somnambulist’s movements, can “prompt [sic] his sympathetical organs to act with those of others” (35). Fourmel attempts to explain the potential to control the sleepwalker as a medical phenomenon based on pre-established sensory relations, thus providing what he finds to be a medically acceptable basis for understanding a much more troubling and questionable form of sleepwalking that, while frequently discredited, was also a source of some fascination for both the scientific community and popular culture in general.

Fourmel’s insistence on the validity of magnetic somnambulism relies upon the same relationship between sleepwalking and volition that we see in more widely accepted medical texts. In one of the earliest and most popular English medical texts, Erasmus Darwin classified sleepwalking as a disease of volition, along with febrile trembling,

screaming, convulsions, epilepsy, and convulsive asthma.⁹¹ In his 1794-1796 edition of *Zoonomia*, Darwin's early descriptions of sleepwalking are thoroughly mired in sorting out whether or not the patient can actually be asleep while still engaging in voluntary movement:

In this malady the patients have only the general appearance of being asleep in respect to their inattention to the stimulus of external objects, but [their actions are only] voluntary exertions to relieve pain. The muscles are subservient to the will, as it appears by the patient's walking around, and sometimes doing the common offices of life. The ideas of the mind are also obedient to the will, because their discourse is consistent though they answer imaginary questions [...] and when they apply their volition to their organs of sense, they become sensible of the objects they attend to, as general sensation is destroyed by the violence of their exertions. (336)

Darwin's implication here relies upon the idea that the sleepwalker displays particular forms of volition (avoidance of pain and some response mechanism to external stimuli). In fact the only allusion to a lack of volition in Darwin's sleepwalker is "inattention to the stimulus of external objects." Also unsettling, and perhaps where some of the bases of magnetic somnambulism can be found is Darwin's lack of specification of whose will the sleepwalker's "muscles" and "ideas" obey. At first glance, this passage could certainly be interpreted as containing the possibility that the sleepwalker's body obeys another will entirely, and that the mind, particularly in the example of answering questions, is controlled by the person asking rather than the sleepwalker. Darwin himself, however, dismisses this potential, noting that "This disease, so far from being connected with sleep [...] arises from an excess of volition, and not from a suspension of it" (337). Here Darwin begins to characterize sleepwalking as a matter of the subject's volition, rather

⁹¹ Several editions of *Zoonomia* were published in the last decade of the eighteenth century and the first decade of the nineteenth century, many of which are still available in archives and digital databases. Here, I trace the development of Darwin's understanding of sleepwalking through the 1794-1796 and 1796-1800 editions, in which he radically altered his classification of the phenomenon.

than his or her vulnerability, arguing that the sleeping state does not render the sleepwalker powerless, but instead may in fact allow him or her to exercise volition in much the same way as if he or she were awake.

In the 1796-1800 edition of *Zoonomia*, Darwin classifies the phenomenon of sleepwalking primarily in terms of “reverie,” a state which he earlier argued accompanied the phenomenon and which he re-categorized as a disease of volition. Darwin defines reverie as:

When we are employed with great sensations or pleasure, or with great efforts of volition, in the pursuit of some interesting train of ideas, we cease to be conscious of our existence, are inattentive to time and place, and do not distinguish this train of sensitive and voluntary ideas from the irritative ones excited by the presence of external objects, though our organs of sense are surrounded with their accustomed stimuli, till at length this interesting train of ideas become exhausted, or the appulses [sic] of external objects are applied with unusual violence, and we return with surprise, or with regret, to the common track of life. (260)

He goes on to explain that reverie is different from delirium or sleep in that reveries “are kept confident by the power of volition” (261). In this edition of the text, he notes that “Those persons who are said to walk in their sleep, are affected with reverie to a great degree, that it becomes a formidable disease; the essence of which consists in the inaptitude of the mind to attend to external stimuli” (261). In this edition, sleepwalking is framed as making the mind inept rather than inattentive, and he backs away from claims the subject, through exercising enough volition, could become “sensible.” His basis for classifying sleepwalking as a reverie is illustrated through the case of a woman whom he describes as going into violent convulsions, hiccups, and nausea after menstruation, and suddenly slipping into “reverie” in which she carries on conversation with imaginary parties and fails to respond to external stimuli. Darwin describes her as waking from the reverie without remembering it, afraid, and angry and with increasingly melancholic

thoughts. Darwin finds the rationality the patient displays during her somnambulism inconsistent with a lack of memory. In one of the few studies that addresses Darwin's work, Justine Murison notes that "because somnambulism combined this loss of memory with apparently rational behavior, late eighteenth-century psychological theory relied on sleep and sleep disorders to define the faculties of the mind" (244). Despite classifying sleepwalking with sleep-related disorders, Darwin's definition here does not rely upon the patient being fully asleep, but rather considers sleepwalking a distracted state that can be attributed either to involuntary causes and or to the mind's focus on a particular train of thought.

Although later medical literature generally treats sleepwalking as a natural phenomenon (one that does not occur as a result of the intervention of a third party), Justine Murison also points out that several American experts focused on the susceptibility of the body of the sleepwalker. Benjamin Rush, the preeminent writer of eighteenth-century U.S. medical texts, considered sleep, although a necessary healing state, to contain "a variety in the suspension of powers [...] In some cases the imagination is only deranged in dreams – in others the memory is affected --- and in others the judgment.--- But there are cases, in which the change that is produced in the state of the brain, by means of sleep affects the moral faculty likewise" (18). Here Rush works through the potential linkages between sleep and volition in a very different way, and one that is specifically connected with understandings of morality. Murison reads such passages in Rush's writings as an argument that "implies here and elsewhere, though, the very suspension of the moral faculties in sleep potentially makes all of the sleeper's actions morally ambiguous" (250). This ambiguity leads Rush to question the

possibility of a moral faculty extant in sleep that is quite separate from the sleeper's waking sense of morality, asking "Why, under certain unfavorable circumstances, may there not exist also a moral faculty, in a state of sleep, or subject to mistakes?" (21). Because the sleepwalker's other senses are impaired, Rush finds an impairment in his moral sense as well, rendering the sleepwalker's body, mind, and moral sense particularly vulnerable to external influence.

Rush later treats sleepwalking with much more depth, probably as a result of the growing public fascination with the phenomenon. In his 1799 lectures, Rush addresses the specific issue of volition in sleepwalking, noting "the stimulating passions act through the medium of the will; and the exercises of this faculty of the mind sometimes extend so far as to produce actions in the muscles of the limbs, and occasionally of the whole body, as we see in persons who walk in their sleep" (*Three Lectures*, 32). Rush's insistence on sleepwalking as a rare phenomenon may speak to the many cases whose medical validity had been disputed. Nevertheless, among the "stimulating passions" that Rush describes are two that gain particular nuance in thinking through the version of sleepwalking presented in *Edgar Huntly*: "The angry and revengeful passions often deliver us [...] from the imaginary guilt of murder" (*Three Lectures* 32). Rush also responds to Darwin's discussion of volition, noting that "He supposes dreams are never attended with volition. The facts which have been mentioned prove, that the will frequently acts with *more* force in [dreams], than in the waking state" (33). Here Rush introduces the notion that the sleepwalker's actions may not only be voluntary, but may arise from the excessive levels of volition found in dream states, and hence may be more dangerous

because these actions are subservient to the sleeper's will, or at least the part of it that is unleashed in such a state.

While Rush's medical writings were certainly of interest in European discourses surrounding sleepwalking, Charles Brockden Brown's fictional texts on sleepwalking were also influential on the study of the phenomenon in Europe, underscoring the permeable boundaries between "fact" and fiction. John William Polidori, most famous for being a companion of Lord Byron, penning the first vampire novel, *The Vampyre* (originally published in Lord Byron's name), and later becoming an integral part of Gothic writing circles, started out as a medical student at the University of Edinburgh. Polidori's doctoral thesis, entitled *Oneirodynia*, examined the phenomenon of somnambulism. In the years preceding his medical study, Polidori authored *Ximenes*, a tragedy that borrows a great deal of its plot from Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland* (MacDonald 27). Polidori critics also believe that his doctoral thesis, completed in 1814, "may have been inspired partly by another of Brockden Brown's novels, *Edgar Huntly*" (37). Whether or not Polidori's interest in or study of somnambulism was related to his readings of Brown's work, his medical and literary works provide an interesting linkage between medical science and literature that cannot be ignored.

Polidori's original medical thesis begins by reviewing the works of Diderot, de Sauvages, and Cullen. David Lorne MacDonald, Polidori's biographer, notes however that sleepwalking first became included in the category of sleep disorder through Cullen, who mistranslated the Greek "odyne" (pain) as "to walk" and thus categorized oneirodynia for the first time as a sleeping disorder (35). Polidori's work also drew heavily on French authors like François Boissier de Sauvages, who classified

somnambulism as a hallucination and connected it with nightmares, which he designated as “*ephiates*, from the Greek *epi* and *allomai*, to mount on, because the sufferer dreams that some creature is mounting on his chest’ and choking him” (qtd. in MacDonald 36).⁹² The implications of vulnerability in de Sauvages’ definition of nightmare are certainly fruitful in thinking about later theories of magnetic sleepwalking. De Sauvages’ version of somnambulism places vulnerability as a critical aspect of the condition: “a hallucination in which dreamers rise from their bed and expose themselves to various dangers” (Qtd. in *Oneirodynia*, trans. David Petrain 776). Polidori, however, objected vehemently to Sauvages’ assertion of vulnerability in somnambulism, arguing that vulnerability to danger is not intrinsic in the disorder and thus should not be part of the definition.

Perhaps as a poor testament to Polidori’s skill as a medical researcher, the case studies he cites both involve sleepwalkers whose condition actually does place them in inherent danger. The first follows the case of a boy who is affected by epilepsy and physical pain (in many ways consistent with Erasmus Darwin’s descriptions and classifications) but is then seized by “fear that French men were trying to attack him, men whom he was caused to see by his imaginative faculty” (778). In this particular instance, the boy both fears his own vulnerability and is also simultaneously made vulnerable by his reactions⁹³. After reviewing his first case, Polidori argues that the boy’s somnambulism “arose not from an organic affliction of the brain, but from a hyperexcitability of the brain and nerves” (781). Hyperexcitability here can be likened to

⁹² The author’s understanding of the sleeper being mounted by a demon creates an interesting inversion to the way spirits mount a worshipper in voodoo systems of belief.

⁹³ The imagined danger here is of a specific vulnerability to foreign aggression, a theme that certainly echoes *Edgar Huntly’s* concerns, as will be discussed in greater detail below.

both Darwin's and Rush's understandings of excess volition that manifests simultaneously through what we now think of as the psyche and the body but what was then understood as a single unit. Polidori goes on to describe somnambulism as being more closely related to Darwin's understanding of delirium in his review of the second case study, noting "when the sufferer performs some action, he does it so intently that his mind's disposition is stronger than customary stimuli," and relies upon the idea of hyperexcitability of the mind as an explanation for somnambulists' lack of sensory reaction (784). While Polidori's medical literature lacks the depth and authority of more established researchers like Darwin and Rush, it posits an interesting linkage between the aspects of somnambulism with which both scientists and writers remained fascinated: notions of excess volition and fears of vulnerability.

The sleepwalker, in most European accounts, is a figure whose bodily vulnerability is caused by an absence of volition. In other words, the subject's will is absolutely removed from his or her actions during sleepwalking. In sorting through the morass of associated conditions like nightmares and delirium, Erasmus Darwin argues that the subject's volition may not be entirely absent during episodes of sleepwalking. While in European medical texts, the presence or absence of volition is not contextualized in terms of morality, Benjamin Rush, in a specifically American context refigures Darwin's notion of excess volition into a moral concern, positing that the sleepwalker may experience his own volition, along with a suppression of the moral faculty he or she possesses when fully conscious. In this case, the excessive volition of the sleepwalker becomes coded as a threat of immorality and thus an impaired ability to function as a morally conscious political subject. It is within this refiguring that

American novelists like Brockden Brown and Stowe position their sleepwalkers, who are not only physically vulnerable in general, but are morally vulnerable both to others and to their own excessive wills. While the results of these excesses differ from one text to another, they both position volition and vulnerability as essential to understanding forms of resistance to state power.

Vulnerable and Volatile Bodies: The Contagion of Sleepwalking in *Edgar Huntly*

Charles Brockden Brown positions *Edgar Huntly* as a novel that is, more than anything, about the phenomenon of sleepwalking, and calls attention to “the incidents of Indian hostility, and the perils of the western wilderness” as the backdrop to his moral project (3). As a “moral painter,” however, Brockden Brown’s work is far more centered on negotiating frontier politics than it is on reliably portraying the phenomenon of sleepwalking, an emphasis made particularly clear by the juxtaposition of its unstable narration and ambiguities about the phenomenon itself with its even, steady portrayal of the Indians. It is, above all, a paranoid narrative focused on the vulnerability of the individual in the early Republic, and the dangerous excesses that arise when that individual’s morality becomes compromised. I argue here that the vulnerability and volition involved in sleepwalking within the novel present to the reader a discourse that centers on the vulnerability and volition at stake in political participation in the early Republic, particularly in terms of the exercise of state power over particular spaces and the bodies that inhabit them.

Despite contemporary critics’ overwhelming focus on *Edgar Huntly* as Charles Brockden Brown’s primary exploration of sleepwalking, the novel is not Brockden

Brown's sole work of fiction surrounding the phenomenon of somnambulism. In 1805, Brown published "Somnambulism: A Fragment" in *The Literary Magazine*, prefaced by an extract from the 1784 *Vienna Gazette* describing a youth who kills a female traveler, apparently during an episode of sleepwalking. Like *Edgar Huntly*, the "fragment" begins with the firsthand narrative of a young man who is later revealed as a sleepwalker. Althorpe, the young man, describes his descent into sleepwalking as a matter of excess volition and delirium that bears some similarities to Polidori's assertions about the causes of somnambulism. Althorpe describes a growing sense of "uncommon danger" surrounding his guests' travels that he notes "rose to terror" as he continued to focus on them (1-2). He interrupts his narrative to relay some general insights into feeling that are worth considering in light of the rest of the text:

All men are, at times, influenced by inexplicable sentiments. Ideas haunt them in spite of all their efforts to discard them. Prepossessions are entertained, for which their reason is unable to discover any adequate cause. The strength of a belief, when it is destitute of any rational foundation, seems, of itself, to furnish a new ground for credulity. When we first admit a powerful persuasion, and then, from reflecting on the insufficiency of the ground on which it is built, instead of being prompted to dismiss it, we become more forcibly attached to it. (3)

Here the narrator pits sentiment, particularly unfounded sentiment, against rationalism. The narrator's "sentiment" continues to build, until he becomes "too powerfully excited to permit" sleep and he becomes lost in melancholy thoughts and fancies (5). He then falls into what he terms a "profound slumber" "in which [his] fancy was incessantly employed in calling up the forms, into new combinations, which had constituted my waking reveries" (5). He then finds his dreams an outlet for "the design which [he] could not bring [him] self to execute while awake" and dreams of murdering his intended's attacker. At this point, the narrator does not recognize himself as a sleepwalker; rather,

he has unknowingly gone through a list of symptoms that were commonly associated with sleepwalking without believing he has ever left his home. Brown's "fragment" takes a sharp turn at this point, as the narrator notes "I should not have described these phantoms had there not been a remarkable coincidence between them and the very real events of the night" (6). He then hears that the young woman has been shot, and relates the events "as I was able to recollect them at different times, from the witnesses" (6). The rest of the story, told from the point of view of the girl and her father, traces their journey and ultimately reveals Althorpe as the attacker. Althorpe's sleepwalking appears to arise from an excess of sentiment (both in expressions of anxiety about the safety of the traveling party and in fraught concerns about Althorpe's potential as the young lady's suitor) that leads to an excessive and misguided outpouring of volition in the form of somnambulistic murder. The episode, despite having been wrought through Althorpe's volition, is also a result of his emotional vulnerability to the young lady, his social vulnerability to courtship customs, and his physical vulnerability to the disease of somnambulism. Both the excessive sentiment and the vulnerabilities it creates encapsulate, if in a more romanticized and briefer treatment of sleepwalking, a nexus of the same concerns Brown highlights in *Edgar Huntly*.

Brockden Brown introduces *Edgar Huntly* as an almost scientific exploration into American culture with the heady notation that "new springs of action, and new motives to curiosity should operate; that the field of investigation, opened to us by our own country, should differ essentially from those which exist in Europe" (3). Just as Benjamin Rush's work connects the studies of nature and medicine to morality, Brown acknowledges himself as a "moral painter," equating his role with that of "the naturalist and politician"

who here have already begun to explore the American landscape. Brown manipulates the primarily European medical discourse surrounding sleepwalking in order to recast it and rethink it in a specifically U.S. based context. In “Diasporic African Sources of Enlightenment Knowledge,” Susan Scott Parrish suggests another linkage between the assertion of authority in colonial settings in the Americas, explaining that “Because natural history was predicated on locally embedded observation and experience (as opposed to technologically sophisticated laboratory or astronomical sciences), empiricism often gave authority where political empire took it away” (282). While not precisely a natural history, the narrative’s efforts to create a sense of empirical observation is particularly relevant in the case of sleepwalking, which emerging medical science had yet to conclusively explain. Parrish reads the pursuit of natural science throughout the early Americas as a means of claiming and highlighting knowledges that were necessarily local as a covert attempt to assert the importance of colonial intellectual contributions to the sciences, which were typically European-dominated, as a counterpoint to the political disenfranchisement extant in the American colonies. Although her focus precedes the U.S. Revolutionary war, *Edgar Huntly*’s empiricism can certainly be read as an extension of Parrish’s colonial uses of scientific inquiry. In that in the new nation in which *Edgar Huntly* was written and published, the assertion of scientific expertise and promotion of local knowledge sustains an assertion of U.S. sovereignty, not only in terms of establishing U.S. knowledges as distinct and equal to those of Europe, but also in terms of establishing contexts for US sovereignty over other, colonized peoples. Brown’s examination of sleepwalking in particular is figured here as a “field of investigation, opened to us by our own country” who nature *and* study “should

differ essentially from those which exist in Europe”. The relationship then between the study of natural science and notions of sovereignty is thus the framework upon which *Edgar Huntly* rests, and one which bears further inquiry into the particular formulations of science Brown moralizes.

Norman Grabo’s introduction to *Edgar Huntly* references Michel Foucault’s work on the relationship between madness and freedom in the eighteenth century, particularly as it relates to the rise of systems of discipline, medicine, social control, and the criminalization of madness in the rise of modern mental health care and incarceration. Suggesting that “involuntary social deviance” is synonymous with “unfettered liberty,” Grabo goes on to substantiate the close connection between Charles Brockden Brown’s novels and Benjamin Rush’s scientific publications, noting that *Edgar Huntly* was published in the same year as Benjamin Rush’s *Enquiry into the Effects of Public Punishment upon Criminals and Upon Society*, in which Rush argues that public punishment is harmful in a number of ways to both the criminal and society as a whole. Rush argues instead for a prison system which operates in a surprisingly Foucauldian manner, in which punishments for particular crimes are kept secret, and the effects of state power must be operate on internal registers (Rush 20-22).⁹⁴ As in the case of Foucault’s “Panopticism,” discipline and the fear of discipline must necessarily become internalized.⁹⁵ The internalization of mechanisms of power and the repudiation of vulnerability and volition are one means of thinking about the complex project Brockden Brown undertakes in *Edgar Huntly*.

⁹⁴ See Rush 20-22

⁹⁵ See “Panopticism” in Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish*, p. 1975-228.

While Huntly asserts his narrative as a case study of the phenomenon of somnambulism, Brown himself elsewhere reads his own novel as a “realistic” representation of U.S.-Indian relations, “calling attention to the ‘minuteness’ of his descriptions and to the historical ‘Truth of these incidents’” (Brown qtd. in Gardner). Leslie Fiedler famously points out that what is actually being detailed in the text is the reality of “human madness and especially somnambulism, diseases explicable by medical science” (157). This intimate observation of somnambulism the text provides also points to an understanding of the intersection of criminality and disease that bears a great deal of similarity to the relationships Foucault traces in the late seventeenth century between scientific classification and the rise of modern systems of discipline. This system, for Foucault, began with the recording of observations related to disease that in some ways parallel Huntly’s early treatment of Clithero within the narrative. Foucault describes the late seventeenth-century plague town as a model for the rise of modern systems of discipline as follows:

Enclosed, segmented space, observed at every point, in which the individuals are inserted in a fixed place, in which the slightest movements are supervised, in which all events are recorded, in which an uninterrupted work of writing links the centre and periphery, in which power is exercised without division, according to a continuous hierarchical figure, in which each individual is being constantly located, examined, and distributed among the living beings, the sick and the dead – all this constitutes a compact model of the disciplinary mechanism (197)

In this model, the space lends itself to containment and observation, allowing for the rise of forms of discipline that are certainly not possible in the wilderness of Pennsylvania. Huntly’s attempt to observe and establish discipline are thwarted at every turn by the open space, difficult terrain, and general lack of order he encounters. He attempts to establish forms of discipline – through observation, visibility and writing – but cannot

establish the optimal disciplinary model because his environment lacks the conditions of fixed space and creates substantial barriers to his ability to observe with any consistency. The text ultimately condemns this failure of discipline on several levels. Paul Downes comments that Huntly's "urgent return to the frontier, the scene of his friend's murder, coincides with a radical intuition that justice will be found where the Republic's 'catechisms and codes' begin to lose ground" (415). That is, in the early republic, disciplinary mechanisms are not in place on the Pennsylvania frontier to either curb Clithero's behavior (and later Huntly's) or stop the spread of the plague of somnambulism to Huntly.

Foucault traces the intersection of madness and criminality as being substantively defined in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century. He notes that the 1810 penal code in European law "turned guilt into a scientific-juridical complex" through which "there is neither crime nor offence if the offender was of unsound mind at the time of the act. The possibility of ascertaining madness was, therefore, a quite separate matter from the definition of an act as a crime; the gravity of the act was not altered by the fact that its author was insane, nor the punishment reduced as a consequence; the crime itself disappeared" (*History of Sexuality* 19-20). This understanding, common to European law at the time of *Edgar Huntly's* publication runs rampant throughout the text. Although the acts themselves are heinous, both Huntly and to some extent Clithero are absolved of their crimes because somnambulism is viewed as a disease of volition, which obviates the crimes themselves.

The question of Huntly's guilt rests, at least in part, on whether the reader finds his observations credible enough to both convince the reader of Huntly's somnambulist

condition and that that condition fully accounts for his criminal and immoral acts. *Edgar Huntly*'s opening chapter begins with a missive by the eponymous character on whether or not he can effect enough detachment to tell his story rationally – if, in Brown's own terms, he can enter a field of investigation about himself. Huntly questions as he begins his narrative "Yet am I sure even now my perturbations are sufficiently stilled for an employment like this? That the incidents I am going to relate can be recalled and arranged without indistinctness and confusion? That emotions will not be re-awakened by my narrative, incompatible with order and coherence" (5). Huntly asserts some basis upon which the reader can rely upon his narrative (or at least understand objectivity as a goal of the author), inviting readings of *Huntly* as a case study, rather than a gothic romance. Paul Downes also argues that the "uncertain relationship between the government and the people can be mapped onto Huntly's troubled negotiation between writing ('arrangement') and what is represented in writing ('incidents' or 'sentiments')" (416). Of course, the possibility of incidents, and at least sensation (if not emotion), without the coherence of ordering also reflects the condition of the sleepwalker. If the "people" in the more historically grounded portion of Downes' argument cannot be ordered by Republican government, then neither can the sleepwalker also be ordered by the writer, despite the narrator's attempts to convey emotion and establish coherence in the narrative. The struggle to record the events and emotions here, in a sense to assert formulations of discipline through writing, reveals a number of struggles at the core of the text whose convergence offer unique insights into Brown's use of science in the text as well.

Despite the narrative's unreliability, and the fact that this unreliability can be read as a failure to establish particular kinds of order, there are many ways in which the narrator successfully imposes strict boundaries of racial and national identity. Jared Gardner argues that *Huntly* seeks to assert national identity in a number of ways, not the least of which racializes othered characters (including Clithero and the Native Americans) in order to create a sense of a national, racial, American identity. An understanding of the complexity of racial categorization and othering within the text can be traced not only through the iterations of physicality within the novel itself, particularly in the bodily transformations of Clithero and Huntly that are intrinsic in their psychological condition – somnambulism. The otherness that Gardner recognizes within the text takes form in the embodied Native American and Irish characters who demonstrate the means through which the racialized body poses multiple registers of threat to the consolidation of U.S. (Anglo) identity. Although Gardner views these threats as converging in one “alien” figure, I argue here that the figure of the Irish Clithero, who infects Huntly with somnambulism, and the figures of the Indians, who appear to be immune to somnambulism, pose very different threats within the novel.

The first example of the intersection of the subject, the body, and the threat posed in *Edgar Huntly* is found in Clithero, a recent Irish immigrant who is not only physically altered through his somnambulism, but whose bodily experiences pose more than one form of threat to the eponymous character because he not only encompasses the threat Gardner recognizes in the Irish during the period, but also by implication infects Huntly with somnambulism, rendering him unable to fully realize his own identity. In the text's first mention of Clithero, the narrator describes him as a subject who is in many ways

separable from his bodily condition, noting that “His mind was superior to his situation. His natural endowments were strong, and had enjoyed all the advantage of cultivation” (14). Clithero’s situation here is marked by his class affiliations and his status as a recent immigrant, and what is “natural” here is separated by the narrator from what has been “cultivated,” implying that Clithero is naturally (physically) superior, but that a level of refinement renders his body more socially acceptable.

Already a suspicious character because of his foreignness and lack of affiliations in a small community, Clithero becomes “the subject of [Huntly’s] scrutiny” (15). Careful to withhold the appearance of subjectivity, Huntly’s descriptions confine themselves to recording precisely what he observes; that is, Clithero’s body and its actions. Interestingly, Huntly imagines that his own presence makes Clithero’s possible, that Clithero’s coming into being relies upon Huntly’s keen observation. Determined to investigate Clithero’s mysterious movements, Huntly goes to the Elm, noting

No one was visible, but I was not discouraged. The hour of his coming was, perhaps, not arrived [...] An hour elapsed before my eyes lighted on the object of which they were in search. My previous observation had been roving from one quarter to another. At last, it dwelt upon the tree. The person whom I before described was seated on the ground. I had not perceived him before, and the means by which he placed himself in this situation had escaped my notice. He seemed like one, whom an effort of will, without the exercise of locomotion, had transported hither, or made visible. His state of disarray, and the darkness that shrouded him, prevented me, as before, from distinguishing any peculiarities in his figure or countenance. (17)

Clithero’s existence here, where his presence is dubious because it “escaped my notice” is called into being by Huntly’s observation. Despite Huntly’s unreliable perceptions, his allusion to an ability to move without a body also preempts the assertion that the text later makes about the separation of volition from bodily function in the case of the sleepwalker. Huntly’s perception here is of the body’s visibility becoming possible

through one act of volition or another - either his own as the observer, or Clithero's as a person potentially capable of moving his body through force of will alone, without the requisite bodily efforts that normally facilitate movement. In either case, the passage highlights the sleepwalker's body as containing and displaying modes of visibility and vulnerability to forms of discipline.

Although Clithero will not grant Huntly an interview, Huntly's observation of Clithero's body initially serves as a means of reading his innocence through his facial expression. While seeking Clithero in the cave, Huntly marks his appearance as once again being brought into existence as a result of his powers of observation, noting "my attention alighted, at length, as if by some magical transition, on.... An human countenance" (99). This passage however, highlights both the ways in which Clithero's body has become, visibly and by implication, something other than human, while his face (at least for Huntly) betrays both his humanity and his madness. Clithero's "countenance" here acts as a stand in for his selfhood, and is immediately read in counterpoint to his overall appearance. Huntly describes his face as "human, but in spite of shaggy and tangled locks" and notes that Clithero's "rueful, ghastly, and immovable eyes, testified not only that his mind was ravaged by despair, but that he was pinched with famine" (100). Although famine would seem to be more apparently written (as it were) on other parts of Clithero's barely clothed body, the assertion that Huntly sees it "in his eyes" speaks to the conflation of Clithero's body and his person. The relationship between body and subject also marks Huntly's consideration of Clithero's volition, a factor which ultimately decides (at least in Huntly's eyes) whether he is guilty of the crimes he is suspected of having committed. Following Clithero's eyes throughout this

confrontation can also be read as a testament to the involuntary nature of the acts he has committed. When Huntly finally speaks, Clithero lies down “with his eyes fixed on a craggy projecture above, as if he were in a momentary expectation of its fall, and crushing him to atoms” (100-101). Upon being commanded to turn his gaze to Huntly, Clithero allows Huntly a full view of his face, which Huntly reads again as a testament to his condition: “Astonishment was now mingled with every other dreadful meaning in his visage” (101).

Huntly describes Clithero as occupying a space that is nearly impossible to access because of the challenging landscape, and it appears almost as if Clithero’s ability to maneuver in the cave is related to his sleepwalking, which like Fourmel’s description of somnambulism, renders him able to “execute things impossible for any man awake to perform” (Fourmel 22). His superhuman powers here are also written onto his body, as it were, in the form of a physical transformation that renders him equally less human. Huntly notes his “air of melancholy wildness” which is in part attributed to “His scanty and coarse garb, had been nearly rent away by brambles and thorns, his arms, bosom and cheek were overgrown and half-concealed by hair” (100). Although at this point in the narrative “several days passed” since Huntly had seen Clithero, it is clear that while the growth of hair on his face might be expected, the half-concealment of his arms and bosom are unexpected and unnatural (90). Interestingly, his next description of Clithero is also consistent with Irish werewolf legends, linking Clithero’s character to both Irish gothic literary traditions and another form of differently bodied threat. The allusion that he has ties to Irish werewolves provides a clear explanation for both his physical transformation and his sudden ability to negotiate the wilderness while simultaneously

linking Clithero to some of the abilities that appear to render the Indians threatening to the Anglo inhabitants of the frontier.

While Clithero's foreignness makes him an immediate object of scrutiny within the text, his somnambulism also infects Huntly, rendering his distinctive, foreign body a particular threat. Several critics, including Jared Gardner have noted that Clithero's Irishness can also be read in light of a series of legislative acts passed in the 1790's that trace a clear path through the morass of consolidating an Anglo-American identity, and consequently defining and making visible specific forms of "other" or "alien" identities. Gardner argues that "what lies at the center of these acts is an erasing of America's own immigrant past through the scapegoating of a class of aliens who can be identified, pursued, and expelled" (57).⁹⁶ Hence not only was the visibility of the alien (in this case Irish) body necessary in the context of the anti-immigration and naturalization uproar amidst which *Edgar Huntly* was written, but its discipline was also a point of concern within the novel. Gardner goes on to propose that Clithero's bodily transformation not only positions his Irishness as racially distinct from the other Anglo-Americans within the text, but also works within a pre-existing framework of aligning the Irish with the Native American populations. Gardner points out that William Cobbett's *Detection of a Conspiracy, Formed by the United Irishmen*, published just before *Edgar Huntly*, sensationalized "the connections between the 'unnatural and blood-thirsty' Irish and the Indian" (62). Gardner goes on to read Clithero's transformation into a state of savagery as "literalize[ing] to the point of equivalence the association implied by Cobbett and

⁹⁶ Interestingly, Ashli White argues that, the 1798 Alien Enemies Act specifically targeted French exiles from Saint Domingue, responding to fears of Republican political contagion. Unlike the Irish, however, French immigrants were much more able to resist the law's most draconian measures. For further discussion, see White p. 121-122.

others between Irish and Indian” (62). Interestingly, Huntly acquires his blood thirst towards the Indians through Clithero, at least in the sense of having become a sleepwalker as a result of his association with him. If indeed, Huntly has contracted the disease of somnambulism (as if it were considered a contagion), this may not indicate a particularly voluntary act on Clithero’s part, but if, as an alternate reading may suggest, Clithero’s somnambulism is magnetic in form, his infection of Huntly comprises an act of extraordinary volition as does Huntly’s killing of the Indians.

Despite Huntly’s apparent fascination with Clithero’s somnambulism, the reader does not understand the phenomenon as contagious until Huntly begins to describe his own symptoms, many of which are only recognizable as such in retrospect. The emergence of Huntly’s somnambulism can be traced back to disturbances in his sleep in which Waldegrave appears to him. He notes that

What, however, was nearly banished from my waking thoughts, occurred, in an incongruous and half-seen form, to my dreams. During my sleep, the image of Waldegrave flitted before me. Methought the sentiment that impelled him to visit me, was not affection or complacency, but inquietude and anger. Some service of duty remained to be performed by me, which I had culpably neglected; to inspire my zeal, to awaken my remembrance, and incite me to the performance of this duty, did this glimmering messenger, this half indignant apparition come. (124)

Determining that the task he must accomplish is the transcription of Waldgrave’s papers, which include documentation of his “earliest creeds [...] to destroy the popular distinctions between body and soul, and to dissolve the supposed connection between the moral condition of man, anterior and subsequent to death” (125). Huntly’s readings of Waldgrave’s philosophies parallel the paradox of sleepwalking within the text: Huntly’s narrative deeply questions whether the soul can be held accountable for actions committed while sleepwalking just as Waldegrave questions whether the actions of the

body in general affect the soul's judgment after death. The reader never gets to examine these papers, which are stolen by, at this point in the novel, an unknown thief. Huntly comments that access to the papers, locked in a secret drawer in a cabinet would be impossible, noting that "Human artifice or power was unequal to this exploit. Means less than preternatural would not furnish a conveyance for this treasure" (131). He rejects the notion that the person his uncle reports having heard walking in the attic could have stolen the papers, noting that "It was otherwise with regard to this unseasonable walker. His inducements indeed were beyond my power to conceive, but to enter these doors and ascend these stairs, demanded not the faculties of any being more than human" (131). It is almost as though he suspects the ghost of Waldegrave who has just appeared in his dream, although his use of the descriptive "walker" alludes to the possibility that a sleepwalker has been in the house.

Huntly leaves behind the subject of sleepwalking until a few chapters later, where he awakes abruptly in a cave, apparently as a result of sleepwalking. He introduces this portion of the narrative by describing ongoing problems with sleep at the time the narrative was recorded:

Solitude and sleep are now no more than the signals to summon up a tribe of ugly phantoms. Famine, and blindness, and death, and savage enemies never fail to be conjured up by the silence and darkness of the night. I cannot dissipate them by any efforts of reason [...] If, by chance, I should awake and find myself immersed in darkness, I know not what act of desperation I might be suddenly impelled to commit. (151)

Here he traces a relationship between nightmare, volition, reason and crime that foregrounds his tale of violence and murder, and specifically posits his volition as absent during the sleepwalking, and his actions as being "impelled" by some force outside of his own will. His description of the onset of his episode of sleepwalking is somewhat

consistent with the European medical literatures of Brown's time describing somnambulism. Huntly links his somnambulism to a state of reverie that is fairly similar to Erasmus Darwin's understanding of the term. Huntly reports "I remember my occasional relapses into fits of incoherent fancies, the harbingers of sleep: I remember, as it were, the instant when my thoughts ceased to flow, and my senses were arrested by the leaden wand of forgetfulness" (152). That is, Huntly's memory is linked to the incoherent fancies Darwin associates with excess volition, but in Huntly's understanding of his own actions, the volition, along with memory and sensation, dissipate when he progresses from reverie into sleep, and then into sleepwalking.

Huntly furthers his case for a lack of volition throughout his sleepwalking episode by noting that "My thoughts were wildering and mazy, and though consciousness were present, it was disconnected with the loco-motive or voluntary power" (152). Having awoken in a cave, Huntly describes his progress in terms of the various sensations of pain, blindness, and hunger that drive his actions. Driven by hunger, Huntly proceeds to kill a panther with what he notes as "the preternatural exertion of my strength," and eat it (159-160). He describes his recollection of the incident as looking "back on it as on some hideous dream. The whole appears to be some freak of insanity" (160). He also notes that he soon "feel into a deep sleep. I was visited by dreams of a thousand hues [...] From this sleep I recovered to fruition of solitude and darkness" (160). At this point, having as yet not identified himself as a sleepwalker, Huntly's rationalization of the scene encompasses a number of fairly fluid notions of dream and insanity, none of which are consistent with his later understanding of sleepwalking. Despite his assertions of insanity, Huntly's episode of sleepwalking is over at this point in the text. He is able to

account for every thought and movement he makes upon leaving the cave, and makes a completely voluntary, and in his eyes, rational decision to attack the Indians he finds outside of the cave.

Huntly's perception of the Indians as a threat operates on a number of levels, the first and most obvious of which is his own traumatic history of losing his parents to violence they perpetrated. Huntly also codes the Indians as a threat by emphasizing their invulnerability to the contagion of sleepwalking. While trapped in the opening of a cave on the edge of the wilderness, Huntly observes the Indians' sleeping habits, focusing in on the ways they act as a counterpoint to his own. He notes that "The slumber of an Indian is broken by the slightest noise [...] Their supine posture assured me that they were asleep. Sleep usually comes at their bidding" (167). The Indians' power over sleep, both to summon it and to awake from it at the perception of any threat, and their sleeping state pose a double threat within the text – not only are they invulnerable to sleepwalking, but they are also more dangerous enemies because their sleep does not render them vulnerable to other forms of violation, particularly the basic form of violation of space that Huntly has recently experienced in having Waldgrave's papers stolen from his home during his sleep. Although Huntly's assessment does not overtly consider the possibility, it is clear that if he had the same sleeping habits as the Indians, he would neither have lost his papers nor fallen victim to sleepwalking, and hence never been vulnerable to the criminality he is about to engage in.

Before realizing the band of Indians had a captive, he recalls quite consciously considering the present state of hostilities on the frontier and notes that "from these reflections, the sense of my own danger was revived and enforced" (166). He then goes

on to describe their sleep patterns as more covert threat before moving on to relaying a number of more overtly rational considerations that result in his decision to kill the band of Indians. Despite Huntly's assertion that the reader should not "conceive a purpose like this to have argued a sanguinary and murderous disposition," given his history as a survivor of violence and his rationalization of the murders makes it difficult to read his actions as anything but vengeful.⁹⁷ If Huntly's actions are the result of a form of sleepwalking characterized by a lack of volition, it seems unlikely that he would have exacted an intentional revenge on his parents' killers. However, leaving aside European understandings of volition as being absent in the sleepwalker, and turning to US medical literature on the subject of sleepwalking and volition, his act of vengeance becomes much more comprehensible. While Erasmus Darwin introduced the notion of "excess volition" as a cause of somnambulism, Benjamin Rush's insistence on the primary role of volition during sleep combined with the absence of moral faculty in the sleepwalker creates a scenario in which Huntly's actions become scientifically plausible.

Despite his rationalizations, the "sanguinary and murderous disposition" Huntly cautions the reader not to assume is repeatedly reinforced in his own descriptions of "thirst". After waking from a deep slumber that follows his consumption of a panther, Huntly recalls that he was "assailed by the torments of thirst. My invention and my courage were anew bent to obviate this pressing evil" (161). Critics like Larzer Ziff note that the narrator conflates the notions of thirst and blood thirst, and that the passages that ensue can be productively read as a series of events geared towards slaking blood-thirst, a trait associated with the Indians and the Irish in the popular imagination. He attempts to

⁹⁷ The role of vengeance here also implicitly parallels Huntly to the black insurgents in Haiti. The history of violence inflicted on the insurgents and on Huntly, by slaveowners and Indians, respectively, precipitates the assumption that both parties' violent acts should be read as revenge for past injustices.

calm his thirst through a figurative act of self-consumption, that is, swallowing “the moisture that flowed from [his own] body,” but finds this solution unsuccessful (162). Upon leaving the cave, Huntly reports being diverted from at least his physical thirst, but kills the Indians in an act that the reader cannot help but view as bloodthirsty. After the killings, he reports sating his “thirst” in a “torrent,” conflating his physical need for hydration with the blood thirst his actions support. He reports that “To quench my thirst was a consideration by which all others were supplanted. I approached the torrent, and not only drank copiously, but laved my head, neck, and arms, in this delicious element” (172). Ziff’s brief reading of *Edgar Huntly* addresses the notion of volition as an issue the reader of the novel must grapple with in order to establish a moral standing on the issue of the murders. He notes that

Although [Huntly] sees himself as having been passive through all the violence [...] the reader has seen that he not only killed both panther and Indians but had eaten the flesh of the former and bathed his head in the blood of the latter. He was ‘the adept in killing’ and his was the appetite that did not just long for but feasted on its enemy. But he sees himself as the moved rather than the mover because the rationalizing self that does the reflecting was indeed passive before the outburst of the unconscious self that killed. (179-180)

Huntly’s killings here appear within the text to be compelled by multiple forces. On the one hand, thirst on a basic physical level can be thought of as an involuntary sensation through which the body is compelled to act. On the other, blood-thirst, driven by revenge, does not compel the body involuntarily, but rather necessitates action on the part of the subject only as a matter of volition.

Citing Benjamin Rush’s lectures at the University of Pennsylvania Medical School, Murison points out that Rush asserts “the paradox of somnambulism—that the senses become “insensible”—and uses this to describe the somnambular body, reduced to

a ‘weather cock,’ as open to any external manipulation” (248). Hence in this construction, the sleepwalking is not caused by an outside party (as in the earlier discussions of magnetic somnambulism), but certainly exposes the sleepwalker, whose moral faculties may not be intact in their unconscious state, to external influence. Huntly’s vulnerability to the disease of somnambulism, and by extension, to other sleepwalkers is clearly laid out throughout the text. Ziff argues that “his mirroring of Clithero’s movements proceeds from similarities they share; his obsessive pursuit of the other man is also a hounding of himself. As his focus on his double narrows to monomania, so the signs of identification between the two increase until Edgar, like Clithero, also becomes a sleepwalker” (178-179). Although it is absolutely clear that Huntly’s sleepwalking arises as a result of his association with Clithero, the full measure of Clithero’s influence on Huntly is certainly apropos to thinking about the role of earlier, less substantiated theories of magnetic somnambulism on Brown’s construction of Huntly as a sleepwalker.⁹⁸ Edgar’s descent into somnambulism occurs as a direct result of his contact with Clithero, which includes many of the sensory stimuli (i.e. sight, sound, feel) that Fourmel acknowledges as having the potential to magnetically induce somnambulism. The possibility of Clithero’s actions as containing a mesmeric effect on Huntly in inducing his sleepwalking can also be read as symbolic of Huntly’s multiple registers of vulnerability within the text.

Grabo’s introduction to the text renders 1787, the year in which the novel is set as a “somnambulistic year” (xxi). Renee Bergland reads this comment, along with the novel’s repetitive references to “constitution” as grappling with the US Constitution,

⁹⁸ See discussion of Jean-François Fourmel’s 1792 “An Essay on the Probabilities of Electrical and Animal Somnabules, or Sleepwalkers” above, pages 212-213.

which was written in the same year. She argues that “the political significance of describing constitutions as mysterious, even capricious entities all of unknown latent powers, cannot be ignored” (91). Her understanding of constitutions as formulating national identity explores a number of registers within the text. Pointing out that the novel’s Indians “are both [Huntly’s] enemies and his doubles, [...] from whom his friends and family cannot distinguish him,” Bergland argues that the novel questions the late eighteenth-century dominant discourse of Indian removal as a necessity for forming national identity (93). Second, she argues that Brown’s use of somnambulism in particular highlights “the assumptions of willful blindness, repression, intentional amnesia and sleepwalking” that represent popular notions that national literatures could “be banished from the discourse of laws, political tracts, and constitutions” that was being formulated at the time of the novel’s publication (93). Bergland goes on to posit that Brown ultimately “questions the supremacy of reason,” and by extension, “rationalist, republican Americanism” through the unreliability of the narrative itself (93). While other critics, like Jared Gardner, reject psychological readings of the text, Bergland treats the psychological potentials of the text as emblematic of larger political issues, making an interesting case for one way in which medical science and political science, and particularly moral and medical discourses come together productively in *Edgar Huntly*.

Murison’s reading of *Edgar Huntly* works more closely with specific formulations of morality and national character through exploring Benjamin Rush’s medical texts, which pay particular attention to morality as a faculty of the psyche. Murison reads Rush

as arguing that political participation rests on moral faculty, thus uniting the psychological health of the nation with its political stability:

In eighteenth-century psychology, the moral faculties were considered as fundamental a basis for the sound mind as reason. To emphasize their importance, Rush separates them into three distinct faculties [...] the moral faculty, which judges others' morality; the conscience, which judges our own; and the sense of deity, which, as its name suggests, is an innate sense of God. [...] For Rush, these faculties represent more than the mind's innate capacity for morality; they also constitute an instrument of political stability. (251)

Thus the mind's moral faculty in Rush's work becomes the basis for the nation, and threats to that faculty, or even the notion that it could be suspended, became coded as threats to the nation. Murison argues that in the case of *Edgar Huntly*, moral capacity, suspended by the disease of sleepwalking, is also unable to function effectively as a basis for what she terms "moral citizenship," or a person's psychological capacity to participate in civil and political affairs in the new nation. For Murison, the late eighteenth century followed a particular model of citizenship in which "potential citizens' readiness to join the republic was evinced by their psychological state; however, their psychological state was determined by their political upbringing" (253). This construction provides a productive lens through which to view the intersection of psychology, citizenship, and anxieties about immigrants and other non-citizens within the novel. Murison, however, goes on to argue that in order to understand personal identity, especially as the precursor to national or political identity, such theories of moral citizenship require a stable psyche on the part of the individual. Huntly's instability, as character and narrator, calls into question the logic of understanding citizenship as a function of psychology in the first place.

At this point in the text, it becomes clear that the Indians' vulnerability is very different from that of Huntly and their other European counterparts. Although invulnerable to the contagion of sleepwalking, it is clear that their resistance to encroachment of territory is futile. Huntly shelters in the abode of the one Indian who has managed to permanently reside in the area, Old Deb (also known as Queen Mab), who is depicted as a subversive figure in terms of her resistance to English territorial encroachment and her own tribe's governance. Huntly notes that her as "all her zeal and eloquence were exerted to induce them to lay aside their scheme [of abandoning their ancient seats]. In this, however, she could not succeed" (198). Queen Mab, as Jared Gardner points out, has "founded her own nation-within-a-nation, even going so far as to set up a system of taxation whereby alien invaders provide her subsistence for their use of the land" in the form of the goods she demands from local white inhabitants (71). As the only Indian character in the novel to receive any detailed description, Gardner points out that Queen Mab's disappearance coincides with the local Indians' attacks on the settlement, and, more importantly, that Huntly's entry to her hut begins the transformation that leads other white settlers to mistake him for an Indian (72). While Gardner argues that Huntly has here internalized the erasure of Indians from the land by looking to "exorcize the Indian from himself" (72). I posit instead that Edgar, seeking to eradicate his own vulnerability to sleepwalking, looks to the seemingly least vulnerable identity he can find, that of the Indian. Since the Indians in the novel are not expected to adhere to what Rush would term a moral sense and are invulnerable to the contagion of sleepwalking, which would (as we have already seen in the case of Huntly) impair that moral sense, they are doubly invulnerable to the nightmarish condition that Huntly

experiences. The Indians, then, despite their inability to resist territorial encroachment by the Anglo settlers, are able to resist other formulations of encroachment over their bodies, most particularly attempts to impose morality and political subjectivity on them. In this way, they bear some similarities to the leaders of the early insurgencies in Saint Domingue, who also refused to submit to colonial and social control.

At the core of the novel's treatment of U.S. sovereignty is the shifting frontier of Pennsylvania. Chad Luck links the novel's sleepwalking as a representation of another kind of walking explicitly linked to geography, cultural contact, and bodies at stake in the mid to late eighteenth century. Luck argues that the novel's setting "is particularly significant to a novel about 'Indian borders' because it comprises the heart of the infamous Walking Purchase of 1737" (272). Luck reads the Walking Purchase as "one of the most flagrant abuses of native American property rights in American history" in which Delaware lands "the distance a man could walk in a day and a half from a particular starting place" were claimed by the Penn family on the basis of "an old Indian land deed of dubious authenticity" (272). Luck goes on to posit that "the novel's philosophical work persistently calls attention to the role of the sensate body, the phenomenological body, in defining the spaces and properties of the Pennsylvania frontier" (274). Luck traces Huntly's sleepwalking as following the same path as the original walkers who delineated the purchase, and notes that as he does so faces the problematic Indian bodies still inhabiting the geographical space that has been appropriated (275-6). Like the walkers of the Walking Purchase, whose physical movements created a legal basis for land ownership, Edgar Huntly, as a different kind of walker, performs movements across geographic space that assert moral claims over the

territory and its inhabitants. Where Huntly sleepwalks, his extralegal notions of justice “walk” with him, expanding his (and potentially other frontier inhabitants’) claims to control of the territory. Luck argues that Brown works through both Hume’s notion of space, which relies on our own perceptions for definition and a Lockean understanding that argues that space exists “independently of material objects” (281). In either sense of space, the “other” – in the case of US territory, the Indian – is left out of the equation that formulates geographic space. Hence the Indian, becomes at once absent from the territory, and part of the landscape that is defined and controlled by the perception of its viewer, or in this case, walker.

Most relevant to this study, however, is Luck’s assertion that Brown’s treatment of sleepwalking falls most distinctively within Hume’s model, where space (and I have argued above, other subjects) are defined by Huntly’s perceptions (282-3). Thus the novel’s understanding of space relies almost exclusively on the presence of bodies, particularly bodies engaged with each other in order to define that space. These spatial definitions also parallel the ways in which the subjects involved define themselves against each other. Luck argues that within *Edgar Huntly*:

space cannot be experienced or understood apart from the other bodies that call it, relationally, into being. This reciprocal, mutually constitutive relationship necessarily accords a much greater significance to other bodies, and to the bodies of an other, than does Locke’s rigid ontological distinction. In the context of the Walking Purchase, I would suggest, this awareness of other bodies translates into a continuing awareness of Native American presence. (283-4)

Luck's reading here highlights the complex role of othered bodies, including Clithero's, in framing the space of the frontier itself, and can be extended as well into framing the novel's struggle to delineate national identity against the identification of others⁹⁹.

If, however, Hume's notions of relational space rely on the sensory body, Luck's arguments that the novel stages a series of bodily contacts between Huntly and othered bodies become even more complex when considering that the contacts occur during episodes of sleepwalking, in which the sleepwalker's sensory faculties are, at the very least, impaired. Huntly's sleepwalking, a state in which both his sensory and moral faculties are presumably lacking poses a stark metaphor for the imposition of space, race, and nationhood along the Pennsylvania frontier. The fact that the sleepwalking Huntly's volition is in question complicates Brown's use of geographical space within the novel. Justine Murison, who focuses more clearly on the issue of somnambulism than Luck, argues that

What is most notable in Brown's gesture towards the Walking Purchase in *Edgar Huntly* is that he turns not to the act of walking (or, more historically apt, of running) but the act of *sleepwalking* to represent the frontier politics at play between the Lenni Lenape and the white settlers in Pennsylvania. (262)

Just as Murison argues for Huntly's sleepwalking here as a metaphor for local relations with the Lenni Lenape along that particular frontier, an argument can certainly be made for the phenomenon as a stand-in for imperialism on a national level. Huntly, who can also be read as a representative of the new nation, blunders into an already populated region, attempts to define its elusive lands and peoples, and finally, with a stunted sense of morality, enacts violence on the land and its people, all the while abnegating any responsibility for the destruction it causes.

⁹⁹ For more detailed discussion of the formulation of race in the Americas as expressed through *Edgar Huntly*, see Jared Gardner's "Edgar Huntly's Savage Awakening" p. 62-64.

If we read Huntly as a stand-in for the new nation, his massacre of the Indians becomes an expression of power that can be read as a scathing critique of the U.S. revolution's failure to break from the exercise of particular forms of sovereignty and to appropriate discipline of bodies in the new nation. If we consider Huntly in terms of Foucauldian understandings of the rise of modern systems of power, his failure to carry out his initial task, that of observing and recording Clithero's sleepwalking and hence exerting disciplinary power over him, leads to his decline into older, more objectionable exercises of sovereign power. The fact that these abuses of power occur during Huntly's sleepwalking makes a clearer case for supporting Rush's assertions of suspended morality that lead to inability to participate in American political life.

More chilling than any particular act of violence within Brown's texts on somnambulism is its exposure of the seemingly paradoxical condition of somnambulism, and indeed of the new nation itself. In one of the earliest critical treatments of *Edgar Huntly*, Leslie Fiedler argues that *Edgar Huntly* covertly argues that "Any man may wake up to find himself at the bottom of a pit. *We are all sleepwalkers!*" (158). Huntly, whose vulnerability to violence at the hands of the Indians as a result of his living on the unprotected frontier, is made doubly vulnerable by contracting the contagion of sleepwalking. As a sleepwalker, however, this vulnerability precipitates a loss of moral control, and he exercises a form of excessive volition to commit violence in enacting his revenge on the local Indians. Like the sleepwalker, the new nation has already been rendered vulnerable to any number of outside influences. While foreignness, as critics like Gardner argue, is coded as a particular sort of danger, the more imminent threat lies within the nation itself. Embodied in Huntly is an aggressive formulation of national

will, a form of volition that necessitates movement forward (both spatially and politically) despite moral or social considerations that might, in the absence of such unfettered force, slow its progress. Because the nation is vulnerable to other influences, it is also vulnerable to losing what holds its volition, its will to power, in check. The complexity of Brown's work is the assertion that this vulnerability coexists with dangerous excesses of volition that cause violence and lawlessness.

Dred's Head and the Case for Magnetic Sleepwalking

As a condition of vulnerability and volition, Edgar Huntly's sleepwalking bears marked similarities to the brief mentions of somnambulism half a century later in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Dred: A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp* (1856). In this text, the eponymous character is figured as a sleepwalker who lives in a maroonage in the "great dismal swamp," a liminal space that is explicitly tied to his claim to freedom and sovereign power. In 1853, William Nell published *The Colored Patriots of the American Revolution*, along with an introduction by Harriet Beecher Stowe. Contained in this text is the following description, which the author attributes to an excerpt from an article in *Liberty Bell* by Edmund Jackson:

The great Dismal Swamp, which lies near the Eastern shore of Virginia, and, commencing near Norfolk, stretches quite into North Carolina, contains a large colony of negroes, who originally obtained their freedom by the grace of God and their own determined energy [...] this singular community of blacks, who have won their freedom, and established themselves securely in the midst of the largest slaveholding State of the South; for, from this extensive Swamp, they are very seldom, if now at all, reclaimed. The chivalry of Virginia, so far as I know, have never yet ventured on a slave-hunt in the Dismal Swamp nor is it, probably, in the power of that State to capture or expel these fugitives from it. (227-228)

Stowe's choice to use a well-known maroonage as the setting for her fictionalized tale positions Dred's community as the same kind of threat as the Native American communities at the center of *Edgar Huntly*. Just as *Edgar Huntly*'s Indians pose a threat to U.S. expansion in their locale, Dred's maroon community, although operating on a smaller scale, can be read the same way. The phenomenon of somnambulism in *Dred*, while not nearly the same object of focus as in *Edgar Huntly*, functions in ways that are similar, even in its limited context. First, it is important to note that the figure of Dred poses a clear threat to the stability of the nation, which is both in the setting of the novel and at the time of its writing, about to enter into civil war. While the sleepwalkers involved in each text are remarkably different, and experience different levels of success in their apparent goals, the phenomenon of sleepwalking in both highlights forms of vulnerability and volition that are particularly productive in the sleepwalkers' particular political and social milieus.

Dred's eponymous character displays a number corporeal characteristics and mental abilities that are linked both to his subversive power and to scientific theories of Stowe's time, half a century after Charles Brockden Brown's. Dred's sleepwalking is presented as being directly related to his magnetic abilities, which are highlighted in the novel long before he is figured as a sleepwalker. Although unlike Brockden Brown, Stowe does not self-consciously point to her novel as a particularly scientific exploration of somnambulism or any other phenomenon, Stowe's careful uses of other popular science of her time, including phrenology, the rise of physiology as a racial determinant, and mesmerism also serve to highlight her examination of multiple "fields of

investigation” that appear, at least in the context of the novel, as phenomena that function in particular ways in an American context.

Our first introduction to the title character of the novel comes some two hundred pages into the text of the first book of the novel, where Dred’s disembodied voice begins to intervene with Harry, the novel’s mulatto protagonist. As Tom Gordon, Harry’s half brother and future owner beats Harry while taunting him about his sexual relations with Harry’s wife, Dred’s voice comes through the thicket, saying ““Aha! Aha! It has come nigh *thee*, has it? It toucheth *thee*, and thou faintest!”” (198). Dred is inserting himself into what is ostensibly a conflict surrounding Gordon’s rights over Harry’s body and that of his wife, and his disembodied voice here passes judgment not as much on Tom Gordon but on Harry, who up until this point in the novel has been unwilling to stage any form of resistance. The uses of Dred’s disembodied voice within the text are absolutely relevant to the sense of power evoked through embodiment and disembodiment in the text as a whole, and echo the kinds of embodiment and disembodiment used in treatments of the insurrectionists of Saint Domingue, as described in Chapter 1. They are also thematically linked to his sleepwalking later in the text.

Stowe’s recourse to racial physiognomy is apparent in her description of Dred’s physical attributes, and she links Dred’s racial characteristics to his magnetic abilities. Stowe’s description of Dred’s body lends it not only superhuman powers, but also creates a distinct attempt to move away from popular notions that Africans were physically and aesthetically inferior to their European counterparts. Despite the subversive potential of Stowe’s initial description of Dred, Mullaney argues that “this technique of distancing Dred’s sexual and physical power is ultimately insufficient in keeping the danger he

represents at bay, so that the passage culminates in a gesture of racial othering that taps into widespread cultural fears about slaves,” that is, his potential sexuality, the designation of his features as specifically African and the later descriptions of the weaponry he wears (152). While Stowe’s initial description of Dred’s body may refute some of the popular notions surrounding black bodies, she also moves on to reference other forms of scientific discourse (presumably those she finds less disreputable) in her description. In particular, Stowe’s attention to Dred’s head alludes to phrenological understandings that create a nuanced layer of meaning that is somewhat elusive to modern readers. Stowe writes that

The head, which rose with an imperial air from the broad shoulders, was large and massive, and developed with equal force both in the reflective and perceptive department. The perceptive organs jutted like dark ridges over the eyes, while that part of the head which phrenologists attribute to the moral and intellectual sentiments, rose like an ample dome above them. (198)

Stowe’s reference here to phrenologists is interesting in its appeal to contemporary science to establish her claims of Dred’s physical superiority.¹⁰⁰ In her description of Dred, the “perceptive organs” jutting out over Dred’s eyes and the shape of his head in general are read as signs of heightened intelligence, moral faculties, and feeling that were generally inconsistent with many of the images of African Americans circulating in the public sphere of Stowe’s time. She goes on to describe an even less consistent phrenological reading of Dred’s features, noting “If any organs were predominant in the head, they were those of ideality, wonder, veneration, and firmness, and the whole

¹⁰⁰ For the purposes of this study, phrenology can be thought of as a scientific system which delineated “aptitudes” which were “localized in different ‘organs’ or regions of the brain” and are physically apparent in “the size and contour of the cranium, so that a well-developed region of the head indicate a correspondingly well-developed faculty (propensity) for that region” (Davies 4). Stowe’s brother, Henry Ward Beecher was an enthusiastic supporter of phrenological societies, and it is like that Stowe herself had more than a passing familiarity with phrenological studies.

combination was such as might have formed one of the wild old warrior prophets of the heroic ages” (198). Here although particular faculties that Dred’s head displays seem desirable, Stowe’s reading of them as a “whole” combination turns to reference Dred’s insanity. Coupled with this insanity, however, is the possibility of exotic forms of mental capability that Stowe alludes to in describing Dred’s magnetism, a feature linked to his abilities to induce sleepwalking in other subjects.

In addition to thinking about Stowe’s phrenological descriptions, her references to his African origins are also fruitful in uncovering the intersections between popular scientific movements, understandings of race, and suppositions about African cultures. She begins to lay out Dred’s African origins as affecting his physiology and his psychological makeup by establishing his Africanness as being inscribed on his body in a number of ways. Stowe notes that Dred’s “large black eyes had that peculiar and solemn effect of unfathomable blackness and darkness which is often a striking characteristic of the African eye” (198). The designation of Dred as African is certainly notable here, since Stowe uses a variety of racially-specific terminology in describing the novel’s other characters. Here Dred’s Africanness is reinforced by his wearing of “a fantastic turban, apparently of an old scarlet shawl, which added to the outlandishness of his appearance” (198). Timothy Marr argues that Stowe uses particular forms of African culture, here established through dress to mark Dred as a subversive character, noting that “Stowe also signifies an African source for Dred’s dissent through his mother’s polycultural Mandingo heritage that gave him his name and a legacy of intelligence, beauty, pride, and capacity that enables him to oppose oppression. Mandingos were predominately Muslim, one possible reason for Dred’s adoption of [the turban]” (539). Marr argues that

in addition to Dred's linkages to American slave resistance, Stowe also links him to "the martial spirit of Muslim resistance" through his dress and the weaponry he carries (539). The characterization of Dred as Mandingo certainly relates his Africanness to the legacy of Muslim resistance in Saint Domingue as well.¹⁰¹

Stowe's inclusion of Denmark Vesey's bible in Dred's belongings also links the fictionalized Dred to a history of slave rebellion in the United States and in Haiti. Vesey himself, the leader of one of the most well-known slave uprisings in the American south, was thought to have substantial ties to Haiti. In *Specters of Haiti: Race, Fear, and the American Gothic 1789-1855*, Gretchen Woertendyke asserts that the historical record is hazy on Vesey's origins, but indicates that he was born and purchased "in either St. Thomas or Saint Domingue" and that the historiography of the Vesey conspiracy were aimed at proving "that the Vesey Conspiracy did exist [and that] Saint-Domingue and Vesey's hypothetical ties to it provides evidence motive, and warning of future slave revolts *simultaneously*" (154). Despite the lack of firm historical evidence of Vesey's having been to Saint Domingue during his time in the Caribbean and allegations that Vesey solicited aid from Haiti and Africa as part of his conspiracy, it is clear that, in the public imagination, Vesey was substantially tied to the legacy of slave revolt in Saint Domingue and the new nation of Haiti.¹⁰²

While Stowe's detailed descriptions of Dred draw from a number of culturally specific sources, they function together to position Dred as embodying a very specific combination of threats that only comes to fruition in the Americas; not only does he represent the immediate threat of slave rebellion, but he also poses the potential to elicit

¹⁰¹ See discussion of the role of Muslim identity in historical writings about the Macandal conspiracy addressed on p. 71.

¹⁰² For further discussion, See Woertendykes *Specters of Haiti*, pages 148-150.

other forms of revolutionary power, particularly in combining what Stowe presents as Africanist spiritual abilities with contemporary scientific methods of persuasion and control. Stowe's implication of sleepwalking as resulting from dangerous foreign systems of belief can also be read as an interesting parallel to Brockden Brown's treatment of Clithero, whose Irishness poses a danger that is linked to mythological, if not spiritual, phenomena that arise from another colonized culture.

Marr acknowledges, however, that "Stowe combines an extravagant mixture from her own cultural archive to multiply the holy vengeance of his power," an archive which is loaded with associations, some of which can be read as contradicting one another (539). As noted above, Dred can be read as being linked to Muslim culture, and hence in some way connected to particular forms of orientalist discourse that were abundant in the popular culture of Stowe's time. Although Said argues that orientalism gathers force in the later nineteenth century, he references the eighteenth and early nineteenth century trend of "character-as-designation appearing as a physiological-moral classification" that served as a series of "designations [that] gather power when, later in the nineteenth century, they are allied with character and genetic type" (119). Said goes on to argue that "when an Oriental was referred to, it was in terms of such genetic universals as his 'primitive' state, his primary characteristics, his particular spiritual background" (120). In the case of Dred, who is presented both as African and Oriental, his dangerous spirituality and apparently primitive means of living in maroonage are consistent with genetic assumptions about both characterizations of race.

Despite her primitive characterizations of Dred, Stowe continues to conflate African spiritual traditions with nineteenth-century popular discourses surrounding

spiritual power. She juxtaposes her version of African systems of belief, which she links to inherent faculties and American understandings of mesmerism, which imply no reference to inherent faculty. Stowe notes that

Dred was under the inspiring belief that he was the subject of visions and supernatural communications. The African race are said by mesmerists to possess, in the fullest degree, that peculiar temperament which fits them for the evolution of mesmeric phenomena; and hence the existence among them, even to this day, of men and women who are supposed to have peculiar magical powers. (274)

Her positioning of mesmerists as an authority on “temperament” places the two sets of practitioners on unequal ground, as does her acknowledgement of supposition in understanding mesmeric phenomena in Africans as “magical”. Stowe goes on to describe Dred’s grandfather as the discoverer of Dred’s “peculiar species of temperament,” and Dred’s childhood of “expectations of prophetic and supernatural impulses” (274). Stowe wavers in her understanding of the source of such beliefs; in her references to “temperament” she appears to link Dred’s supernatural qualities to his African heritage, while simultaneously acknowledging his early childhood influences as another source, and finally adding in the comment that beliefs in supernatural phenomena are “a common tradition among the negroes,” affiliating Dred’s propensity with his race. Murison also reads this passage as “conjoining religious and physiological ‘susceptibilities’” that speak to Stowe’s “awareness of how physicians characterized women’s and Africans’ nervous systems” (116). Susceptibility, whether it be to physical or spiritual contagion, becomes a formulation of physical vulnerability. While on the one hand, Dred’s body is rendered vulnerable by its susceptibilities, it also contains the potential to influence other vulnerable bodies in a number of ways. Murison points out that “from the beginning of the century, physicians [...] emphasized a theory of contagion” in explaining the

sweeping popularity of revivalism (116). That is, the religious enthusiasm so prominently featured in *Dred* contains the potential to “infect” other susceptible subjects, in this case most notably Nina and Harry. Murison also argues that both gender and race were believed to render bodies more susceptible to this form of contagion. Although Murison’s arguments surrounding physiological susceptibility do not address *Edgar Huntly*, it is certainly fair to argue that, in contrast, Clithero’s hypermasculinity, which is also linked to his racial identity, renders him a threat to the susceptible, feminized Huntly as well.

Despite a marked uncertainty about the origins of Dred’s belief in his own abilities, Stowe quickly moves towards centering the phenomena in terms of medical discourse of her time. She frames his mesmeric and prophetic ability as a “faculty,” allowing that

What this faculty may be, we shall not pretend to say. Whether there be in the soul a yet undeveloped attribute, which is to be to the future what memory is to the past, or whether in some individuals an extremely high and perfect condition of the sensuous organization endows them with something of that certainty of instinctive discrimination which belongs to animals, are things which we shall not venture to decide upon. (274-275)

The “faculty” then, like Rush’s “moral” and “sensory” faculties, is staged as an inherent capability, physically embodied in Dred’s person, not unlike the ability to experience sensation, or, as Stowe posits, animal instinct. Justine Murison argues that “two inversions occur in this passage: Stowe asserts first the possibility that clairvoyance may be a faculty as yet undeveloped in the soul but one that Dred has developed already; and second, that this development would make humans more like (rather than less like) animals” (118). Although *Dred*’s publication precedes Charles Darwin’s publication of

On The Origin of Species, her understanding here alludes to notions of evolutionary development.

Dred's "primitive spirituality," although critical of the hypocrisy of the various Christian frameworks presented in the text as being used to support the institution of slavery, is also linked to an overexcess of religious zeal that is also written on Dred's body. Reading Stowe's characterization of Dred as a nuanced look at the spiritualist movements of the mid nineteenth century, critics like William P. Mullaney note that spiritualist practices were intimately linked, at least in the public imagination with particular forms of scientific study that are also related to sleepwalking. Mullaney argues that "Traditionally, spiritualism is the name given to the larger movement that swept the United States around midcentury and serves as the umbrella term that includes more specialized beliefs, such as mysticism, animal magnetism, and mesmerism" (147). Because of his abilities to elicit emotional and physical responses through manipulating stimuli, Dred is presented as being capable of performing acts of magnetism that are in kind similar to those Fourmel identifies in magnetic somnambulism.

Oddly enough, particular characteristics of popular versions of mystical experience are very much in line with earlier symptoms of somnambulism as described above by medical encyclopedias of the early nineteenth century. Mullaney argues that:

What differentiates mysticism from other offshoots of spiritualism is its focus on the intense physical reaction of the experience, a reaction that signals the mystic's crossing into the spiritual realm. As interest in the study of psychology was also rising during the nineteenth century, the mystical experience, which was usually accompanied by some bodily manifestation, such as shaking or trembling, often led to doubts about the mystic's sanity. (148)

Although most medical texts at the time designate “insanity” as a separate condition from somnambulism, they often classified somnambulism as a disorder of volition, akin to hiccups and epilepsy, and thus accompanied by tremors. In 1796, Erasmus Darwin also mentions religious fanaticism as a form of insanity relating to delirium and classified under “Diseases of Volition,” the same heading as sleepwalking. Darwin notes that

Besides the insanities arising from exertions in consequence of pain, there is also a pleasurable insanity, as well as a pleasurable delirium; as the insanity of personal vanity and of religious fanaticism. When agreeable ideas excite into motion the sensorial power of sensation, and this again causes other trains of agreeable ideas, a constant stream of pleasurable ideas succeeds, and produces pleasurable delirium. So when the sensorial power of volition excites agreeable ideas, and the pleasure thus produced excites more volition in its turn, a constant flow of agreeable voluntary ideas success; which when thus exerted in the extreme constitutes insanity. (495)

Dred’s particular form of insanity, in the medical parlance of the time, is intimately related to his religious fanaticism, which is in turn linked to an excess of volition, or will. While many of the forms of volition Darwin discusses are most clearly related to the movement of the subject’s own body, this is one of the few examples where Darwin reads the psychological effects of “volition” as a negative, recurring cycle. Although Stowe relies here upon European understandings of volition, the potential Dred’s insanity contains to resist slavery lends it a unique application in the Americas. Considering that both the medical notions of insanity involved in religious fanaticism and the bodily manifestations of mysticism common to nineteenth-century accounts, it is not surprising that Dred’s most lucid, effective actions occur within the text when his body is not visible, and therefore on some level invulnerable to these effects.

It is also telling that Stowe’s mentions of somnambulism directly precede Dred’s attempts to exert substantial influence on other characters within the text. Stowe very

self-consciously breaks her narrative to introduce Dred in his chosen environment, noting “We have yet to take our readers to one more scene before we finish the review of those who were going to the camp-meeting. The reader must follow us far beyond the abodes of man, into the recesses of that wild desolation known as the ‘Dismal Swamp’” (238)¹⁰³. Stowe then goes on to catalogue in great detail the fauna and geographic features of the swamp. As if preempting Dred’s somnambulism, the swamp offers both an otherworldly locale, and a wilderness so untamed that “it would seem impossible that human foot could penetrate the wild, impervious jungle” (239). Stowe describes Dred’s attempt to save a runaway from slave catchers, and Dred’s “wild vehemence” at his death (241). Dred appears then to preach himself into a state of religious delirium which is accompanied by outward signs of sleepwalking. Stowe writes “As Dred spoke, his great black eye seemed to enlarge itself and roll with a glassy fulness, like that of a sleep-walker in a somnambolic dream” (242). It appears in this scene that Dred, already capable of negotiating a wilderness no man can come through (not unlike Clithero or the sleepwalking Edgar Huntly), has induced his own somnambolic trance through the excess of volition contained in his religious zeal, and he uses that state to begin to influence others at the nearby camp-meeting.

Dred’s first intervention with the white populations within the text comes in the form of his disembodied voice powerfully preaching to a camp meeting. The emergence of Dred’s voice comes not inconspicuously after the Father Bonnie, a popular local sensationalist minister, announces “The Lord is coming among us” (262). The disembodied voice comes not from an obvious hiding place but apparently “down

¹⁰³ Camp-meetings were evangelical events common in the mid-nineteenth century geared towards public worship and communion.

directly from the thick canopy of pines over the heads of the ministers,” lending it an aura of awe and the theatrical illusion that Dred’s voice is indeed the voice of God (262).

Notably, Dred’s judgment addresses not only the nation itself, but the nation’s power as exercised through the human body. The apex of his speech and the core of his condemnation of the crowd highlight the body parts which have been used to create oppression and sin:

I will not smell in your solemn assemblies; for your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers are greedy for violence! Will ye kill, and steal, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and come and stand before *me*, saith the Lord. Ye oppress the poor and needy, and hunt the stranger; also in thy skirts is found the blood of poor innocents! And yet ye say, Because I am clean shall his anger pass from me! (262)

It is not primarily sins of thought or belief upon which Dred passes judgment, but sins that are particular to the body itself. This creates an interesting juxtaposition between Dred as at this point disembodied, and the listeners, whose bodies are being condemned. Rather than situating this conflict about bodies through the bodies of the characters themselves, Stowe specifically removes Dred from his own body, highlighting a reversal of power in which a black subject is here able to pass judgments on white bodies.

In his physical absence, Dred’s voice takes on another nuance of power, where it “actually seemed, in the expressive words of the Scripture, to make every ear tingle” (263). Dred enacts here what could be described as a magnetic power through which he produces a physical sensation in others through what might be termed in that century, the expression of his religious delirium. Justine Murison argues that this passage “draws on the language of animal magnetism, of electricity exciting listeners to Dred’s prophecy” (121). Harry, who recognizes the voice, cannot find Dred himself, due to what Stowe describes as Dred’s “savage familiarity with nature [which] gave him the agility and

stealthy adroitness of a wild animal” (264). While Stowe’s use of magnetism is apparent here, it is also clear that Stowe’s allusion to Dred’s somnambulism can also be linked to his magnetic faculties. Like Clithero, Dred appears to have superhuman abilities to maneuver through natural terrain, a feature of Clithero’s sleepwalking linked to Fourmel’s delineation of natural somnambulism, in which “sleepers execute things impossible for any man awake to perform” (22). Secondly, like Clithero, who infects Edgar with the disease of somnambulism, he also participates in more than one form of magnetism within the text. The example above outlines the first, but the second, and more directly linked to somnambulism, can be traced through Dred’s interactions with Harry.

Dred’s magnetic pull on Harry is evident in their first meeting. As discussed above, Dred’s disembodied voice sounds out of the swamp after Harry’s confrontation with Tom Gordon, his white half-brother who lays claim to Harry and his wife as property of the plantation. Upon Dred emerging from the swamp, Stowe notes “Wild and startling as the apparition might have been, it appeared to be no stranger to Harry,” whose tone towards Dred holds awe and respect (198). Dred confronts Harry about his acquiescence to slavery and his words elicit what could be read as a magnetic reaction in which Harry is described as “trembling with excitement” (199). Harry’s reactions to Dred’s enthusiasm include both a physical response and a recognition of the potentially magnetic pull Dred espouses, a quality explicitly linked to his religious fanaticism: “‘Don’t talk in that way! – don’t!’ said Harry, striking out his hands with a frantic gesture, as if to push back the words. ‘You are raising the very devil in me!’” (199). Here it is not necessarily the content of Dred’s speech that is identified as eliciting specific responses

from Harry, but rather his manner of speaking that Harry objects to, particularly as it instigates a set of sympathetic physical responses to which Harry is vulnerable. As Dred emphatically compares his state of freedom with Harry's condition as a slave, Harry becomes increasingly agitated. Stowe writes "the effect of this address on the already excited mind of the bondman may be better conceived than described. He ground his teeth, and clenched his hands," two seemingly involuntary actions aroused by Dred's speech (200).

Dred goes on to perform what might be considered an act of mesmerism through singing a hymn

in a clear loud voice, one of those peculiar melodies in which vigor and spirit are blended with a wild, inexpressible mournfulness. The voice was one of a singular and indescribable quality of tone; it was heavy as the sub-bass of an organ, and of a velvety softness, and yet it seemed to pierce the air with a keen dividing force which is generally characteristic of voices of much less volume. (200)

What Stowe describes here is another nearly impossible aesthetic achievement apparently made possible through Dred's volition, which transfers to Harry through a sympathetic, almost magnetic response. Stowe writes that upon hearing Dred's song, "There was an uprising within [Harry], vague, tumultuous, overpowering; dim instincts, heroic aspirations; the will to do, the soul to dare" (200). Here Stowe literalizes the possibility of magnetic somnambulism, in which Dred enters Harry's vulnerable psyche and produces a sensation of volition that plants in Harry his first rebellious seed. In Dred's second confrontation with Harry, he is also explicitly named as a sleepwalker. After Harry's admission that he refuses to serve Tom Gordon, Stowe reveals Dred's full measure of power as a somnambulist, noting:

Dred stood still a moment. Through an opening among the branches, the moonbeams streamed down on his wild, dark figure. Harry remarked his eye

fixed before him on vacancy, the pupil swelling out in glassy fullness, with a fixed, somnambolic stare. After a moment, he spoke, in a hollow, altered voice, like that of a sleep-walker: “ ‘Then shall the silver cord be loosed, and the golden bowl be broken.’ Yes, cover up the grave – cover it up! Now hurry! Come to me, or he will take thy wife for a prey!” (270)

Dred’s prophetic power here goes unchallenged within the text. Tom Gordon does continue to threaten Harry’s wife, and Harry does eventually respond to Dred’s call. Stowe’s mentions of sleepwalking clearly and repetitively link Dred’s “strange and abnormal condition” to that of the sleepwalker (273). Stowe specifically identifies that condition as one that parallels Darwin’s understandings of delirium, and is hence acutely related to Dred’s volition, rather than his vulnerability. Stowe qualifies Dred’s condition as follows:

It was a state of exaltation and trance, which yet appeared not at all to impede the exercise of his outward and physical faculties, but rather to give them a preternatural keenness and intensity, such as sometimes attends the more completely-developed phenomena of somnambulism. (273)

As a somnambulist, Dred’s physical faculties are intact (rather like the case studies of sensation found in Darwin’s, Rush’s and Polidori’s medical work) and are also heightened in degree to a point where Dred seems capable of nearly inhuman activity. It is interesting to note that Stowe here recognizes multiple “phenomena” of somnambulism; by implication, Stowe does not limit her comparison to the dominant definitions of sleepwalking but rather leaves the reader to decide which formulations of somnambulism Dred’s condition might most closely resemble.

Harry’s response to Dred’s prophecy occurs as a result of his numerous vulnerabilities. The lack of a will for the property of the estate renders Harry vulnerable to being sold. As this is revealed to Harry, “destroying the hopes of his whole lifetime,” Harry becomes vulnerable to the stirrings of the emotions originally elicited by Dred in

their first meeting (385). After the Gordons' lawyer warns Harry not to get "excited," Harry becomes "thoroughly roused" to the point of being "wholly desperate and reckless" (387). Harry experiences his own vision of "himself, already delivered, bound hand and foot, into the hands of a master from whom he could expect neither mercy nor justice" (387). Despite Stowe's coding of this scenario as a form of prescience, in the context of Harry's legal status, it is merely a literal imagining of Harry's actual situation. Harry's "excitement" is first exposed in his "trembling" hands, and continues in a series of physical manifestations of emotion: "the veins in Harry's forehead were swollen, his lips were livid, his eyes glittered like lightning" (388). As Tom Gordon witnesses Harry's "frantic raving," the scene comes to a climax in a physical confrontation between the two in which Harry and his wife, Lisette, flee into the entrance of the swamp to find Dred, who proclaims "the vision is fulfilled!" (389). Both Harry's nervous manifestation of emotion, and the sense that he has fulfilled Dred's prophecy point to Dred's magnetic influence on him, an influence heightened by his physical, emotional, and legal vulnerability.

Dred is not the only of Harriet Beecher Stowe's novels to reference somnambulism. Her allusions to sleepwalking in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, although generally ignored by its scholars and certainly not a focal point within the novel, are not dissimilar to those described above in *Dred*. In the case of the characters in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, references to somnambulism, which center around enslaved characters who are about to seek freedom, signal the desire and potential for freedom. Within the first few chapters, we find the first reference to sleepwalking in Uncle Tom himself. Upon hearing Eliza's confirmation that Harry has been sold, Stowe writes that "Tom had stood, during

the speech, with his hands raised, and his eyes dilated, like a man in a dream. Slowly and gradually as its meaning came over him, he collapsed, rather than seated himself, on his old chair, and sunk his head down upon his knees” (35). Tom’s reaction here is certainly inconsistent with that of the other characters, and his “dilated eyes” and later collapse, as well as Stowe’s assertion of his dreamlike state, can certainly be read as a brief episode of sleepwalking. Although at this time, the potential for subversive action signaled by raising his hands goes unrealized, it does seem that, for a moment, Tom’s emotional upheaval at the selling of the child has produced the kind of overexcess of volition that becomes a somnambulatory episode.

An even clearer reference to somnambulism occurs later in the text, where the racially cross-dressed runaway, George Harris, elicits the effect of sleepwalking when his identity is about to be publicly revealed. In this scene, Stowe notes that the white man who half-recognizes George follows his request for a private conversation “like one who walks in his sleep” (98). Castronovo argues that “Harris, in fact, seems to exert a magnetic power associated with mesmerism over the white man, fixing his eyes on Wilson, inducing a sort of hypnosis,” in other words, an act of magnetic somnambulism (50). Castronovo’s arguments at this point center around the “psychic effects that disguised blackness has upon white psychology” Stowe creates by situating this magnetic episode in terms of racial ambiguity. Although little scholarship exists specifically addressing the somnambulism of *Dred*, Julia Stern argues that Stowe’s scene of sleepwalking in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* literalizes Stowe’s assertion that “well-intentioned white America has not assumed the lead in the battle for abolition of slavery and is indeed sleepwalking through a crisis that threatens to rend the nation” (117). Stern

juxtaposes this formulation of sleepwalking with Stowe's utopian ideal of abolition, arguing that the text implies that "such citizens must give up their own somnambulism and join the African American's dream, a vision of a nation without slavery" (117). While Stern's reading sidesteps the scientific nuances of Stowe's use of sleepwalking here, it does make an interesting case for thinking about the figure of the sleepwalker in a later, equally tenuous political situation than the setting of *Edgar Huntly*.

Surprisingly, current scholarship has yet to explore the relationship between Stowe's and Brown's literatures on somnambulism, and none deals with the two depictions of somnambulism as closely related phenomena that respond to specific medical literatures of their respective times. William Mullaney notes that

Stowe's reference to somnambulism here should remind of Charles Brockden Brown's *Edgar Huntly* (1799), where sleepwalking was used to illustrate the hysterical tendencies of Edgar and his mysterious friend. What differentiates Stowe's use of sleepwalking from Brown's is her interest in the phenomenon as an outgrowth of religious devotion versus Brown's primarily psychological approach. (152)

Mullaney's brief gloss of *Edgar Huntly* disregards the complex relationships between Edgar and his "friend" (Clithero) and the closely related medical and scientific discourses surrounding delirium, somnambulism, reverie, enthusiasm, and magnetism. Surprisingly, especially considering her extensive work on somnambulism in *Edgar Huntly*, Justine Murison's analysis of enthusiasm in *Dred* sidesteps the issue of somnambulism in the novel, explaining Dred's magnetism as primarily connected to his religious enthusiasm. Despite the novel's obvious focus on religion as a mediating factor in individual and group psychology, *Dred*, like *Edgar Huntly*, makes equally emphatic uses of medical and scientific discourse that cannot be ignored.

What are we to make, then, of the appearance of the sleepwalker at the literal and figurative crossroads of *Dred*? Dred inhabits the borders between a slave state and a maroonage, just as the novel appears in the wake of civil war. While Dred's rebellion never comes to pass within the novel, it is clear that his figure itself presents revolutionary possibilities that are very much rooted in the science of Stowe's time. While fears of repetition of the violent slave rebellion in Saint Domingue were certainly rampant at the time of the novel's publication, Dred's character poses a far greater threat: the idea that, because of genetically and culturally specific traits, Africans could use contemporary science to influence the minds and bodies of their white counterparts. Dred's apparent abilities to judge and control the actions of white bodies, although not fully realized within the text, present a radically different facet of the notions of vulnerability and volition of the sleepwalker than we see in *Edgar Huntly*. Dred can be read as containing a potentially limitless power to exert his will over vulnerable white bodies. The use of scientific studies as bases for formulating somnambulistic threat is apparent in both novels; *Dred*, written at the outset of civil unrest, rather than in its aftermath, poses that threat in a much more immediate sense.

From Zombi to Sleepwalker: Haitian Undercurrents in Early U.S. Literatures

Scientific discourse in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has been firmly established as central to forming understandings of race, nationhood, and the formation of institutions in the United States. U.S. literatures of the period, however, were not conceived, written, or read in a void, and certainly the early modes of cultural imagination did not imagine the United States as an exclusive cultural milieu. Authors

and readers alike were consistently interested and involved in the political, cultural, and scientific productions of the rest of the Americas, particularly those in independent states (like Haiti) and other contiguous slave-holding colonies (for example, Cuba, Barbados, and Jamaica). While the novels in question in this chapter respond to Western scientific discourse, they also lend themselves to productive readings through Caribbean contexts and modes of cultural imagination. It is important to note that each text discussed in this chapter can be read as linked to the Caribbean in one way or another; Charles Brockden Brown later published writings on Haiti, and Stowe references legacies of Caribbean resistance in her characterization of Dred. The sleepwalkers presented in these texts can also be read in light of their connection to Caribbean cultures of resistance; they have a great deal more in common in the notion of the zombi in eighteenth and nineteenth century Haiti than do contemporary representations of zombies in the United States.

Whether or not Brown or Stowe explicitly link sleepwalking to the forms of disembodiment examined earlier in this work in Saint Domingue, looking at forms of disembodiment in Haitian cultures more closely is helpful in understanding the subversive potential of the sleepwalker in U.S. literatures of the late eighteenth and mid nineteenth centuries. Like the sleepwalker, the disembodied subject in Haiti also contained an immense potential to resist the encroachment of colonial power and normative social constraints. Disembodied spirits offered a means of resistance to social control that was otherwise unavailable in nineteenth-century Haiti, or, for that matter, for many disempowered populations in the United States. Like the spirits and lwa of Haiti, sleepwalkers in nineteenth-century U.S. literature can be fruitfully read as a response to the encroachment of power on specific populations, while at the same time, a justification

for the bases of that power. The ghosts, spirits, lwa, and sleepwalkers wandering through the literatures of Saint Domingue and the nineteenth-century United States present sources of power to disrupt and resist sovereign power throughout the Americas.

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