

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

ENDING SLAVERY, NARRATING EMANCIPATION:
REVOLUTIONARY LEGACIES IN THE FRENCH ANTISLAVERY DEBATE AND
“SILENCING THE HAITIAN REVOLUTION,” 1814-48

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BY
YUN KYOUNG KWON

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To My Loving Parents,
Gwon Yeong Sik and Kum Young Sook

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the nineteenth-century French debate on slavery and emancipation by analyzing its engagement with the antislavery legacies of the French Revolution and the Haitian Revolution. In revising the prior historiography's preoccupation with the influence of the benchmark British example, it contends that the impacts of revolutionary abolition formed another vital factor in shaping French abolitionism and emancipation. For this purpose, this thesis charts the discursive mobilization of the revolutionary past's divisive meanings concerning slavery and the controversial state of postindependence Haiti as the first postemancipation society in the French antislavery debate. This process seeks to rework Michel-Rolph Trouillot's thesis and trace the complex practices and the procedure of "silencing the Haitian Revolution," not reducible to "unthinkable."

In order to reconstruct the discursive contestation over revolutionary legacies, this thesis is predicated on two approaches. First, it delves into the linkage between French domestic politics and antislavery issues. As the politics of memory over the French Revolution dominated French postrevolutionary politics, it excavates how narrating the history of the French and Haitian Revolutions became a crucial part of antislavery politics. From the Restoration to the July Monarchy, the shifting political positions of the antislavery elites in the regime deeply affected their changing uses and strategies of the representation of the Haitian Revolution and Haiti. Second, this thesis revamps the studies of French antislavery from a transatlantic perspective by examining the roles of three colonial groups: refugee planters of Saint-Domingue in Paris; free people of color from French colonies represented by Cyrille Bissette; and Haitian

ruling elites intervening in metropolitan discussions. The study of these three groups illuminates the evolution of French antislavery at the nexus of metropolitan-colonial interactions and on a transatlantic scale. For these purposes, I mobilize a variety of instances in which the narratives of slavery and abolition were produced and contested: political tracts, historical books, parliamentary debates, antislavery associations, the press, the *causes célèbres*, and artistic representations.

This thesis works towards three goals. First, it reveals the key role of revolutionary examples in molding French antislavery discourse—in particular, the Haitian Revolution and post-1804 Haiti. By doing this, it provides an alternative explanation for the dynamics of French emancipation and also illuminates the Haitian Revolution’s discursive impact on French abolitionism. Second, this thesis focuses on revolutionary legacies in order to delve into a wider array of discourses engendered by antislavery debate. It delineates the overlapping and often conflicting concepts of Frenchness, race, and colonialism contested by the various groups who sought to define and appropriate revolutionary examples. By investigating the dispute over the status of colonial groups in the French national community—white planters, free people of color, and slaves—this work argues that the negotiations over French citizenship and Frenchness were at the center of the antislavery debate, with an emphasis on French citizenship’s complicated relation to race and colonialism. Third, this thesis ultimately shows how these contestations over revolutionary antislavery led to the formation of the dominant national discourse of French-given universal liberty, and how in this process the hegemonic narrative of the French Revolution and emancipation “silenced” the Haitian Revolution and Haiti.

Chronology

1788	<i>Société des amis des noirs</i> founded in Paris.
1789	Beginning of the French Revolution.
1790	Saint-Domingue mulatto delegation including Vincent Ogé and others went to the French Assembly to request French rights for mulattos.
1791 May	Constituent Assembly gave full political rights to qualified mulattos and free blacks (the May 15 decree).
August	Outbreak of the general insurrection of slaves in the northern part of Saint-Domingue.
September	Outbreak of the civil war launched by the conflict over the revolutionary decree for free-colored rights. French civil commissioners, Léger-Félicité Sonthonax and Étienne Polverel, arrived.
1793	Spanish and British armies invaded Saint-Domingue.
1793 August	Proclamation of the abolition of slavery by Sonthonax and Polverel in Saint-Domingue.
1794 February	National Convention proclaimed general abolition of slavery in all French colonies (the February 4 decree).
May	Toussaint Louverture, who had served in the Spanish army, joined the French Republic.
1795 August	Constitution of the Year III by the Directory integrated the metropole and colonies.
1796-1801	Toussaint Louverture controlled Saint-Domingue. He abolished slavery throughout the island.
1802 February	Napoleonic expeditionary force led by General Leclerc landed on Saint-Domingue.

May	Napoleon reestablished slavery in the French colonies.
1802 June	Toussaint Louverture captured and deported to France. The War of Haitian Independence began.
1803 March	General Rochambeau, successor of Leclerc who fell by yellow fever, landed.
December	French army capitulated and left Saint-Domingue.
1804 January	Dessalines proclaimed Saint-Domingue's independence as the Republic of Haiti.
1806	Assassination of Dessalines and the division of territory of French part of Saint-Domingue. Christophe's kingdom (from 1811) in the North. Pétion's republic in the South and West.
1807	British abolition of the slave trade.
1814	Bourbon Restoration.
1815	Napoleon abolished slavery during the Hundred Days. The Second Restoration.
1821	<i>Société de la morale chrétienne</i> established in Paris.
1822	Boyer united the island as the Republic of Haiti.
1823-27	The <i>Affaire Bissette</i> .
1825	King Charles X of France recognized Haiti's independence.
1830	July Revolution. The birth of the July Monarchy.
1833	French colonial reform (<i>Charte colonial</i>). The <i>Affaire Grand'Anse</i> .
1834 August	British abolition of slavery.
December	Foundation of the <i>Société française pour l'abolition de l'esclavage</i> .
1838	Franco-Haitian treaties for renegotiating the 1825 ordinance.
1843	Overthrow of Boyer's regime in Haiti. Political unrest till 1847.

- 1845 The Mackau law for mitigating slavery is passed.
- 1848 February Revolution. Proclamation of the Second Republic. Abolition of slavery (April 27, 1848).

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CHAPTER I. Introduction: Liberty, Revolutions, and Silence

“The Great Narratives of Emancipation”¹

Since the last decades of the twentieth-century, France has engaged in an intense “memory war” concerning the resurrection of its colonial past.² With the impassioned conflict over the memories of the Algerian War in the lead, colonial memories are now haunting French politics, and filling public debates with the terms such as “reparation,” “justice,” and “repentance.” The ongoing battle concerning colonial memories and identities shows itself in heated national debates, such as the dispute surrounding the law that would require schools to teach the “positive roles of French colonization” in 2005, and the much controversial “national identity” debate in 2009.³ The rising contestation over social recognition of minorities’

¹ Françoise Vergès, *Monsters and Revolutionaries: Colonial Family Romance and Métissage* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), 1.

² About today’s battle of colonial memory in France, see Pascal Blanchard, Nicolas Bancel, and Françoise Vergès, eds., *La république coloniale: essai sur une utopie* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2003); Pascal Blanchard, Nicolas Bancel and Sandrine Lemaire, eds., *La fracture coloniale: la société française au prisme de l’héritage colonial* (Paris: Découverte, 2005); Benjamin Stora and Thierry Leclère, *La guerre des mémoires: la France face à son passé colonial* (La Tour d’Aigues: Aube, 2007); Pascal Blanchard and Isabelle Veyrat-Masson, eds., *Les guerres de mémoires: la France et son histoire, enjeux politiques, controverses historiques, stratégies médiatiques* (Paris: Découverte, 2008); Laurent Dubois, “La République Métissée: Citizenship, Colonialism, and the Borders of French History,” *Cultural Studies* 14, no.1 (Winter, 2000): 15-34.

³ Confronting much criticism, the 2005 law was partially repealed by President Chirac in 2006. See Claude Liauzu, “Une loi contre l’histoire,” *Le Monde diplomatique*, April, 2005. About the national identity debate in 2009, see Judith Broadbridge, “Great Debate on National Identity: Language and Identity,” *Association for French Language Studies* 16, no. 2 (2011), <http://www.afls.net/cahiers/16.2/2.%20broadbridge.pdf>, accessed April 11, 2012. The official homepage, www.debatidentitenationale.fr, has disappeared. French historians, intellectuals and journalists working on colonialism and postcolonialism issued a response to this debate. See “Identité nationale et passé colonial: Pour un véritable débat” in

memories and identities has raised the political stakes in the debate about how to approach the history of French colonialism, in a metropolitan France that is marked by the increasing visibility of cultural and racial diversity.

In this landscape of memory wars, one of the most prominent memories is that of slavery in the Atlantic world. France's active role in colonial slavery had been of the most repressed colonial memories. As Françoise Vergès describes in her book, after the Second Republic abolished slavery in 1848 "Slavery was the *secret de famille*. Amnesia was the operative word."⁴ Now this long-term amnesia is being challenged from various directions. The people of the *départements d'outre-mer* (DOM)⁵ have played a leading role in demanding that the French Republic acknowledge its accountability for the slave trade and slavery. Most notably it led to the passing of Taubira law in 2001 that stipulated the slave trade was "a crime against humanity." On May 10, 2006 the French government celebrated the first national day of commemoration for the end of Atlantic slavery.⁶

http://www.achac.com/file_dynamic/Appel%20pour%20un%20veritable%20debat.pdf, accessed April 11, 2012.

⁴ Vergès, *Monsters and Revolutionaries*, 9. About this topic, see also her another work, Françoise Vergès, *Abolir l'esclavage: une utopie coloniale, les ambiguïtés d'une politique humanitaire* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2001).

⁵ Four "old colonies," Martinique, Guadeloupe, Réunion, and Guyana, were departmentalized in 1946. See Robert Aldrich and John Connell, *France's Overseas Frontier: Départements et territoires d'outre-mer* (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

⁶ About the recent events around the memory of the slave trade and slavery in France, see Françoise Vergès, *La mémoire enchaînée: questions sur l'esclavage* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2006); Catherine A. Reinhardt, *Claims to Memory: Beyond Slavery and Emancipation in the French Caribbean* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006); Doris Garraway, "Memory as Reparation? The Politics of Remembering Slavery in France from Abolition to the Loi Taubira (2001)," *International Journal of Francophone Studies* 11 no.3(2008): 365-86; Danielle Pétrissans-Cavaillès, *Sur les traces de la traite des Noirs à Bordeaux* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2004); Christiane Taubira, *Rendez-vous avec la République* (Paris: La Découverte, 2007); Edouard Glissant, *Mémoires des esclavages: la fondation d'un centre national*

More intriguing is that this memory surge accompanies new contestations over the origin of liberty and emancipation. Until the late twentieth century, French official memory fixed the birth of liberty to two specific historical years: 1789 (the French Revolution) and 1848 (the abolition decree by the Second Republic). The universal liberty born in 1789 with the Declaration of Rights of Man and Citizen bore fruit in the emancipation decree of 1848—it accentuated the redemptive momentum of the two revolutions and reinforced the notion that the French Revolution was the origin of universal liberty. Freedom was defined as a “gift” from the metropole and freed people became “indebted” to the mother country.⁷ Since 1848, in France as well as in colonies, Victor Schoelcher, the celebrated abolitionist republican who was dubbed “the Liberator,” had been the dominant landmark of memory with regard to the history of slavery and abolition.

This is how official memory buried the past of slavery in the glorious vision of abolition. That vision was clearly revealed in the official commemoration of the two revolutions. The bicentennial of the French Revolution in 1989 praised the universal mission of the Great Revolution by spotlighting pro-“human rights” figures like Marquis de Condorcet and Abbé Henri Grégoire.⁸ The 1998 sesquicentennial of the second abolition of slavery took the slogan of

pour la mémoire des esclavages et de leurs abolitions (Paris: Gallimard, 2007); *Antilles: la République ignorée*, Special number of *Esprit* (February, 2007); Michel Giraud, “Les enjeux présents de la mémoire de l’esclavage” in *L’Esclavage, la colonisation et après... France, États-Unis, Grande-Bretagne*, ed. Stéphane Dufoix (Paris: PUF, 2005); Charles Forsdick, “The Black Jacobin in Paris,” *Journal of Romance Studies* 5, no. 3 (2005), 9–24.

⁷ About the rhetoric of emancipation as a “gift,” see Vergès, *Monsters and Revolutionaries*, 6; Marcus Wood, *The Horrible Gift of Freedom: Atlantic Slavery and the Representation of Emancipation* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010).

⁸ Louis Sala-Molins criticizes the overstated “liberatory” essence of the Revolution in the bicentennial of the French Revolution in 1989, which led to the omission of the problem of slavery. See

“*Tous nés en 1848* (All born in 1848),” emphasizing how the newborn Republic regenerated colonies by “granting” liberty.⁹

It is both ironic and illuminating that the official commemoration in 1998, an attempt to fix memory in an approved form, triggered new contestations over what to commemorate about slavery and abolition, especially with active participation from the DOM that emphasized the roles of Caribbean insurgents. The Martinicans remember abolition via the slave uprising in 1848 that predated the arrival of metropolitan decree. In Guadeloupe, the Great Revolution is commemorated by remembering the tragic defeat of the mulatto leader Louis Delgrès and his comrades by the French army.¹⁰ In the former colonies, Maroon slaves have emerged as a new icon of slavery and liberty, replacing the narrative of peaceful transition from servitude to liberty with that of rebellion and resistance. As a result, the official monopoly of memory of emancipation is now challenged by divisive countermemories.

This change casts the time-honored story of the French Revolution and general liberty in a new light, problematizing the chronology, mode of narration, and agency that is embedded in

The Dark Side of the Light: Slavery and the French Enlightenment (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 138-150.

⁹ Charles Forsdick, “Foreword,” in *Postcolonial Slavery: An Overview of Colonialism’s Legacy*, ed. Charlotte Baker and Jennifer Jahn (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Pub., 2008), xi.

¹⁰ About the contestations of slavery’s memory in the former colonies, see Chris Bongie, “A Street Named Bissette: Nostalgia, Memory, and the Cent-Cinquantenaire of the Abolition of Slavery in Martinique (1848–1998),” *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 100, no.1 (2001): 215-57; Laurence Brown, “Monuments to Freedom, Monuments to Nation: The Politics of Emancipation and Remembrance in the Eastern Caribbean,” *Slavery and Abolition* 23, no.3 (December, 2002): 99-116; Laurence Brown, “Creole Bonapartism and Post-Emancipation Society: Martinique’s Monument to the Empress Josephine,” *Outre-mers* 93, no. 350 (2006): 39-49; Bogumil Jewsiewicki, “Héritages et réparations en quête d’une justice pour le passé ou le présent,” *Cahiers d’études africaines* 173-174 (2004): 7-24; Laurent Dubois, “Haunting Delgrès,” *Radical Historical Review* 78 (2000): 166-77; Laurent Dubois, “Solitude’s Statue: Confronting the Past in the French Caribbean,” *Outre-Mers* 350-351 (June 2006): 27-38.

that story. This “great narrative of emancipation” was an essential part of the French national discourse, and one that defined emancipation as a natural outcome of French national history. Through this, France managed to transform its not-so-honorable past of slavery and prolonged abolition into a grand narrative of French-given universal liberty. The Second Republic institutionalized this vision with the abolition decree in 1848 and installed it as an important part of republicanism.¹¹ The advanced version of this idea appeared when the Third Republic upheld antislavery as an ideology to justify imperialism in Africa.

This grand vision of French-given emancipation is now being challenged and criticized by not only countermemories but also new historiography. The expanding studies of transatlantic slavery and abolition dispute the metropole-oriented explanation of emancipation. They diversify the causes and paths toward liberty with an emphasis on the agency of colonial people, and reveal the complexity of the historical process around the abolition of slavery. It led to the ongoing debate on the cause of emancipation, or how to approach the problems of causation and agency in understanding emancipation.¹²

My dissertation builds on this new historiography, but it does not directly investigate the

¹¹ See Oruno D. Lara, *De l'oubli à l'histoire: espace et identité caraïbes* (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 1998), 151-207; Vergès, *Monsters and Revolutionaries*; Myriam Cottias, “L’oubli du passé’ contre la citoyenneté: troc et ressentiment à la Martinique (1848-1946)”, in *Cinquante ans de départementalisation*, ed. Fred Constant and Justin Daniel (Paris: Harmattan, 1998), 293-313.

¹² For comprehensive or comparative history of the “Age of Emancipation”, see David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: the Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Seymour Drescher, *Abolition: a History of Slavery and Antislavery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Seymour Drescher, ed., *Who Abolished Slavery: Slave Revolts and Abolitionism: A Debate with João Pedro Marques Marques* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010); Robin Blackburn, *Overthrow of Colonial Slavery* (London: Verso, 1988); Robin Blackburn, *The American Crucible: Slavery, Emancipation and Human Rights* (London & NY: Verso, 2011); Olivier Pétrel-Grenouilleau, ed., *Abolir l’esclavage: un réformisme à l’épreuve* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2008).

making of emancipation policy. Instead it inquires into another problem raised by the new historical findings and new historical consciousness: if emancipation is a product of complex historical process involving multiple actors and factors, how did that particular story of French-given liberty come to be the one that the French—including colonial subjects—choose to tell themselves about slavery, emancipation, and liberty, at the expense of other stories and the complexity of the actual historical process? A central question of this dissertation is thus how French abolitionists and other competing groups *talked* about the cause of emancipation, and how one story—the grand narrative of French universal liberty—obtained hegemony and in the process silenced other alternative stories.

My thesis therefore focuses on the politico-discursive aspects of French abolitionism, and intends to provide an alternative explanation for the dynamics of French emancipation. The abolition of slavery meant depriving an institution, one that was more than two centuries old, of its legitimacy and appearance of naturalness. That is why the end of slavery had to be accompanied by a paradigm shift. Moreover, according to Christopher Leslie Brown, abolitionism is about “not only changing attitudes toward slavery, but also, and even more, changing attitudes toward antislavery.”¹³ Neither the decreasing economic value of slavery nor widespread belief in the immorality of slavery automatically led to support for abolitionism. In the case of French abolitionism, legitimizing emancipation was much more difficult than condemning slavery.

In order to examine this subject I have reconstructed the impact of revolutionary legacies, both French and Haitian, as a crucial politico-discursive context that defined French

¹³ Christopher Leslie Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 460.

antislavery debate.¹⁴ From the late eighteenth-century to the early nineteenth-century, both sides of the Atlantic world underwent great upheaval. At the top of the metropolitan revolution, France was the first in the history of European empires to proclaim the general abolition of slavery in

¹⁴ About the Haitian Revolution, the pioneers include C. L. R. James' now classic account in *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, 2nd edition (New York: Vintage Books, 1989) and Eugene D. Genovese, *From Rebellion to Revolution: Afro-American Slave Revolts in the Making of the Modern World* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979). For the works in English, see Thomas O. Ott, *The Haitian Revolution, 1789-1804* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1973); Carolyn Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below* (Knoxville, Tenn., 1990); David Geggus, ed., *A Turbulent Time: The French Revolution and the Greater Caribbean* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997); David Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002); David Geggus, ed., *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World* (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 2002); David Geggus and Norman Fiering, eds., *The World of the Haitian Revolution: Viewed 200 Years After* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009); Franklin W. Knight, "The Haitian Revolution," *American Historical Review* 105, no. 1 (February 2000): 103-15; Franklin Knight, "The Haitian Revolution and the Notion of Human Rights," *Journal of the Historical Society* 5, no.3 (2005): 391-416; Laurent Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens: Revolution and Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean, 1787-1804* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004); Laurent Dubois and John Garrigus, ed., *Slave Revolution in the Caribbean, 1789-1804: A History in Documents* (New York: Bedford Press, 2006); Deborah Jensen, ed., "The Haiti Issue: 1804 and Nineteenth-Century French Studies," Special number of *Yale French Studies* 107 (2005); Jeremy Popkin, *Facing Racial Revolution: Eyewitness Accounts of the Haitian Insurrection* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); Jeremy Popkin, *You Are All Free: The Haitian Revolution and the Abolition of Slavery* (New York: Cambridge, 2010); Jeremy Popkin, *A Concise History of the Haitian Revolution* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012). About the works that locate or highlight the Haitian Revolution in a larger framework of the Age of Revolution, see Robin Blackburn, "Haiti, Slavery and the Age of the Democratic Revolution," *William and Mary Quarterly* LXIII, no. 4 (2006): 643-74; Laurent Dubois, "An Atlantic Revolution," *French Historical Studies* 32, no.4 (Fall 2009): 655-661; Allysa Sepinwall, "Atlantic Revolutions" in *Encyclopedia of the Modern World I*, ed. Peter Stearns (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Wim Klooster, *Revolutions in the Atlantic World: A Comparative History* (New York, 2009); David Geggus, "The Caribbean in the Age of Revolution" in *The Age of Revolutions in Global Context*, ed. David Armitage and Sanjay Subrahmanyam (Basingstoke, 2010); Richard Bessel, Nicholas Guyatt and Jane Rendall, ed., *War, Empire, and Slavery, 1770-1830* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Laurent Dubois and Richard Rabinowitz, eds., *Revolution! The Atlantic World Reborn* (London: D. Giles, 2011). For the works from the West Indies, see Michel Hector, ed., *La révolution française et Haïti: filiations, ruptures, nouvelles dimensions* (Port-au-Prince: Éditions Henri Deschamps, 1989); Michel Martin and Alain Yacou, eds., *Mourir pour les Antilles: indépendance nègre ou esclavage* (Paris: Éditions Caribéennes, 1991); Claude Wanquet and Benoît Jullien, eds., *Révolution française et Océan Indien: prémices, paroxysmes, héritages et déviances* (La Réunion: Université de La Réunion; Paris: L'Harmattan, 1996); Roger Toumson and Charles Porset, eds. *La période révolutionnaire aux Antilles* (Schœlcher, Martinique: GRELCA, 1987); Martin Munro and Elizabeth Walcott-Hackshaw, eds., *Echoes of the Haitian Revolution, 1804-2004* (Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2008). For the works from France, see the footnote no.57 in this chapter.

1794, only to revoke it after less than a decade, and lose her most precious colony—Saint-Domingue—to the ex-slave insurgents in a bloodbath. In the metropole as well as in French colonies, the French and Haitian Revolutions meant a formidable revolutionary experiment in slavery, citizenship, and freedom, which would remain an uncomfortable but crucial legacy.

Dealing with the years between 1814 and 1848, my thesis focuses on the period of the Restoration and the July Monarchy, which is positioned between the revolutionary upheaval and the second abolition of slavery in 1848. In the wake of the French Revolution, antislavery was closely associated with Jacobinism, Robespierre, and the Terror. Once Saint-Domingue had been lost in bloodshed and massacres, the revolutionary trial of general liberty was regarded as a fatal error. Moreover, Haiti, a nation of self-liberated slaves, now existed in the midst of slavery societies as a constant reminder of the revolutionary past. In such circumstances, redeeming antislavery and justifying emancipation was an enormous task.

When looking into the French official memory of emancipation, the imbalance between the memories of the two revolutions that shaped French antislavery in the nineteenth-century is most striking. The French Revolution, whose colonial dynamics were erased or set aside, was celebrated as a source of universal liberty. The Haitian Revolution, detached from the French national narrative of the Revolution and emancipation, became an alien story to the French people. Here a question emerges: how could these two revolutions end up being narrated as divergent historical events? And how could they come to be remembered in such different manners?

In 1814, when the return of the Bourbon monarchy signaled the end of the Revolution, neither the proslavery nor the antislavery party distinguished one revolution from the other. As

they understood the Haitian Revolution to be part of the French Revolution, they had to either defend or condemn them both. Haiti, as the first postemancipation society, occupied a central place in the controversy over the abolition of slavery. Yet the situation had changed by the time of the second abolition in 1848. The French republicans advocated the French Revolution as the sole origin of general liberty, eliminating the Haitian Revolution and Haiti from their narrative of emancipation. During the first half of the nineteenth-century, what happened to the ways in which French people understood the two revolutions? I argue that understanding how the Haitian Revolution and Haiti were separated from the French national narrative of universal liberty is the key to fully understanding the distinctiveness of French abolitionism.

My main questions therefore are: how did “the great narratives of emancipation” in a liberal/republican version emerge triumphant from the hard struggle against revolutionary specters? How did French abolitionists install the French Revolution and its notorious decree of abolition in 1794 as the origin of general liberty? And in the process, how did they manage to “silence” the Haitian Revolution and Haiti? By seizing upon the different manner in which the two revolutions were narrated and interpreted, my project approaches the formation of French abolitionist discourse not only from what was told, but also from what was untold, excluded, and silenced.

From the late twentieth century, scholars have become more interested in this “silence” surrounding the Haitian Revolution in the Western/French narrative of modern history: how most accounts of the Age of Revolution “fail to mention the only revolution that centered around the issue of racial equality.”¹⁵ One of the most influential theses about this collective amnesia is

¹⁵ Sibylle Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed: Haiti and the Cultures of Slavery in the Age of*

Michel-Rolph Trouillot's "silencing" the Haitian Revolution.¹⁶ Here he not only indicates the two-century-long silence embedded in the West's world historical memory, but also argues that the Haitian Revolution was being silenced even while it was happening. Defining the Haitian Revolution as "unthinkable," Trouillot argues that the colonial revolution defied the discursive context of the time by which late eighteenth-century Western people examined the world. As a result, this epistemological threshold, predicated on the Enlightenment ideas of Man, forbade contemporary European observers from recognizing the full importance of the black and colonial revolution, leading to the downplaying of the Haitian Revolution and its exclusion from public memory.

My thesis intends to illuminate the complicated nature of "silence" around the colonial revolution by reworking and elucidating Trouillot's notion of "silence." It will also provide a helpful framework for historiographical questions about the Haitian Revolution. Overall the "silence" thesis is valid in terms of a long historical continuum. Recent studies have shown how French collective memory and national narratives systematically neglected both the Haitian Revolution and the Haitian nation.¹⁷ However, we need to be careful in our approach to this

Revolution (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2004), vi.

¹⁶ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, "Unthinkable History," in *Silencing the Past: Power and Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 70-107.

¹⁷ Yves Bénot, "Dans le miroir truqué des historiens" in *Le révolution française et la fin des colonies* (Paris: Découverte, 2004), 205-17; Jean Suret-Canale, "La portée historique de la révolution haïtienne," in *La révolution française et Haïti*, vol. 2, 389-98; Francis Arzalier, "La révolution haïtienne dans l'imaginaire français" in *La révolution française et Haïti*, vol. 2, 348-57; Gérard Barthélemy and Christian Girault, "Introduction," in *La république haïtienne: état des lieux et perspectives*, ed. Gérard Barthélemy and Christian Girault (Paris: Karthala, 1993), 7-32; Marcel Dorigny, "Aux origines: l'indépendance d'Haïti et son occultation" in *La fracture coloniale*, 45-55; Alyssa Sepinwall, "The Specter of Saint-Domingue: American and French Reactions to the Haitian Revolution," in *The World of the Haitian Revolution*, 317-338; Alyssa Sepinwall, "Atlantic Amnesia: French Historians, the Haitian Revolution and the 2004-6 CAPES Exam," *Proceedings of the Western Society for French History* 34

concept of “silence.” Susan Buck-Morss notes that in Trouillot’s thesis, there is a danger of “conflating two silences, the past and the present one.”¹⁸ Even if the French people of the early nineteenth-century might have deemed a full-scale slave revolution against slavery and colonialism “unthinkable” as Trouillot assumes, they were acutely aware of the event and never ceased to speak about it, partly in an effort to make sense of it.¹⁹ It was impossible for them to forget the legendary prosperity of Saint-Domingue and its violent secession from the mother country. Today, by contrast, the Haitian Revolution is quite “thinkable” in various ways—as a pioneer of emancipation, black liberation, and anti-colonial struggle. Yet it is more invisible and obscured in world history, due to “the construction of disciplinary discourses through which knowledge of the past has been inherited.”²⁰

It is therefore necessary to differentiate between the past and present silence about the Haitian Revolution. Today’s silence is a result of the two centuries of history, which cannot be identified with nineteenth-century condition of silence. In other words, my project distinguishes process from outcome in conceiving the silence on the colonial revolution, without reducing the complex in-between history to the end product of amnesia. A goal of my thesis is to grasp the process of silence building, from 1814 when the Haitian Revolution and Haiti were a burning issue in France, to 1848 when they were silenced and trivialized in the triumphant French abolitionist discourse.

(2006): 300-314.

¹⁸ Susan Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti and Universal History* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009), 50.

¹⁹ Jeremy Popkin indicates a similar point in *Facing Racial Revolution*, 3-4.

²⁰ Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti and Universal History*, 50.

In what follows, after a short summary of the history of French abolitionism, I analyze the two levels of silence: the present silence on revolutionary legacies in the prior historiography of French abolitionism, and the “silencing” of the Haitian Revolution as a historical process in the first half of the nineteenth-century. This clarifies and concretizes the subject of my thesis, the role of revolutionary legacies in the evolution of French abolitionism. I also introduce another important element in French antislavery debate, derived from revolutionary abolitionism—postindependence Haiti. To approach this subject, I show how this research can benefit from the studies of the politics of memory and narrative theories (“emplotment” in particular). This chapter concludes with a summary of chapters and main themes.

History of French Antislavery from the late Old Regime to 1848

For French colonial economy, the latter half of the eighteenth-century was the heyday of French sugar islands in the Caribbean—Saint-Domingue, Martinique and Guadeloupe.²¹ The combination of slave labor and large-scale plantation led to the flowering of sugar production in

²¹ About the general history of the French Caribbean colonies under the Old Regime, see Pierre Pluchon and Denise Bouche, *Histoire de la colonisation française*, vol. 1 (Paris: Fayard, 1991); Robin Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery* (London & New York: Verso, 1997); Paul Butel, *Histoire des Antilles françaises: XVIIe-XXe siècle* (Paris: Perrin, 2002). For the French slave trade and slavery, Gaston Martin, *Histoire de l'esclavage dans les colonies française* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1948); Gabriel Debien, *Les esclaves aux Antilles françaises* (Basse-Terre: Société de la Guadeloupe, 1974); Antoine Gisler, *L'esclavage aux Antilles françaises* (Paris: Karthala, 1981); Lucien Peytraud, *L'esclavage aux Antilles françaises avant 1789* (Paris: Hachette, 1979); Robert Stein, *The French Sugar Business in the Eighteenth Century* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988); Robert Stein, *The French Slave Trade in the Eighteenth Century: An Old Regime Business* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1979); Jean-Michel Deveau, *La France au temps des négriers* (Paris: France-Empire, 1994); David Geggus, “The French Slave Trade: An Overview,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 58, no. 1 (2003): 119-38; Paul Cheney, *Revolutionary Commerce: Globalization and the French Monarchy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).

these islands, which placed France at the top of trade powers.²² In particular, Saint-Domingue became the world's first sugar producer, called "the Pearl of the Antilles," in the process consuming the lives of countless number of black slaves.

Paradoxically it was the very prosperity of colonial economy that caused the crisis at the end of the eighteenth century in Saint-Domingue. On the one hand, the thriving plantation economy caused fissures in the mercantile edifice (the *Exclusif*), and deepened the resentment of white planters who preferred their autonomy against the metropolitan control. On the other hand, the social crisis was graver. The flourishing economy increased the population's racial imbalance by the explosive influx of African slaves.²³ The plantocracy of whites based on the caste of color was being challenged by the rise of free people of color who grew both in number and in wealth, to which white elites responded by the refortification of racial barriers.²⁴ With all the three classes of the island—planters, free people of color, and slaves—resenting the old colonial system for different reasons, colonial officials warned the metropolitan government of an impending crisis.

²² The exports from the French Antilles in 1789 rose to nearly £9 million, compared to £5 million from those of the British West Indians. Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery*, 163.

²³ In Saint-Domingue on the eve of 1789, the white population of 54,000 was surrounded by 36,000 free-coloreds and 675,000 slaves, although the estimation varies according to sources. Blackburn, *Making of New World Slavery*, 440.

²⁴ About the pre-revolutionary history of free people of color, see John Garrigus, "Sons of the Same Father: Gender, Race, and Citizenship in Saint-Domingue, 1760-1792," in *Visions and Revisions of Eighteenth-Century France*, ed. Christine Adams et al. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997); John Garrigus, *Before Haiti: Race and Citizenship in French Saint-Domingue* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Stewart R. King, *Blue Coat or Powdered Wig: Free People of Color in Pre-Revolutionary Saint Domingue* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001).

In the metropole, French antislavery was born in the second half of the eighteenth-century. The Enlightenment raised issues regarding slave trade and slavery from multiple standpoints: the *philosophes*' anti-clerical and anti-monarchical stance against slavery, physiocrats' colonial reform plans, and the reading public's enthusiasm for the stories of suffering noble slaves.²⁵ In 1788 Brissot founded the first French antislavery association, *la Société des amis des noirs*. Yet this nascent antislavery was an elusive intellectual and literary trend among only the elites, who were usually content with just condemning the notorious Middle Passage or encouraging the good treatment of slaves.²⁶

²⁵ About the French Enlightenment and antislavery, see William B. Cohen, *The French Encounter with Africans, 1530-1880* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980); Roger Mercier, *L'Afrique noire dans la littérature française; les premières images, XVIIe-XVIIIe siècles* (Dakar: Publications de la section de langues et littératures, 1962); Srinivas Aravamudan, *Tropicopolitans: Colonialism and Agency, 1688-1804* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999); Edward Seeber, *Anti-slavery Opinion in France during the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1937); Michèle Duchet, *Anthropologie et histoire au siècle des lumières: Buffon, Voltaire, Rousseau, Helvétius, Diderot* (Paris: Maspero, 1971); Léon-François Hoffmann, *Le nègre romantique: personnage littéraire et obsession collective* (Paris: Payot, 1973); Louis Sala-Molins, *Dark Side of the Light: Slavery and the French Enlightenment*, trans. John Conteh-Morgan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006); Sankar Muthu, *Enlightenment Against Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003). Sentimental narratives of suffering slaves also obtained popularity. See *Oroonoko* translated from English (1745, 1779, 1788); Jean-François de Saint-Lambert's *Ziméo* (1769); and Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's *Paul et Virginie* (1788).

²⁶ About *la Société des amis des noirs*, see Daniel Resnick, "The Société des Amis des Noir and the Abolitionist Society," *French Historical Studies* 7. no.4 (1972): 558-569; Marcel Dorigny and Bernard Gainot, eds., *La société des amis des noirs 1788-1799: contribution à l'histoire de l'abolition de l'esclavage* (Paris: UNESCO, 1998); Marcel Dorigny, "The Abbé Grégoire and the Société des Amis des Noirs" in *Abbé Grégoire and His World*, ed. Jeremy Popkin (Boston: Kluwer, 2000); Marcel Dorigny, "Mirabeau and the Société des Amis des Noirs: Which Way to Abolish Slavery?" in *The Abolitions of Slavery: From Léger Félicité Sonthonax to Victor Schoelcher, 1793, 1794, 1848*, ed. Marcel Dorigny (New York: Berghahn Books, 2003). About the last book edited by Dorigny, the original version is Marcel Dorigny ed., *Les abolitions de l'esclavage: de L. F. Sonthonax à Schoelcher* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de Vincennes and Éditions UNESCO, 1995).

The French Revolution broke new ground in the colonial crisis by splitting the master classes and propagating the revolutionary credo of universal rights.²⁷ While it was the white planter group that took the initiative with their claim of representation in the National Assembly, the free-colored elites promptly advanced their demand of color equality with the help of the *Amis des noirs*. Most unpredictably, black slaves in Saint-Domingue rose in the general insurrection in 1791, which threw the island into civil war. The situation was worsened by the invasion of the British and Spanish forces. The revolutionary assemblies were bitterly divided on how to deal with colonial issues by their factional conflicts and the lobby of planters.

Their paralysis was unexpectedly put to an end when Léger-Félicité Sonthonax and Étienne Polverel, the civil commissioners sent to Saint-Domingue, declared the abolition of slavery in 1793. The decision was primarily a means for coaxing the slave army over to the republican side, against the white counterrevolutionaries and foreign invaders. The National Convention at the height of its egalitarian mood not only approved it but also declared general abolition throughout the French colonies. This was the decree of *Pluviôse* 16 Year II (February 4, 1794), one of the most radical moves of the Terror.

²⁷ About the general history of colonial problems in the Revolution, see Yves Bénot, *Le révolution française et la fin des colonies*; David Geggus, "Racial Equality, Slavery, and Colonial Secession during the Constituent Assembly," *American Historical Review* 94, no. 5 (December, 1989): 1290-1308; Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery*, 161-264; J. Saintoyant, *La colonisation française pendant la révolution française* (Paris : la Renaissance du Livre, 1930); Jean-Pierre Biondi, *16 Pluviôse An II: les colonies de la révolution* (Paris: Éditions Denoël, 1989); Jacques Thibau, *Le temps de Saint-Domingue: l'esclavage et la révolution française* (Paris: Jean-Claude Lattès, 1989); Jean-Daniel Piquet, *L'émancipation des noirs dans la révolution française: 1789-1795* (Paris: Karthala, 2002); Florence Gauthier, *Triomphe et mort du droit naturel en Révolution: 1789-1795-1802* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1992); Florence Gauthier, *Périssent les colonies plutôt qu'un principe!: contributions à l'histoire de l'abolition de l'esclavage, 1789-1804* (Paris: Société des études robespierristes, 2002); Dorigny, ed., *The Abolitions of Slavery*.

After the Thermidor reaction, the republican experiment on colonies continued during the Directory in spite of the return of colonial party. The Constitution of the Year III reaffirmed abolition and declared the colonies to be an integral part of the Republic.²⁸ In Saint-Domingue, Toussaint Louverture suppressed enemies and established himself as a *de facto* ruler of the island. It was the coup of Bonaparte that turned the tables against revolutionary innovation. In 1802 Napoleon sent the expeditionary forces to the Caribbean colonies with the mission of reestablishing slavery and securing the colonies.²⁹ The French army easily quashed the revolt of Guadeloupe, but news of re-enslavement inflamed Saint-Domingue.³⁰ After Louverture was deported to France, his successor, Jean-Jacque Dessalines, defeated the Napoleonic army, and after the evacuation of the French army and the massacres of remaining whites, he declared the independence of Haiti in 1804.

During the Bourbon Restoration, the guiding principle for colonial matters was to return to the prerevolutionary system based on sugar production and slavery, but it was not as easy as expected by the monarchy and planters. In the colonies, the return of the old system provoked widespread protests. After the Slave Trade Act in 1807, Britain pressed other colonial powers to ban the slave trade. Sandwiched between British pressures and a reinvigorated colonial lobby, the Bourbon kings acceded to the British demands only on the surface, allowing the French slave

²⁸ Bernard Gainot, "The Constitutionalization of General Freedom under the Directory" in *The Abolitions of Slavery*, 180-96.

²⁹ About the expedition, see Yves Bénot, *La démente coloniale sous Napoléon* (Paris: Découverte, 1992); Claude B. Auguste & Marcel B. Auguste, *L'expédition Leclerc 1801-1803* (Port-au-Prince: Imprimerie Henri Dechamps, 1985); and Philippe Girard, "Liberté, Egalité, Esclavage: French Revolutionary Ideals and the Failure of the Leclerc Expedition to Saint-Domingue," *French Colonial History* 6 (2005): 55-77.

³⁰ As regards to the history of revolutionary Guadeloupe, see Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens*.

trade to be restored. Meanwhile the French antislavery movement revived in spite of the hostile political atmosphere. *La Société de la morale chrétienne*, with its anti-slave-trade committee, was founded in 1821 by moderate elite liberals.³¹ Struggling to present antislavery as a decent liberal principle, the society clung strictly to legalistic, moralistic and gradualist approaches, which were stumbled by the combined forces of the monarchy and the colonial party.

The July Monarchy was more favorable to the antislavery cause than the Legitimist regime. The Orleanist monarchy drew abolitionists into the Cabinet, ended the clandestine slave trade, and conducted partial colonial reforms. Invigorated by this new political atmosphere and the British Slavery Abolition Act of 1833, French antislavery elites established *la Société française pour l'abolition de l'esclavage* in 1834, composed of the former members of the *Société de la morale chrétienne* and leading Orleanist liberals. The new society presented to the Parliament a variety of plans for gradual abolition, but they failed to obtain significant concessions from the intransigent colonial party and the royal government in favor of the *status quo* in colonies. The modified strategy of the planters worked well—while recognizing the cause of emancipation in principle, they continually delayed its implementation under the pretext of prerequisite conditions that were impossible to satisfy.

³¹ About French nineteenth-century antislavery association, see Lawrence C. Jennings, *French Anti-Slavery: the Movement for the Abolition of Slavery in France, 1802-1848* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Serge Daget, "A Model of the French Abolitionist Movement and Its Variations," in *Anti-Slavery, Religion, and Reform*, ed. Christine Bolt and Seymour Drescher (Folkestone, England: Dawson & Archon, 1980); Nelly Schmidt, *Abolitionnistes de l'esclavage et réformateurs des colonies: 1820-1851: analyse et documents* (Paris: Karthala, 2000); Paul Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000); Patricia Motylewski, *La Société française pour l'abolition de l'esclavage* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1998); Seymour Drescher, "Two Variants of Anti-Slavery," in *Anti-Slavery, Religion, and Reform*; Seymour Drescher, "British Way, French Way: Opinion Building and Revolution in the Second French Slave Emancipation," *The American Historical Review* 96, no.3 (1991): 709-734; Dorigny, ed., *The Abolitions of Slavery*.

As the mulatto elites from the French colonies became disenchanted with the recurring failures of moderate abolitionism, they organized around Cyrille Bissette and demanded immediate abolition earlier than their white comrades. From the mid-1840s, the initiative of the French abolitionist society was also handed to a more radical stream of abolitionism with republican and socialist affiliations, which opted for popular appeals and immediate abolition under the state tutelage. The problem of labor after emancipation intrigued a wide range of the oppositional left including socialist and utopist authors.³²

The February Revolution forced a revolutionary solution on the long delayed problem of slavery and abolition. Under the leadership of Schoelcher, the Provisional Government, facing the threat of slave uprisings in the colonies, promptly proclaimed the decree of general emancipation on April 27, 1848. Loyal to the revolutionary tradition, the Second Republic conferred political rights on the freed people. How this republican program of assimilation betrayed itself in the postemancipation era is another story.³³

Silence in Historiography: Revolutionary Legacies in French Abolitionism

³² See Lawrence Jennings, "French Slave Liberation and Socialism: Projects for 'Association' in Guadeloupe, 1845-1848," *Slavery and Abolition* 17 (1996): 93-111; Schmidt, *Abolitionnistes de l'esclavage*, 267-81, 895-935; Élodie Le Garrec, "Abolitionisme et réforme sociale: les figures de l'esclave et du pauvre laborieux en France, 1814-1840," in *Abolir l'esclavage*.

³³ See Oruno Lara, *La liberté assassinée: Guadeloupe, Guyanne, Martinique et la Réunion en 1848-1856* (Paris: l'Harmattan, 2005); Vergès, *Monsters and Revolutionaries*; Nelly Schmidt, *La France a-t-elle aboli l'esclavage?: Guadeloupe-Martinique-Guyane, 1830-1935* (Paris: Perrin, 2009).

Compared to the well-examined field of British abolitionism, French abolitionism is still an underdeveloped subject. In France the unsatisfactory achievements of French abolitionism have induced French historiography to accentuate the moment of emancipation instead of the less-than-honorable period before 1848. A large corpus of works on Schoelcher have dominated the entire field.³⁴ In other cases the studies of French abolitionism have focused mainly on a series of antislavery societies, in their often vindictory efforts for French humanitarianism.

The comparative studies of abolitionism led by Anglo-American scholars have given French antislavery movement more systematic analysis. In delineating a global map of antislavery struggles, the studies of abolitionism highlighted the French contributions to the overthrow of transatlantic slavery and, in particular, the Enlightenment ideas and the revolutionary episodes, while investigating the limits of the French antislavery movement. In the major works on nineteenth-century French abolitionism, however, the influences of the revolutionary legacies, especially those of the Haitian Revolution, are usually undervalued or trivialized.³⁵ Here I inquire into why existing historiography has underrated them and how reconstructing revolutionary legacies can help us more fully understand the development of French abolitionism.

First, the prior historiography of French nineteenth-century abolitionism usually cast the legacies of the French Revolution in a negative light, mainly because it focused on explaining

³⁴ About the studies of Schoelcher, among many, see Anne Girollet, *Victor Schœlcher, abolitionniste et républicain: approche juridique et politique de l'œuvre d'un fondateur de la République* (Paris: CTHS, 2001); Nelly Schmidt, *Victor Schœlcher et l'abolition de l'esclavage* (Paris: Fayard, 1994); Aimé Césaire, *Victor Schoelcher et l'abolition de l'esclavage: suivi de trois discours* (Lectoure: Editions le Capucin, 2004).

³⁵ For example, see Jennings, *French Anti-Slavery*; Drescher, "Two Variants of Anti-Slavery"; and Drescher, "British Way, French Way."

how French abolitionism, in contrast to British abolitionism, was a failure as a social movement. When the unrivaled success of British abolitionism was supposed to be derived from the initiative of civil society and popular mobilization that channeled into the parliamentary process of abolishing slavery, the main question was why French abolitionism failed to emulate the British model of success as a social movement.³⁶ Lawrence Jennings's *French Anti-slavery*, marked by excellent archival research and detailed narrative, offers a frustrating picture of the paralysis of nineteenth-century French abolitionism. Largely inspired and pressed by successful British abolitionism, French abolitionism failed to follow the British model because it was caught among the reluctant government, a powerful colonial lobby, and the indifferent French populace. French abolitionists are depicted as sincere but too moderate reformers, whose elitism and gradualism delayed the course of abolition in France.

In this framework, revolutionary legacies and the politically charged circumstance of postrevolutionary France appear primarily as negative factors leading antislavery astray from its proper course or as an obstacle to British-style social mobilization.³⁷ The “revolutionary excesses” fueled the dread for the revolutionary mob and obstructed popular mobilization. The two constitutional monarchies, which were “more frightened by the revolutionary tradition than stimulated by it”³⁸, did not offer a nurturing environment for cultivating British-style social mobilization.

³⁶ See the differentiation between a British model and a Continental model in Drescher, “British Way, French Way.”

³⁷ As another example, see João Pedro Marques, “Four Examples of New Equations,” in Drescher, ed., *Who Abolished Slavery*, 38.

³⁸ Jennings, *French Anti-slavery*, 74.

Second, the prior historiography has dealt with the impact of the Haitian Revolution on metropolitan antislavery mostly in terms of the terror of slave rebellions, as the Haitian Revolution is regarded as the acme of slave revolts in the New World. The interplay between abolitionism and slave rebellion has been a subject of debate in the studies of abolitionism. Whereas countermemories and transatlantic studies have accentuated the role of slave resistance in the emancipation process, the more traditional school of metropolitan abolitionism is skeptical of the impact of slave revolts. The latter suggests that upholding the self-liberation ethos of slaves might be politically correct but empirically unfounded. As this approach has focused on the judiciary/parliamentary process of legalizing abolition, it tends to consider the success or failure of abolition a matter of the inner dynamics of the metropole and underestimate the role of the colonial events and actors, because the impact of the latter on the metropolitan decision-making is relatively difficult to measure.

Such a tendency led to the dismissal of the legacies of the Haitian Revolution in studying French abolitionism. Jennings contends, “there is little evidence that this late eighteenth-century slave revolt [Haitian Revolution] directly influenced French government policy in the latter part of the 1830s or the 1840s prior to 1848.”³⁹ Instead he takes up pressures from Britain, especially the British abolition of slavery in 1833, as a central stimulant of nineteenth-century French abolitionism. In a similar vein Seymour Drescher argues that Saint-Domingue/Haiti was an unspeakable issue in postrevolutionary France with little effect on the process of abolition.⁴⁰ In

³⁹ Jennings, *French Anti-slavery*, 121-22.

⁴⁰ Drescher, *Abolition*, 176-80. Also see Drescher, “Limit of Example,” in *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World*, 10-14.

general he considers that the slave revolts retarded or denigrated the abolitionists' agenda for making abolitionist laws in the metropole.⁴¹

However, a different picture emerges when we look into the recent French studies that excavate a wider discursive universe around the abolition of slavery beyond the source track of metropolitan policy-making. In the research of antislavery and reformist discourses methodically collected by Nelly Schmidt, the reference to the Haitian Revolution/Haiti looms quite large. In the formation of French discourse on slavery and abolition, Schmidt highlights the “heritages of the precedent century—and notably of the revolutionary period—which it [the nineteenth century] tirelessly utilized.”⁴² Schmidt insists that there were two determinants of colonial social tensions in the first half of the nineteenth century—the Saint-Domingue Revolution and the British abolition of slavery.⁴³ The opinion-building of French abolitionism also took shape between these two different pressures.

In the introduction to Myriam Cottias's collection of sources on colonial slavery, she strongly advocates the pivotal role of the references of Saint-Domingue/Haiti in nineteenth-century French abolitionism. According to her, “Till 1848, Saint-Domingue is an omnipresent reference in the abolitionist texts.”⁴⁴ The Haitian Revolution was represented in diverse manners, such as “experimental laboratory of colonial risk,” “nostalgia of grandeur,” and “fear of

⁴¹ Drescher, “Civilizing Insurgency,” in *Who Abolished Slavery?*.

⁴² Schmidt, *Abolitionnistes de l'esclavage*, 389.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 390.

⁴⁴ Myriam Cottias, *D'une abolition à l'autre: anthologie raisonnée de textes consacrés à la seconde abolition de l'esclavage dans les colonies françaises* (Marseille: Agone Editeur, 1998), 7. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from French are author's own.

violence.” It was only after the second abolition in 1848 that the memories of the first abolition retreated from the public discourses on colonies. Before the 1848 abolition finally settled the matter of slavery, the memory of Saint-Domingue/Haiti was impossible to be forgotten.⁴⁵

In short, the prior historiography of French abolitionism has tended to reduce both the French and Haitian revolutionary legacies to a negative reminder of revolutionary violence that derailed French abolitionism from a proper course of social mobilization. It led to the dismissal of revolutionary impacts in the making of French abolitionism. My thesis argues that such an approach loses sight of the wider importance of revolutionary legacies beyond what Drescher calls the “fear factor.”⁴⁶ I propose that revolutionary legacies should be analyzed as a crucial politico-discursive context that formed the French antislavery debate. It is true that the influence and example of the British antislavery movement were a decisive stimulus in the recovery of French antislavery after 1814. Still, it was impossible for French antislavery supporters to follow the example of Britain consistently and easily, even without the Anglophobia prevalent in France. The joint revolutions of France and Saint-Domingue moved French antislavery discourses and practices beyond the confines of British philanthropism, and introduced heterogeneous, even conflicting, elements into the formation of French abolitionism, forcing it to restart on a different ground. What follows explains how the revolutionary legacies molded French postrevolutionary abolitionism in three ways.

First, the revolutionary events enfeebled the moral prestige of antislavery in France that British abolitionism openly entertained. In postrevolutionary France, where the disaster of Saint-

⁴⁵ Ibid., 8.

⁴⁶ Drescher, “Civilizing Insurgency,” in *Who Abolished Slavery?*, 123.

Domingue was still fresh in public memory, philanthropy was considered at best a naive misjudgment of the colonial situation and at worst a dangerous revival of Jacobinism for disrupting colonies. The organized French antislavery movement in the form of the *Amis des noirs* was identified as the main culprit of colonial upheaval. In the aftermath of the Revolutions antislavery opinions were stigmatized as radical, revolutionary, and unpatriotic. Consequently, in contrast to Britain where abolitionism held appeal beyond party divisions (“Wilberforcean aura of non-partisanship”⁴⁷), the issues of the slave trade and slavery were greatly politicized in postrevolutionary France, becoming a particularly partisan issue between the conflicting political parties. In this politically charged situation, it was implausible for civil initiatives to lead an antislavery crusade. Fighting revolutionary stigma and re-legitimizing abolitionism would be a main task of nineteenth-century French abolitionism.

Second, the revolutionary legacies diverted French antislavery from the tradition of humanitarianism, which had been nurtured by Enlightenment philosophy and promoted by the British antislavery movement. This surge of philanthropism in the late eighteenth-century was grounded in sympathy and pity for suffering victims, which Lynn Hunt and others describe as the culture of sensibility.⁴⁸ It was on this framework that the first *Amis des noirs* was formed in 1788. The combined revolutions in France and Saint-Domingue, however, imposed another tradition on French antislavery discourses and practices: the language of “rights” and general liberty proclaimed by the state.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France*, 113.

⁴⁸ Lynn Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights: A History* (New York: Norton, 2007).

⁴⁹ Blackburn says that the French and Haitian Revolutions introduced a new fear to slave-owning class, “a fear of emancipation as a state policy.” Blackburn, *The American Crucible*, 249.

Antislavery is today regarded as belonging to the history of humanitarianism or human rights. The two terms are often thought to be interchangeable. But they developed different traditions in diverging historical contexts, albeit with substantial overlap.⁵⁰ On the one hand, humanitarianism refers to philanthropism based on the human faculty for empathy and sympathy for others' suffering. It was mostly depoliticized, or at least deemed politically neutral. On the other hand, the idea of human rights was derived from the traditions of natural rights and natural laws and was crystallized during the American and French Revolutions. The French Revolution critically politicized the rights of man by associating them with a particular kind of polity, a modern nation-state. According to Anthony Pagden the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, departing from the earlier thinking of natural rights, found the source of equal rights in the inclusion to a sovereign community: "They [basic rights] derive from the status of their holders as citizens, and all are held, and can only have any meaning, within the context not merely of civil society but of a society constituted as a nation."⁵¹

All the more complicating was the fact that once the metropolitan revolutionaries presented the Declaration of the Rights, the *gens de couleur libres* and slaves of French colonies forcibly expanded its meaning and redefined emancipation in terms of natural rights and the rights of French citizens. In the words of Frederick Cooper, "The nation-state was being transcended as it was being born; the universe to which the rights of man applied was extended

⁵⁰ See Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010); Samuel Moyn, "On the Genealogy of Morals" *The Nation*, April 16, 2007.

⁵¹ Anthony Pagden, "Human Rights, Natural Rights, and Europe's Imperial Legacy," *Political Theory* 31, no. 2 (April 2003): 189.

even as those rights were being specified...”⁵² On top of this the decree of abolition in 1794 left behind an unmatched example in European history—a major European power proclaiming the abolition of slavery without any condition or compensation and offering (at least technically) citizenship to all freed men regardless of color. Robin Blackburn calls this phenomenon “revolutionary emancipationism”—the overall abolition of slavery achieved by the combination of metropolitan revolution and colonial insurgency.⁵³

This radical precedent became a potent reference in the nineteenth-century French debate on slavery. The mode of the first abolition materialized in every discussion about colonial slavery both for and against emancipation. The issues of abolition were not contained within the range of colonial administration, but extended into the discussion on the scope of French citizenship, and the role and nature of the French state in the emancipation project. Abolition would require answers to the questions regarding the status of ex-slaves and free-colored people in the postemancipation regime. Would they be united into the new national community? If so, under what conditions?

Third, the Haitian Revolution not only transformed the foundations of abolitionism but also redefined its beneficiary—black slaves. In British-style humanitarianism, the subject of colonial reforms and emancipation was a suffering slave, as seen in the famous abolitionist icon of a kneeling slave pleading for grace from metropolitan whites.⁵⁴ The Haitian Revolution defied

⁵² Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 99.

⁵³ Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery*, 213. Christopher Schmidt-Nowara applies this model to the emancipation in the Spanish Empire, see Christopher Schmidt-Nowara, *Empire and Antislavery: Spain, Cuba, and Puerto Rico* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1999), 157-60.

⁵⁴ Most famously, the antislavery tokens describing a kneeling slave with the caption of “Am I not a

this formula and presented to the world a wholly new kind of political subject—slaves who revolted on a national scale, expelled their masters, and seceded from the metropole in favor of an independent nation. Haiti was not only the first postemancipation society but also the first independent nation in the Americas ruled by the ex-slaves and people of color. How did such a striking example influence antislavery debate in France? True to their belief in the French Revolution, could French antislavery liberals and republicans allow themselves to expand their endorsement of the rights of the oppressed to the bloody struggles of black slaves for freedom and the proud new rulers of this black republic?

All of these conditions imposed new problems and missions on French abolitionism. In taking British abolitionism as a model, French antislavery supporters after 1814 were, however, grasping for ways to deal with the heterogeneous legacies—the Enlightenment humanitarianism, revolutionary abolitionism based on equal rights, and the independence of Haiti. My thesis aims to indicate the ways in which the competing parties of the French antislavery debate dealt with these heterogeneous legacies and challenges while legitimizing their own visions for rebuilding French colonies.

The French-Haitian moment of the first emancipation and its repercussions has recently attracted much attention in academia, reflecting the increasing interest in the studies of the Haitian Revolution and Caribbean revolutionary politics.⁵⁵ In transatlantic studies, the Haitian

Man and a Brother?" were widely distributed in Britain as well as in the USA. It was also printed in French antislavery publications. See Lynn Festa, *Sentimental Figures of Empire in Eighteenth-century Britain and France* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006).

⁵⁵ For example, David Brion Davis' new narrative of slavery and abolition, *Inhuman Bondage* (2006), spares a whole chapter to the Franco-Haitian Revolution. Blackburn's *The American Crucible* (2011) spotlights it as a pivotal moment and criticizes other historians' works for downplaying the legacies of the Haitian Revolution.

Revolution has been spotlighted not as simply a single event, but as a focal point of a longer crisis of slavery societies in the Americas. By accumulating multidisciplinary research, we begin to see the repercussions of the Haitian Revolution emerge on multiple levels and on a transatlantic scale. One place rather neglected in charting the impact of the Haitian Revolution was the ex-metropole, France. Even in the burgeoning field of Haitian Revolution studies, the impact of the Haitian Revolution on French postrevolutionary abolitionism has often been suggested as a desirable subject or a promising agenda, but scarcely turned into a full-scale historical research.⁵⁶

In France, with the guidance of Marcel Dorigny, Yves Bénot and others, the international conferences and anthologies show that French academia has started to grasp the dynamic of the French and Haitian Revolutions and its postrevolutionary repercussions. The bicentennial of the 1804 Haitian Revolution signaled a heightened interest in complicated Franco-Haitian relationships after 1804.⁵⁷ Previously-mentioned works of Schmidt and Cottias are good

⁵⁶ See the essays of David Geggus, “New Approaches and Old,” and “Underexploited Sources,” in *Haitian Revolutionary Studies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 33-54. For a more updated essay, see David Geggus, “Slavery and Emancipation in the French Caribbean: Recent Scholarship” in *Beyond Fragmentation: Perspectives on Caribbean History*, ed. Juanita De Barros, Audra Diptee, David V. Trotman (Princeton, NJ: M. Wiener Publishers, 2006).

⁵⁷ Marcel Dorigny, ed., *Esclavage, résistance et abolitions* (Paris: CTHS, 1999); Marcel Dorigny, ed., *Les abolitions de L'esclavage*; Yves Bénot, ed., *Révolution aux colonies*, special number of *Annales historiques de la révolution française* 293-294 (1993); Marcel Dorigny and Jean Metellus, eds., *De l'esclavage aux abolitions: XVIIe-XXe siècle* (Paris: Éditions Cercle d'art, 1998); Yves Bénot et Marcel Dorigny, eds., *Grégoire et la cause des Noirs (1789-1831): combats et projets* (Paris: Société française d'histoire d'outre-mer, 2000); Marcel Dorigny, ed., *Léger-Félicité Sonthonax: la première abolition de l'esclavage* (Saint-Denis: Société française d'histoire d'outre-mer; Paris: Association pour l'étude de la colonisation européenne, 1997); Marcel Dorigny, ed., *Révolution française, colonisation, esclavages, libérations nationales* (Paris : L'Harmattan, 1990); Yves Bénot and Marcel Dorigny eds., *Rétablissement de l'esclavage dans les colonies françaises* (Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose, 2003); Marcel Dorigny ed., *Haïti, première république noire* (Paris: Société française d'histoire d'outre-mer, 2004); Yves Bénot, *Les lumières, l'esclavage, la colonisation* (Paris: Découverte, 2005); Comité 89 en 93, *Esclavage,*

examples of the new effort to register the impact of the Haitian Revolution on French antislavery. Unfortunately both limit themselves to merely collecting sources and suggesting the problematic. My dissertation tries to expand their suggested agenda by incorporating the legacies of the French and Haitian Revolutions into the analysis of French antislavery debate in the nineteenth-century.

Focusing on the impact of revolutionary legacies gives us two advantages for a fuller understanding of French abolitionism. First, it brings us directly to the heart of nineteenth-century French politics—that is, the question of how to understand the French Revolution. The contestation over “the bitterly divisive living memories of the revolutionary era”⁵⁸ has developed into an important theme in the studies of French history. It shows that the interpretation of the French Revolution was one of the most vital components of nineteenth-century French politics. For the conflicting parties, defining the nature of the Revolution amounted to claiming their political identity and their vision for the future of France. The Restoration marked the start of a battle between two opposed memories. On one side, the conservatives, royalists and clerics condemned the revolutionary crimes and the Jacobin conspiracy, urging a return to the state

colonisation, libérations nationales de 1789 à nos jours: colloque (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1990); Gérard Barthélemy and Christian Girault, eds., *La république haïtienne: état des lieux et perspectives* (Paris: Karthala, 1993); Laënnec Hurbon, ed., *L'Insurrection des esclaves de Saint-Domingue: 22-23 août 1791* (Paris: Karthala, 2000); Marie-Christine Rochmann, ed., *Esclavage et abolitions: mémoires et systèmes de représentation* (Paris: Kathala, 2000).

⁵⁸ Alan B. Spitzer, “Malicious Memories: Restoration Politics and a Prosopography of Turncoats,” *French Historical Studies* 24, no.1 (2001), 38. About the Restoration politics of memory, see Stanley Mellon, *The Political Uses of History* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1958); Sheryl Kroen, *Politics and Theater: Crisis of Legitimacy in Restoration France, 1815-1830* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Robert Alexander, *Re-writing Revolutionary Tradition: Liberal Opposition and the Fall of the Bourbon Monarchy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Alan Spitzer, “The Ambiguous Heritage of the French Restoration,” in *The American and European Revolutions, 1776-1848*, ed. J. Pelenski (Iowa City: Univ. of Iowa Press, 1980).

before 1789. On the other side, liberals struggled to defend the achievements of the French Revolution and preserve the civil and political liberty it endorsed.⁵⁹

This confrontation dominated the problem of how to understand the Haitian Revolution—in the nineteenth century, the French understood the colonial revolution through the lens of the Great Revolution, regardless of their political position. For them, the colonial revolution was first and foremost the child (though unexpected and unwelcome) of the metropolitan revolution. Thus my dissertation demonstrates that the confrontation between different memories of the French Revolution formed a critical vector in how to interpret the meanings of the Haitian Revolution and Haiti. It thus seeks to excavate the ways in which the French domestic politics was channeled into antislavery and colonial issues, and also vice versa.

The second advantage is that we can conceive a more dynamic role of the colonies in the formation of French abolitionism, in particular by reconstructing the repercussions of colonial events and slave resistance. As mentioned above, prior historiography of abolitionism was often reluctant to recognize the role of slave resistance in the making of abolition.⁶⁰ As shown in the debate over “Who Abolished Slavery,” historians of metropolitan abolitionism suggest that the pendulum of slavery and abolitionism studies has gone too far in praising slave resistances and revolts as the makers of their own freedom.⁶¹ In their attempts at rectification, however, they

⁵⁹ Alexander, *Re-writing Revolutionary Tradition*, 1-29.

⁶⁰ Jennings, *French Anti-slavery*, 121; Drescher, “The Limits of Example,” in *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World*, 10-14; Drescher, “Civilizing Insurgency”, in *Who Abolished Slavery?*, 120-132.

⁶¹ See the discussions of Marques and Drescher in *Who Abolished Slavery?*.

tend to come back to the same place from which they had started (“the metropole abolished slavery”), refortifying metropole-centered approaches.

This position reaffirms the dichotomized venues of abolition between metropolitan abolitionists and colonial slaves.⁶² Blackburn criticizes the academic world’s two ready-made and compartmentalized approaches to emancipation. One attributes emancipation to organized abolitionism in the metropole, while the other romanticizes the slave rebellions and resistances as a path toward liberation.⁶³ However, as Blackburn’s own works show, recent studies of emancipation prove that the complexity of the process toward emancipation requires multipronged frameworks of explanation and elaborate narratives combining the interactions of various events and actors in a transatlantic scope.

In his review of Jennings’s *French Anti-slavery*, Laurent Dubois suggests a similar point. He says that Jennings’s metropole (Europe)-oriented approach did not fully recognize the recent achievements in Atlantic history that have illuminated the colonial agency.⁶⁴ Although it is true that the slave resistances in the French Caribbean did not amount to the elimination of the institution of slavery, this does not mean that we can dismiss this factor in the manifold—and far from being linear—steps along the road to emancipation. A new strategy is required to unearth the influences of the subaltern resistances that are instilled into the discussions of abolition. As a

⁶² It is the same in terms of memory practices. Those from the former slave societies define their past of slavery and liberation in terms of unbeatable and unrelenting slave resistance, whereas the metropole is preoccupied with commemorating the legal and parliamentary process of abolition, punctuated with philanthropic activism. See Forsdick, “Foreword” in *Postcolonial Slavery*, xii.

⁶³ Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery*, 531.

⁶⁴ Laurent Dubois, “The Road to 1848: Interpreting French Anti-Slavery,” *Slavery and Abolition* 22, no.3 (December, 2001): 150-57.

way of illustrating this suggestion, Dubois presents a plausible story: Schoelcher's resolute push for immediate abolition in 1848 could be gleaned from the convergence between European and Caribbean histories. Dubois says, "It was, I would argue, his knowledge of the current situation in the French Caribbean, as well as the region's history, that enabled him to understand that slaves would make a connection between the Republic and emancipation—a connection rooted in the history of the 1790s—and that deferring abolition in this context was a danger."⁶⁵

Gelien Matthews's recent book about British abolitionism more closely illuminates this often-neglected link, that is, the "discursive" impact of slave revolt on metropolitan abolitionism.⁶⁶ Her thesis is that if the antislavery movement from the metropole sharpened the tool of resistance for colonial slaves, then the opposite is also true: the slave rebellions in the colonies contributed to the revamping of the antislavery campaign in Britain. Matthews's goes against the conventional observation that the slave revolts impeded the abolitionist agenda in the metropole and insists that we should instead look beyond immediate responses to colonial violence. According to Matthews, the slave revolts pushed British abolitionists to the left. The abolitionist leaders slowly changed their position from defending themselves against the charge that abolitionists instigated the colonial revolts to endorsing the rebellions as a natural human reaction to oppression. As a result, British abolitionism abandoned its prior gradualist position and turned toward immediate emancipation. She says, "The continuous probing for a solid antislavery defense moved the abolitionist discourse on to its next stage. What began as a

⁶⁵ Ibid., 156-57.

⁶⁶ Gelien Matthews, *Caribbean Slave Revolts and the British Abolitionist Movement* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006).

discourse to refute proslavery accusations for stirring slave rebellion soon produced an abolitionist articulation of the nature of slave rebellions.”⁶⁷

In bringing Matthews’s approach to France, my project places the discursive impact of the first abolition achieved by the French and Haitian Revolutions at the center of French antislavery discourse. It delves into how the manners in which people discussed revolutionary abolitionism and Haiti affected the formation of French abolitionism in the nineteenth century. More importantly, it was not just the French abolitionists and their proslavery enemies who participated in this discursive contest—the free people of color from French colonies and Haitians promoted their own competing agendas by appropriating the revolutionary legacies. My thesis attempts to provide a framework to reveal how colonial events and colonial people penetrated the metropolitan debate on slavery as both visible and invisible discussants, demonstrating the necessity of a transatlantic perspective to the history of French abolitionism.

Silence in History: “Silencing the Haitian Revolution”

Silence is not limited to historiography. In Trouillot’s thesis of “Silencing the Haitian Revolution,” he argues that the Haitian Revolution, even at the moment when it was happening, was being silenced. His main framework for explaining this limit or failure in acknowledging the colonial revolution is “the unthinkable,” which means “that which one cannot conceive within the range of possible alternatives, that which perverts all answers because it defies the terms

⁶⁷ Matthews, *Caribbean Slave Revolts and the British Abolitionist Movement*, 57.

under which the questions were phrased.”⁶⁸ The Haitian Revolution defied the very worldview or the episteme of late eighteenth-century Europe—the contemporary public could neither fathom what was happening nor find any framework to make sense of the chain of events in the Haitian Revolution. The failure of facts and narrative set the ground for the procedures of silencing the colonial revolution that followed and made it a “non-event.” This thesis has been so influential that, in the words of Jeremy Popkin, “it has become almost a cliché to emphasize this ‘silencing’ of the Haitian Revolution.”⁶⁹

I mentioned before the necessity of distinguishing the present silence from the past silence—more exactly, “silencing”—in Trouillot’s thesis. In approaching the past silence as a historical process, we now need to clarify the nature of this “silence” in the wake of the revolutionary turmoil. For this, there are two purposes for which I wrestle with the “unthinkable” that Trouillot indicates as a major operating mode of “silencing.” First, as the “silencing” process has been often conflated with the “unthinkable” thesis, I suggest that we should elucidate the multiplicity of strategies for “silencing.” Though Trouillot proposed a series of “silencing” processes, the “silencing” thesis was more often than not appropriated to mean that the Haitian Revolution was silenced because it was unrepresentable (“unthinkable”). My thesis focuses on excavating a variety of strategies and practices for making an effect of “silencing” rather than reducing the whole dynamics into the unintelligibility of a slave revolution. Second, the “unthinkable” thesis assumes the metropolitans’ failure to acknowledge the Haitian Revolution was a predetermined matter on the level of a racist/racial episteme. My thesis intends to

⁶⁸ Trouillot borrows this concept from Pierre Bourdieu. Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 82.

⁶⁹ Popkin, *Facing Racial Revolution*, 2.

challenge this assumption of a homogeneous ontological barrier by illuminating the instances of recognition and the disparity among various groups' understanding of the Haitian Revolution. My suggestion is that the "silencing" of the Haitian Revolution was not so much derived from a lack of recognition by a certain ontological threshold, but rather from a failure of alternative frameworks in the political process.⁷⁰

In fact, "silence" is not merely Trouillot's term. It was also the term used by the postrevolutionary French parties concerning the colonial revolution. When looking more closely at the situation just after the Revolution, we can understand more clearly the nature of "silence" in postrevolutionary France. In spite of the most conventional definition of "silence"—the absence of discourse—the situation was rather complicated.

When the Bourbon monarchy returned to power in 1814, it had to secure the French colonies whose order had been disrupted by the war and Revolution.⁷¹ After the loss of Saint-Domingue, France still had Martinique and Guadeloupe as major sugar producers, by which they hoped to revive the French sugar empire. Yet the situation in the colonies seemed to be very precarious, as revolutionary turmoil lingered and the reimposition of the old system provoked widespread discontent and heightened social tension. Moreover, Haiti, the newborn nation of freed slaves, now existed in the midst of slavery colonies and was simultaneously a source of hope and a threat. The colonial authorities responded to this threat (both real and imagined) by

⁷⁰ Sybille Fischer, "Unthinkable History?: the Haitian Revolution, Historiography, and Modernity in the Periphery," in *A Companion to African-American Studies*, ed. Lewis R. Gordon and Jane Anna Gordon (Malden, MA & Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 366.

⁷¹ After the French Revolution, France had Martinique and Guadeloupe and other tiny islands in the Caribbean; Senegal and Guiana in Africa; and Bourbon in the Indian Ocean. Of these, Martinique, Guadeloupe, Bourbon and Guiana were the four main slavery colonies. Concerning the overall situation of French colonies after the Napoleonic War, see Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery*, 475-79.

enforcing strict censorship on any remark concerning the revolutionary past and Haiti, and enhancing supervision over the *gens de couleur libres* and slaves. They wanted to cast a sanitary cordon around both the news and people from Haiti.

In the metropole it was usually the colonial party that demanded its alleged “silence” on the subject of the Haitian Revolution. Their demand was not a result of “trauma” or a subconscious phobia, but rather came from a clear political rationale. According to the colonial party, a principal lesson of Saint-Domingue was that a discussion in the metropole about liberty and emancipation could cultivate a blind hope in colonies, producing unexpected results. They argued that merely speaking of such a dangerous subject in Paris might provoke another rebellion in the colonies. After the French and Haitian Revolutions, the counterrevolutionaries feared that the power of language would incite the servile population.⁷² However, those colonial spokesmen never hesitated to bring up the issue of the Haitian Revolution and Haiti when they protested against the suggestion of colonial reforms. Whenever the gradual abolition of slavery or mitigation of color discrimination was suggested, the two Chambers rang with the cry of “Remember Saint-Domingue!” and “Look at Haiti!” from the right wing. Haiti was supposedly a taboo subject, but the references to the Haitian Revolution and Haiti also proved a major asset in proslavery rhetoric to prevent colonial reforms.

Challenging this contradictory mode of “silence,” French liberals tried to redefine the references of Saint-Domingue/Haiti for the benefit of antislavery cause, arguing that the Haitian Revolution meant something other than the terror and fears of colonial violence. They urged that

⁷² About conservatives’ apprehension about the power of words to “kill,” proved by the Terror and the Haitian Revolution, see Katherine M. Bonin, “Signs of Origin: Victor Hugo’s *Bug-Jargal*,” *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* 36, no. 3-4 (2008): 194-95.

they should “break the silence” over the Haitian Revolution and Haiti, because the latter could teach France a valuable lesson about how to properly run the colonies.

Thus, there were at least three different approaches to “silence” at the time: the colonial authorities’ sheer repression of discourse on the dangerous subject, procolonial conservatives’ selective usage of the subject as a break against abolitionism, and French liberals’ intervention for challenging the “silence” dictated by colonial party. In the metropole, this confrontation between conflicting parties was *generating* discourses about the Haiti Revolution, not repressing them. Even blatant repression by colonial authorities could not guarantee silence on the matter; rather, it induced the colonial people to devise other routes and venues to address the issue.

This “silence” is closer to what Michel Foucault elucidates in *The History of Sexuality*. Inquiring into the alleged repression of sex during the Victorian era, Foucault criticizes the viewpoint to define “silence” in terms of repression, absence, and deficiency as the “repressive hypothesis.”⁷³ As Foucault articulates, repressions, denials, and silences do not so much limit discourses as propagate them.⁷⁴ He proposes that we should disengage our analysis from “scarcity” or “rarefaction” of speech and “search instead for instances of discursive production (which also administer silences, to be sure), of the production of power (which sometimes have the function of prohibiting), of the propagation of knowledge (which often cause mistaken beliefs or systematic misconceptions to circulate)...”⁷⁵ About silence, Foucault says, “Silence itself—the things one declines to say, or is forbidden to name, the discretion that is required

⁷³ Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, vol. 1 (New York: Vintage, 1990), 17-50.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

between different speakers—is less the absolute limit of discourse, the other side from which it is separated by a strict boundary, than an element that functions alongside the things said, with them and in relation to them within over-all strategies.”⁷⁶

Another insight Foucault provides is that the thesis of “silence” itself might hinder our full grasp of the contemporaries’ responses to the colonial event. Criticizing the repressive hypothesis on the Victorian taboo of sexuality, Foucault discerns a “mutually reinforcing” process between the repression thesis and the supposedly liberating criticism of repression: the criticism of repression reproduces and reinforces the history of repression itself. The thesis disclosing the two-centuries-old silence on sexuality (in assumption) is on the one hand critical and revealing, but on the other hand it is prone to make a self-congratulatory language praising our now enlightened perspective.⁷⁷

What Foucault calls “the grandiloquence of a discourse purporting to reveal the truth”⁷⁸ is often shown in today’s criticism of the “silence” on the Haitian Revolution. Those criticisms too easily assume that the people of nineteenth century were unable to understand the importance of black liberation, presumably blocked by some racist episteme—“unthinkable.” However, when looking into the historical documents we can see that the responses to the Haitian Revolution were extremely varied. Expecting a full-blown discourse on black agency from nineteenth-century French elites is surely an anachronism. However, it is not so difficult to find individual discourses that recognize the radical historical stakes of the colonial revolution. As shown in the

⁷⁶ Ibid., 27.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 8.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 8-9.

second chapter, some of the Restoration liberals praised the Haitian Revolution as an anticolonial and antiracist revolution. Yet it is also true that the potentials of such discourse were curtailed and marginalized in the course of antislavery debate. Thus I suggest that we need to excavate “a regime of discourses” or overall strategies that canceled the effect of those observations, without underestimating the diversity of discourses. As Foucault says, “There is not one but many silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeates discourses.”⁷⁹

Sibylle Fischer provides a useful concept with which to address the points that the “unthinkable” thesis overlooks. In her Foucauldian criticism of Trouillot, Fischer opts for “disavowal” or “denial,” instead of “unthinkable,” as a framework to excavate the discursive production of “silence” around the Haitian Revolution. Fischer cautions against the possibility that such a transcendent concept of *episteme* could prevent us from perceiving a variety of practices of silencing. Denial is “productive in that it brings forth further stories, screens, and fantasies that hide from view what must not be seen.”⁸⁰ Together they form the strategies designed to evade a disturbing reality and make an unmanageable story manageable. I do not disagree with Trouillot that the Haitian Revolution seriously challenged the normal order of things of the time. Yet such a challenge also provoked contemporaries to try to accommodate its meanings, especially in the Age of Revolution in which political and social concepts and ideas were susceptible to changes and contestations.

Another merit of “disavowal” is that it can illuminate the diversity of forms of denial or the diversity of powers acting on silencing process. The “unthinkable” thesis misses the

⁷⁹ Ibid., 27.

⁸⁰ Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, 37-38.

multiplicity of motives and reasons behind the discourses on the Haitian Revolution and Haiti (or a lack thereof), by reducing different politics to one epistemological cause. As Fischer says, “There is no need to assume that all those who contributed to the ‘silencing the Haitian Revolution’ did so for exactly the same reason; nor that all forms of silencing have the same structure.”⁸¹ I agree with Fischer’s view that if other frameworks to recognize the Haitian Revolution eventually failed, then the reason was political rather than epistemological.⁸² Therefore if hegemonic discourse managed to “silence” challenging stories and voices, we should analyze “the gaps and silences in hegemonic concepts of modernity” left by the contestation in between.⁸³

By bringing Fisher’s approach to the metropole, my thesis strives to uncover the “disavowed” impacts of the Haitian Revolution on French abolitionism. It inquires into how the French antislavery debate was formed by its struggle to accommodate the political and discursive challenges posed by the Haitian Revolution and the presence of Haiti, producing both acknowledgment and denial in the overall process of making “silence.”

By doing so, my thesis seeks to overcome the limits of earlier historiography that treat the legacies of the Haitian Revolution only as a source of terrors and traumas. In most cases, the responses of France—and other European countries and the USA—to the Haitian Revolution has been articulated in psychological terms of “trauma,” highlighting the terrors of the elite classes in

⁸¹ Fischer, “Unthinkable History?,” 366.

⁸² Ibid., 365.

⁸³ Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, 37.

confronting the colonial violence and loss.⁸⁴ As a result, Saint-Domingue/Haiti was regarded in terms of “the unspeakable,” or the collective unconscious, turning into an ambiguous fear complex. Patricia Motylewski for example has recently made a rare and valuable attempt to insert the legacies of the colonial revolution into her study of the French abolitionist society during the July Monarchy.⁸⁵ The problem in her book is that the Haitian Revolution remains a monolithic image of fears and terrors.

On the contrary, in the first half of the nineteenth century the Haitian Revolution had many different meanings, especially when interlocked with the independence of Haiti, which made its legacies inherently ambivalent. It was an outcome or part of the French Revolution, a slave insurrection on a full scale, the world’s first emancipation, and the first independent black nation in the Americas. Even the aspect of Saint-Domingue/Haiti as a symbol of colonial violence was not appropriated in a homogeneous manner. In profiling the different reactions of Europe and the Americas to the terrors of the Haitian Revolution, Drescher demands that any

⁸⁴ Sibylle Fischer criticizes the abuses of the psychological trope of “trauma” in describing the Haitian Revolution, which she suggests is derived from the Holocaust studies. See Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, 131-54. Recent studies have also investigated the diverse modes in which such horrors and fears were interpreted and utilized in antislavery politics. See Alfred Hunt, *Haiti’s Influence on Antebellum America* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1988); Matthews, *Caribbean Slave Revolts and the British Abolitionist Movement*; Ashli White, *Encountering Revolution: Haiti and the Making of the Early Republic* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010); Ashli White, “The Limit of Fears: The Saint Dominguan Challenge to Slave Trade Abolition in the United States” *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 2, no.2 (2004): 362-97; Anthony P. Maingot, “Haiti and the Terrified Consciousness of the Caribbean” in *Ethnicity in the Caribbean*, ed. Gert Oostindie (London: MacMillan Education, 1996), 53-80. About trauma about the revolutionary era in France, see Deborah Jensen, *Trauma and Its Representations: The Social Life of Mimesis in Post-Revolutionary France* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).

⁸⁵ Motylewski, *La Société française pour l’abolition de l’esclavage*. See the preface written by Marcel Dorigny, “Préface: la Société française pour l’abolition de l’esclavage, dernier maillon de la chaîne des abolitionnismes français” in *La Société française pour l’abolition de l’esclavage*, 11-19.

historian mentioning this revolutionary “trauma” should explain such disparity.⁸⁶ Likewise, within French society different groups took advantage of the terrors of the colonial revolution for different purposes. Part of the “trauma” of the Haitian Revolution was moreover derived from the proslavery propaganda to threaten the metropolitan opinions. The trauma of the colonial revolution in psychoanalytical terms should not be confounded with the “terrors” as a product of proslavery discourse. That the Haitian Revolution was an “unimaginable” event beyond proper language was the very thing proslavery propaganda wanted to promote, as shown in the next chapter.

Therefore, by going beyond a one-dimensional image of the Haitian Revolution and Haiti of fears and terror, my thesis highlights the diversity and fluidity of its meanings for different groups in changing political contexts. I investigate how and why certain aspects or interpretations were chosen in the evolution of French antislavery discourse through the two regimes, while others hidden or forgotten among many faces of the Haitian Revolution and Haiti.

In summation, I suggest that “Silencing the Haitian Revolution” should be examined as a historical process. My goal is to investigate the long-term process in which the discourses of the Haitian Revolution and Haiti were utilized in various ways in the French debates on colonies and slavery, emphasizing the usability and “thinkability”—instead of “unthinkable”—of the Haitian Revolution and Haiti in shifting political situations.⁸⁷ If the Haitian Revolution was finally

⁸⁶ Drescher, “Limit of Example,” 11.

⁸⁷ Caleb McDaniel, “Haiti’s Usable Past: Violence, Anglophilia, and Antebellum American Abolitionists.” Paper presented in Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture Annual Meeting, New Orleans, LA (June 8, 2003), accessed in <http://hdl.handle.net/1911/27610>.

silenced in the French narrative of liberty of 1848, it was only after passing through the complicated process of selection, redefinition, and negotiations during the first half of the nineteenth century. By analyzing the interactions of competing discourses involved, my thesis attempts to identify the modes and phases in the building of “silence” around Haiti and its revolution.

***Post-independence Haiti in French Antislavery Debate:
A Testing Ground of Freedom***

The Haitian Revolution produced not only powerful precedents for abolitionism but also a living laboratory in which it could experiment: the newborn nation of Haiti. As the first society born from emancipation and an outcome of revolutionary abolitionism, Haiti became an indispensable part of the French antislavery debate. Both the proslavery and antislavery parties in France eagerly published the reports on the “present situation of Haiti.” The news from Haiti provoked intense discussions about what a post-emancipation society would entail: a labor regime after emancipation, black slaves’ work ethic (or lack of it), the viability of sugar plantation economy, and the problem of color division. These discussions developed into another debate about the equal capability of the “African” race because Haiti was also the first nation governed by the blacks.

The aspirations of French abolitionists to see a flourishing example in Haiti clashed not only with proslavery propaganda but also with the path that postindependence Haiti chose.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ For the political and social history of post-1804 Haiti, I consulted David Nicholls, *From*

After Dessalines was assassinated in 1806, Haiti was divided into a kingdom in the north and a republic in the south and west. The kingdom of Henri Christophe, a black general who had served under Toussaint Louverture, revived his state-run plantation system and established a strong military government. President Alexandre Pétion, a mulatto politician surrounded by Francophile mulatto elites, ruled in the republic of the south and west. In contrast to Christophe, the republic distributed land to appease the black masses, while lighter-skinned elites occupied the state apparatus and commerce.

After Pétion died in 1818 and Christophe committed suicide in 1820 in the face of an impending coup, Pétion's successor, President Jean Pierre Boyer, integrated the kingdom of the north with the republic of south and west. Boyer then annexed the Spanish part of the island in 1822 and unified the island under a banner of general liberty. Until his fall by a coup in 1843, Boyer maintained a relatively stable but increasingly authoritarian government. His coming into power brought about a favorable turn in the Franco-Haitian relationship because Boyer pursued international recognition and the reestablishment of commerce. After difficult diplomatic negotiations, Charles X officially recognized the independence of Haiti in 1825, though with the conditions of heavy indemnity and commercial privileges for France. The conditions of the 1825 treaty, especially the payment of indemnity, became an important part of discussions about the

Dessalines to Duvalier: Race, Colour and National Independence in Haiti (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); James Leyburn, *The Haitian People*, new edition, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1966); Alex Dupuy, *Haiti in the World Economy: Class, Race, and Underdevelopment since 1700* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1989); Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Haiti, State Against Nation: The Origins and Legacy of Duvalierism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1990); Sidney W. Mintz, *Caribbean Transformations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974); Sidney W. Mintz, *Three Ancient Colonies: Caribbean Themes and Variations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010); Laurent Dubois, *Haiti: The Aftershock of History* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2012).

meaning of Haitian independence and its quality as a “civilized” nation in France, while producing discontent among the Haitian populace.

The most contested aspect of postindependence Haiti was its labor regime. In spite of the governing elites’ effort to revive the plantation system, the freed people detested the plantation labor that was associated with slavery and chose to secure their own autonomy in the form of smallholding peasantry. Predating the British Emancipation Act in 1833-34, Haiti displayed the typical pitfall of postemancipation societies: the metropolitan or elite vision of freedom (wage labor) conflicting with an oppositional vision of the freed people (small-holding farming), leading to state-sponsored coercion for implementing a “free” labor system.⁸⁹ In Haiti, no regime could preserve large estates. Without gang labor, sugar production plummeted. “Black peasantry” became a predominant feature of the countryside in Haiti, and peasant-grown coffee replaced sugar as a main export crop. The former landed elites began exchanging coffee with foreign traders and turned into an urban merchant class. This situation perplexed French abolitionists because in the Caribbean colonies, plantation economy had been identified with civilization and progress.

For their part, the ruling elite of Haiti, composed mainly of affluent, well educated, and Francophile mulattoes, was keenly aware of what was being said about Haiti by people in the ex-

⁸⁹ There exists a large corpus of historiography on this subject. Among many, see Thomas Holt, *The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor, and Politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1832-1938* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992); Eric Foner, *Nothing But Freedom: Emancipation and Its Legacy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983); Frederick Cooper et al., eds., *Beyond Slavery: Explorations of Race, Labor, and Citizenship in Post-emancipation Societies* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Howard Temperley, ed., *After Slavery: Emancipation and Its Discontents* (London: Frank Cass, 2000); Michaeline A. Crichlow, *Negotiating Caribbean Freedom: Peasants and the State in Development* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2004); Rebecca Scott, *Degrees of Freedom: Louisiana and Cuba After Slavery* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005).

metropole. They often intervened in the French debate about the Haitian Revolution and Haiti. Their self-assigned task was to uphold Haiti as a leading example in international abolitionism and a hope for black dignity, which found a considerable echo in French abolitionism for a while. Yet this ardently supported self-image of Haiti was also utilized as a domestic political strategy to suppress inner discontents and reaffirm the legitimacy of the mulatto oligarchy. During the period of 1820-43, Haiti became “a society split in two” between mulatto urban elites and black rural masses.⁹⁰ The mulatto elite seized political power, while a large army composed mainly of blacks had powerful leverage. Inevitably “undesirable” features of Haitian society—autocratic government, color division, and sociopolitical instability—disconcerted French supporters, provoking impassioned disputes over the nature of the Haitian regime and the meaning of its emancipation.

My thesis examines how throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, the French antislavery debate was affected by the historical trajectory of the newborn nation and the multifold dialogues with Haitians who engaged not only with proslavery spokesmen but also with abolitionists. How did French antislavery cope with the deepening chasm between their projected image of a proper postemancipation society and the local realities of Haiti? And how did the changing relationship between French abolitionism and Haiti affect the discourse of revolutionary abolitionism in France?

***Politics of Memory and Narrative Discourse: Narratives of the Two Revolutions
in French Antislavery Debate***

⁹⁰ There is a controversy over the nature of this split. See Trouillot, *Haiti: State against Nation*, 81.

Overall, my thesis investigates the formation of the official French discourse of emancipation and universal liberty developed in the contestations over the legacies of the first abolition of slavery in the revolutionary period. As it focuses on the competing discourses of the revolutionary past for making claims, “memories” analyzed in this thesis refer to the discursive production of the past utilized as sociopolitical resources. It places “historical” or “narrativizing” discourse at the center because postrevolutionary French politics made it a principal mode of political languages.⁹¹ The discourse of revolutionary history mobilized in antislavery debate is deemed to be a part of this politicized historical discourse. In what follows, I elaborate on the theoretical approach of this thesis informed by politics of memory and narrative theories.

First, my project relies on the framework of the politics of memory studies for investigating the dynamics of conflicting discourses on the revolutionary past.⁹² Among many, the collective authors of *The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration*—T. G. Ashplant, Graham Dawson, and Michael Roper—can help us to grasp the interactions among individuals, groups, and the nation in the struggle over memory: how are the lived remembrances of individuals articulated into group memories, how does each shared memory struggle to acquire public sanction against competing narratives, and for what purpose?⁹³

⁹¹ R. Darrell Meadows utilizes “narrativizing” discourse in his examination of refugee colons’ discourse of exile. See R. Darrell Meadows, “Engineering Exile: Social Network and the French Atlantic Community, 1789-1809,” *French Historical Studies* 23, no.1 (2000): 91-92.

⁹² About the model of the multiplicity of memories along different social groups, see Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

⁹³ T. G. Ashplant, Graham Dawson, and Michael Roper, “The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration: Contexts, Structures, and Dynamics,” in *The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration* (London & New York: Routledge, 2000).

The authors examine numerous “arenas” in which the memories perform: “those socio-political spaces which social actors advance claims for the recognition of their specific war memories, and for whatever other benefits they seek to derive from such recognition.”⁹⁴ In these multiple arenas, we should look into “the way in which these [individual memories] can be transformed into the shared/common memory of a social group and then be projected into a public arena, whether promoting a new sectional or oppositional narrative, fitting within or modifying an existing dominant national narrative, or connecting with a transnational narrative.”⁹⁵ In their Gramscian framework, “the politics of war memory and commemoration is precisely the struggle of different groups to give public articulation to, and hence gain recognition for, certain memories and the narratives within which they are structured.”⁹⁶

Along with this model, my thesis examines how various conflicting groups with different agendas competed to appropriate the meanings of the French and Haitian Revolutions, with emphasis on their campaigns for public sanction or winning public opinion. Each chapter highlights one of four groups. Under the Bourbon Restoration, there were two adversaries who confronted each other over the recent past of the Revolution—the former planters of Saint-Domingue who took refuge in France and became a spearhead of the proslavery party, and the French antislavery liberals who fought them as part of their opposition to the reactionary monarchy. During the July Monarchy, there were the metropolitan abolitionists who rose in power to promote abolitionism, and alongside them, the mulatto abolitionists from the French

⁹⁴ Ibid., 17.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 17-18.

⁹⁶ Ibid. 16.

colonies both supported and criticized metropolitan abolitionism. In addition to these four groups, Haitians consistently interfered in metropolitan discussions to “correct” the biased views of metropolitans. While they were all engaged in the fight for or against colonial slavery in a larger sense, the benefit each group pursued differed from one to the other, from monetary compensation, political legitimacy, to a recognized place in the national community. Eventually, we look into how those contestations influenced the making of the French official national narrative of emancipation.

By emphasizing this contestation among groups, I intend to reconstruct the French antislavery debate as a dialogue between opposing parties. In her book on British abolitionism, Srividhya Swaminathan criticizes other studies of British abolitionism for exclusively analyzing abolitionist rhetoric, “an approach which fails to appreciate the dialogue between proslavery and antislavery that actively captured public interest in the later century.”⁹⁷ We cannot treat abolitionist discourse as a self-isolated entity of ideas emanating from certain humanitarian sources, such as Christianity or the Enlightenment. Much of antislavery discourse was made out of the impassioned arguments with various interlocutors, such as the proslavery party, the royal government, and colonial people. It was in responding to their no less resourceful enemies’ tactics that antislavery supporters fabricated and changed their rhetoric. This is truer of French antislavery discourse in the wake of the Revolution that was constructed as a response to the attack of proslavery/counterrevolutionary forces.

Second, my thesis emphasizes a specific form of discourse mobilized in the antislavery debate—that is, the narrativizing discourse. It places antislavery debate in a larger political

⁹⁷ Srividhya Swaminathan, *Debating the Slave Trade: Rhetoric of British National Identity, 1759-1815* (Farnham, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 2.

context of the postrevolutionary French regimes: the struggle over how to interpret the French Revolution. One outcome of the contestation over the revolutionary past was the empowerment of historical discourse in politics, marked by strong narrativity. From the political articles in the press to the parliamentary debates, the political discourses in postrevolutionary France were pervaded by narrativizing discourses.⁹⁸ Doris Kadish states that the retelling of the French Revolution was at the center of political languages of the first half of the nineteenth-century France.⁹⁹ My thesis demonstrates that the retelling of the French and Haitian Revolutions was crucial in each group's strategy for fighting for or against colonial reforms and emancipation.

One central purpose of my project is to analyze the "emplotment" of each group's narrativizing discourse. According to Hayden White, emplotment is a means by which a sequence of events is transformed into a story with a beginning, middle, and end, and providing the story in question with a moral or ideological meaning.¹⁰⁰ Here, a plot is to be investigated as an overarching principle, to determine what to include or exclude from the narration, and arrange both the sequence of events and the relative importance of actions. Concerning emplotment, the following questions are asked of each group's narrative: what causality does the plot strategy contrive in narrating revolutionary events? What is the greatest turning point in the story? How does the story characterize the main actors and subjects? How does the selection or exclusion of

⁹⁸ It is "a discourse that feigns to make the world speak itself and speak itself as a story," in the words of Hayden White. Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 2.

⁹⁹ Doris Kadish, *Politicizing Gender: Narrative Strategies in the Aftermath of the French Revolution* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1991), 2.

¹⁰⁰ Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 5-11.

events contribute to the plot? And how does the narrative confirm or challenge established authority and legitimacy?

By looking into the detailed narrative-making (plotting) process, we can discern how each party contrived to make its own argument for the future of French colonies and slavery. For example, from the demand of equal rights by free people of color in the National Assembly in 1789 to the declaration of Haitian Independence in 1804, there were a series of events constituting revolutionary emancipationism. However, there was no consensus as to when the challenge to slavery was born or at what point the French Revolution in Saint-Domingue became something else—the Haitian Revolution. Each event could embody a different bifurcation of events and different futures for the French colonies.¹⁰¹ It led conflicting parties to dispute particular events and particular actors, by which they promoted their own vision of colonial order and appropriate mode of emancipation (or no emancipation).

Emplotment also shows what *kind* of story each group made out of the entangled events of the two revolutions. According to White, “Emplotment is the way in which a sequence of events fashioned into a story is gradually revealed to be a story of a particular kind.”¹⁰² White articulates the explanatory schemes by identifying four modes of emplotment: Romance, Tragedy, Comedy, and Satire.¹⁰³ The story of the French Revolution was a Romance for

¹⁰¹ See Blackburn, *The American Crucible*, 182.

¹⁰² White, *Metahistory*, 7. Concerning the explanatory power of narrative, White identifies three levels, explanation by emplotment, explanation by argument, and explanation by ideological implication. As this thesis focuses on the conflicting narratives among different groups, I mostly rely on the explanation by emplotment. But I also utilize other two frameworks in the analysis of narrativizing discourses. (See “Introduction” in *Metahistory*)

¹⁰³ White, *Metahistory*, 8-9.

metropolitan liberals and free people of color, but it was a Satire for conservatives and the refugee planters of Saint-Domingue. In their efforts to appropriate the story of the French Revolution, how was the story of the Haitian Revolution conceived differently? My project emphasizes how the situation in postindependence Haiti affected the change of narratives about the Haitian Revolution, as the former being the endpoint of the latter.

Lastly, the analysis of emplotment induces us to understand how each social group's narrative was part of their particular identity formation process. In explaining uses and abuses of memory, Paul Ricoeur indicates how identity is mediated by "the unavoidably selective nature of narrative," in other words, by emplotment.¹⁰⁴ He says, "it is through the narrative function that memory is incorporated into the formation of identity. Memory can be ideologized through the resources of the variations offered by the work of narrative configuration."¹⁰⁵ This concept of "narrative identity"¹⁰⁶ can help us to understand how historical narratives act on a community's self-fashioning process and how such narratives are revised to accommodate changing historical contexts. Even within supposedly homogenous groups, inner differences and diverging interests can exist. In such cases, narratives contributed to identity formation itself, while they also became media to express those dissenting voices. Each chapter brings to light how each social group narrated the complicated stories of the two revolutions in their identity formation process: victimhood for the refugee planters of Saint-Domingue; legitimacy of liberal opposition for the Restoration liberals; abolitionism as an embodiment of French national character for the July

¹⁰⁴ Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 448.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 84-85.

¹⁰⁶ See Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, vol. 3 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988) and *Oneself As Another* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

Monarchy abolitionists; rightly-deserved French citizenship for Bissette and the free people of color; and dignity of the first black nation for Haitians.

The Structure of Chapters and Main Themes

In the next two chapters about the Restoration period, the second chapter examines the refugee planters from Saint-Domingue who fled from the colonial revolution and settled in France. Empowered by the reactionary political milieu of the time, the former planters organized a powerful colonial lobby and publishing campaign, first for the reconquest of Saint-Domingue and later for claiming indemnity for their dispossession. I investigate how these refugee planters justified their victimhood by combining counterrevolutionary politics and racial discourse, and how they represented the French and Haitian Revolutions to signify both perils of impatient abolition of slavery and the danger of the “African race.”

The third chapter inquires into the efforts of French liberals organized by the *Société française de la morale chrétienne* to overcome the revolutionary stigmas attached to the antislavery cause. It emphasizes how this struggle was interwoven with their larger political project of legitimizing the French Revolution as a challenge to the reactionary regime. By fabricating apologies for the violence of both metropolitan and colonial revolutions, they tried to redefine the meanings of the colonial revolution for the liberal cause and elevate the newborn nation Haiti as a living testimony to abolitionism and the equal capability of blacks.

Moving on to the July Monarchy, the fourth chapter centers on the French abolitionists who were the power elite of the Orleanist regime, organized by *la Société française pour*

l'abolition de l'esclavage. The French liberals felt bolstered by the British emancipation of 1834 and confidently rehabilitated the revolutionary decrees for the colonies, in particular the decree of abolition in 1794, as a new basis of legitimacy for emancipation. In the process, this chapter inquires into how French abolitionists separated the French Revolution from the Haitian Revolution and Haiti, and how this separation served the metropolitan antislavery elites' cause as they constructed a grand narrative of French-given universal liberty.

The fifth chapter delves into the extraordinary career of Cyrille Bissette, a mulatto abolitionist from French Martinique. It investigates how he carved out another brand of abolitionism led by free-colored people, by simultaneously deconstructing the planter ideologies of slavery and race and criticizing metropolitan abolitionism. This chapter highlights how Bissette provided alternative meanings for the Haitian Revolution and Haiti. His conflict with leading French abolitionists—Schoelcher in particular—reveals the diversity of antislavery politics in the French Empire, providing another reference against which metropolitan abolitionism can be reevaluated.

In their debate over colonial slavery, the competing parties brought up several vital issues that were not reducible to the abolition of the institution of slavery. In what follows, I will briefly touch upon central issues around which each chapter is organized. First, the groups' contending narratives placed the contestation over French citizenship and "Frenchness" at the center. They disputed the status of different colonial groups in the French national community: white planters, free people of color, and slaves after emancipation. As "Frenchness" was a major symbolic asset for which they competed, each group came forward with different definitions of French citizenship, whose relationship with race, class, and gender was articulated in conflicting

manners.

This leads to the second issue of how the antislavery debate involved the issues of race and color. How did the Haitian Revolution affect racism and antiracism in France? Haiti would hold a vital position in the fight against proslavery ideologies, as the island was supposed to be a great experiment to demonstrate the equal capacity of Africans. What does the French abolitionists' championing of "perfectibility of Africans" here tell us about their ideas of race? And what does it mean for the representation of Africa and Africans?

Third, the antislavery debate naturally implicated the controversy over the possibility of a free labor system after emancipation, together with the crucial question of whether "Africans" or ex-slaves could work without the coercion of enslavement. As revolutionary history, Haiti, and British emancipation conducted a variety of experiments in colonial labor regimes, how did conflicting parties conceive the nature of and transition to free labor in colonies?

Fourth, the Haitian Revolution and the independence of Haiti led to the reconsideration of French colonialism, generating new ideas for the future of the French Empire. What did it mean for the old colonial system, the peril of colonial reforms, or their necessity? And what did it mean for the new direction of French colonialism in relation to the independence of Spanish colonies in Americas and new interests in African expansion?

Lastly, through the complex contestations over revolutionary legacies and meanings of the Haitian Revolution, we would eventually see how "the great narratives of emancipation," with which this introductory chapter started, emerged victorious by the late July Monarchy. A main goal of this dissertation is to inquire into the nature and process of this shift in French antislavery discourse—how did they transform these messy and complicated steps toward

emancipation into a story of unfaltering pursuit of liberty embedded in French national character? How did they formulate a linear genealogy of French-given liberty from 1789 to 1848?

Consequently, my inquiry into the contesting narratives of the two revolutions returns to the problem of silencing the Haitian Revolution and Haiti. In the evolution of French abolitionism, we can observe a historical process by which antislavery discourses gradually isolated, diminished, and thus erased the story of Saint-Domingue/Haiti from the dominating narrative of the French Revolution and emancipation. In other words, the manner of silencing the Haitian Revolution and Haiti cannot be separated from the way of remembering and narrating French emancipation.

CHAPTER II. Narrating the Tropical Terror: The Paris Campaign of the *Colons* from Saint-Domingue and Its Effects on the Restoration Antislavery

With the Bourbon Restoration in 1814, most of the French émigrés had returned to France, but one group was still in exile even after the end of the French Revolution—former white residents of Saint-Domingue. The white population of the island had been through a series of exiles since the slave insurrection of 1791 and the defeat of the Napoleonic army in 1803 was the final call for remaining whites to evacuate the island. In the final stage of the independence war, Dessalines ordered the white population to be massacred, and when faced with the choice of flee or die, the white colonists of Saint-Domingue spread out broadly through the transatlantic world.

Among the refugees of the Haitian Revolution, many of the *colons*—the elite white planters—settled in France. There they could expect to find material resources, familial support, and sympathetic communities.¹ Finding themselves as exiles in their mother country, the refugee *colons* launched a struggle to either retake the colony or at least be compensated for their losses. This chapter delves into the political campaign staged by the refugee planters from Saint-Domingue in Restoration France. It explores how and why the refugee *colons* publicized their sufferings during the Haitian Revolution in the metropole and describes how their campaign affected the French debate about the slave trade, slavery, and colonialism in general.

The Planter Class of Saint-Domingue before and after the French Revolution

¹ See Meadows, “Engineering Exile.”

Who exactly were these people who designated themselves “*anciens colons et propriétaires de Saint-Domingue* (the former *colons* and proprietors of Saint-Domingue)” in the petitions, pamphlets, and booklets published during the Restoration? In pre-revolutionary Saint-Domingue, the elite planter class dominated the most productive plantation economy in the Americas; they owned the large plantations, facilities, and slaves for export crop production. They also controlled colonial politics through the representative councils installed in colonial cities. Their plantocracy was then consolidated through carefully coordinated marriages and inheritances among prominent families.²

However, their power was predicated on an unstable social balance, as the white *colons* were entirely outnumbered by the servile classes. On the eve of 1789, the white population of 30,000-40,000 was surrounded by 25,000-30,000 *gens de couleur libres* (free-colored), and approximately half a million black slaves.³ White planters lived in fear of conspiracies and revolts by slaves and also felt challenged by the rise of the free people of color, who constituted an increasingly strong intermediary class both in number and wealth. Feeling threatened by all of this, the white planters fortified racial barriers and declared the rank of the master class to be for only those of “pure white blood,” which in turn aggravated the discontent of the *gens de couleur*

² About the planter class of Saint-Domingue before 1789, see Jacques de Cauna and Jean Fouchard, *Au temps des isles à sucre histoire d'une plantation de Saint-Domingue au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Karthala, 1987); Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery*, 401-56; Robert Forster, “Three Slaveholders in the Antilles: Saint-Domingue, Martinique, Jamaica” *Journal of Caribbean History* 36, no.1 (2002): 1-32; Malick W. Ghachem, *The Old Regime and the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge: New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

³ Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, 278n. 42.

libres.⁴

The *colons* had a strained relationship with the metropole, and detested the metropolitan interference with colonial affairs. The planters of Saint-Domingue were notorious for defying metropolitan authorities in favor of colonial autonomy and clashed with the governor and officials sent from France.⁵ One constant complaint was that the metropole's mercantilist regulations were stifling their thriving businesses.

However, the *colons* also depended on the metropole for military protection and commerce. Their dominance over the people of color—the absolute majority of the population—was impossible without the protection and support of the metropole. Moreover, as sugar plantations required a large sum of capital, huge loans from the merchant banks of French port cities were part of their normal business.⁶ Many planters were not even permanent residents of the colony, as they often had estates on both sides of the Atlantic and tended to visit France frequently. The rich *colons* successfully infiltrated the Old Regime aristocracy through marriages and investments and many of them obtained noble titles.⁷ Given how tightly the white planters

⁴ See the works of John D. Garrigus, "Sons of the Same Father"; Garrigus, *Before Haiti*; Garrigus, "A Struggle for Respect: The Free Coloreds of Pre-revolutionary Saint Domingue, 1760-1769" (Ph.D. dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, 1988); Garrigus, "Catalyst or Catastrophe? Saint-Domingue's Free Men of Color and the Savannah Expedition, 1779-1782," *Review* 22 (1992): 109-125; Garrigus, "Colour, Class and Identity on the Eve of the Haitian Revolution: Saint-Domingue's Free Coloured Elite as Colons américains," *Slavery and Abolition* 17(1996): 19-43.

⁵ On the planter class' long-term struggle for colonial autonomy, see Charles Frostin, *Les révoltes blanches à Saint-Domingue aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* (Paris: l'École, 1975).

⁶ See Stein, *The French Sugar Business in the Eighteenth Century*; Paul Butel, *Les négociants bordelais, l'Europe et les îles au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Aubier, 1996[1974]); Françoise Thésée, *Négociants bordelais et colons de Saint-Domingue* (Paris: Société française d'histoire d'outre-mer, 1972); Olivier Pétré-Grenouilleau, ed., *L'argent de la traite: milieu négrier, capitalisme et développement : un modèle* (Paris: Aubier, 1996).

⁷ Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery*, 164-66, 207n5.

were bound to the metropole, R. Darrell Meadows defines them as “Saint-Domingue’s metropolitan-oriented planter class.”⁸ Their ambiguous relationship with the metropole, resentful on the one hand and dependent on the other, would manifest itself once again in their postrevolutionary campaign in France.

At the outbreak of the French Revolution, the planters of Saint-Domingue were one of the most quickly-mobilized sectors in the French society. They sent their own delegation to the National Assembly, while aristocratic absentee planters in Paris organized the famous *Massiac Club*.⁹ In the early phase of the Revolution, color equality was the leading issue of the colonial problems—the *colons* found themselves pitted against the mulatto elites, who were aided by the *Amis des noirs*. Yet it was only shortly after this time that both the *colons* and revolutionaries were overtaken by events in Saint-Domingue, from the general insurrection of black slaves in 1791 to the declaration of emancipation in 1793 by the civil commissioners. In turn, the National Convention proclaimed the decree of *Pluviôse* 16 Year II (February 4, 1794), declaring universal emancipation for all the French colonies.

When the escalating events of the French Revolution peaked with the Terror, the white *colons* joined the royalist exodus from revolutionary France, as many of them had monarchist associations. Across the Atlantic, resident planters in Saint-Domingue were deserting the island in the face of slave revolts and civil war. From Europe to the Americas, the émigrés from both

⁸ R. Darell Meadows, “The Planters of Saint-Domingue, 1750-1804: Migration and Exile in the French Revolutionary Atlantic” (PhD diss., Carnegie Mellon University, 2004), 5.

⁹ Gabriel Debien, *Les colons de Saint-Domingue et la révolution; essai sur le club Massiac* (Paris: A. Colin, 1953); Blanche Maurel, *Saint-Domingue et la révolution française: les représentants des colons en France de 1789 à 1795* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1943).

France and Saint-Domingue mingled together in their places of exile, sharing their experiences and longing to return home.¹⁰ It was after the Thermidorian reaction that they began to return to France, and many of them arrived in France under the Empire or with the return of the Bourbon monarchy in 1814. Exhilarated by the reinstatement of the Bourbons, the Saint-Domingue refugees were confident that the time had come for homecoming, or at least reparation for their losses.

In French historiography, this group—the refugee *colons* from Saint-Domingue—remained for a long time a neglected and underdeveloped subject, despite the fact that the history of colonial Saint-Domingue raised significant interest in historical studies. In particular, the second half of the eighteenth-century—the golden age of colonial Saint-Domingue—drew particular attention due to its superior economic performance. The *colons*’ lobby in the revolutionary assemblies was relatively well documented by French historians. However most of the researches on *colons* stop after those early revolutionary years. As the black slaves in arms of Saint-Domingue dominated the political scene after the general insurrection of 1791, the white *colons* were relegated to the margins in the history of the French and Haitian Revolutions. Once Haiti declared independence in 1804, the *colons* of Saint-Domingue disappeared altogether from the standard narratives of French history.

In the prior historiography of French abolitionism, the refugee *colons* of Saint-Domingue were not given much space either, appearing only in passing sentences for their “agitation,” and its negative impact on abolitionism. On the one hand, this is because previous

¹⁰ On the encounter between the émigrés and the refugee *colons*, see Ghislain de Diesbach, *Histoire de l’émigration* (Paris: Librairie Académique Perrin, 1984), 491-520; and Jean Vidalenc, *Les émigrés français, 1789-1825* (Caen: Université de Caen, 1963), 251-83; Meadows, “Engineering Exiles.”

studies of French antislavery tended to underestimate the impact of the Haitian Revolution and instead favored British influences. On the other hand, this neglect is derived from the ideological predisposition of French historiography. As French historiography was more preoccupied with the great story of abolitionism rather than slavery, it focused on the finest echelon of abolitionist discourse of this era, such as the writings of Abbé Henri Grégoire, Madame de Staël, and Benjamin Constant, while underestimating the works of the colonial party and dismissing them as simply an instrumental reflection of colonial interest. Historians considered the propaganda of the refugee planters repetitive, mundane, and too “boring” to analyze in detail.¹¹ However the pro-colon discourse was much more prevalent at that time than that of the abolitionist writers, regardless of the individual quality of the writings.

A few decades ago, Benoît Joachim published several pioneering works that shed new light on the refugee *colons* in France and their role in the postindependence Franco-Haitian relationship.¹² His main argument is that the independence of Haiti in 1804 was not the end of the story, but the beginning of a new chapter: that of the neocolonial relationship between France and Haiti. It should be noted that France did not recognize the independence of Haiti until 1825, and continuously attempted to keep Haiti under French power even after that. Joachim illuminates how the refugee *colons* were the prominent party during France’s groping attempts to

¹¹ Hoffmann, *Le nègre romantique*, 150-51.

¹² See the works of Benoît Joachim, “Décolonisation ou néocolonialisme?: aspects fondamentaux des relations de la France avec Haïti”(PhD diss., Université Paris I, 1969); “L’indemnité coloniale de Saint-Domingue et la question des rapatriés,” *Revue historique* 246, no.2 (1971): 359-76; “le néo-colonialisme à l’essai: la France et l’indépendance d’Haïti,” *Pensée* 156 (1971): 35-51; “Commerce et décolonisation: l’expérience Franco-Haïtienne au XIXe Siècle,” *Annales ESC* 27, no.6 (1972): 1497-1525; “La reconnaissance d’Haïti par la France: naissance d’un nouveau type de rapports internationaux,” *Revue d’histoire moderne et contemporaine* 22, no.3(1975): 369-96.

redefine its relationship with the former colony, first through their demands for reconquest, and later through their efforts to acquire indemnity and recognition for their loss. Far from disappearing from the political scene, they organized vigorous lobbies aimed at both high politics and Parisian public opinion. Most importantly, Joachim's work reveals the interwoven networks between elite exiles of Saint-Domingue and metropolitan aristocrats, showing how the *colons* infiltrated metropolitan politics and economy.

More recently, the refugee *colons* of Saint-Domingue are being newly illuminated in transatlantic research as a subject of studies on diaspora communities, transatlantic business networks, and cultural exchanges. Specifically, the studies of the Haitian Revolution focus on the wide distribution of the Saint-Domingue refugees in the Americas and their influences on the Atlantic communities. After 1789, nearly 45,000 exiles from Saint-Domingue—white colonists, free people of color, and slaves—were scattered around the Americas and Europe, accelerating the socioeconomic changes of the Atlantic world.¹³ In particular, those refugee planters wielded influence through the capital they carried, their advanced sugar plantation technologies, Francophone cultures, and their hardened belief in the danger of antislavery. A particularly important question is how their presence, as the realization of the planter class' worst nightmare,

¹³ The impact of the Saint-Domingue refugees in the USA became an especially important topic. For example, see Winston Babb, "French Refugees from Saint-Domingue to the Southern United States: 1791-1810" (PhD diss., University of Virginia, 1954); Gabriel Debien and René Le Gardeur, "Les *colons* de Saint-Domingue réfugiés à la Louisiane" *Revue de Louisiane* 9 (Winter, 1980): 101-40; 10 (Winter, Summer 1981): 11-49, 97-141; Carl A. Brasseaux and Glenn R. Conrad, eds., *The Road to Louisiana: The Saint-Domingue Refugees 1792-1809* (Lafayette: University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1992); Susan Branson and Leslie Patrick, "Étrangers dans un pays étrange: Saint-Domingue Refugees of Color in Philadelphia," in *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World*; Paul Lachance, "Repercussions of the Haitian Revolution in Louisiana," in *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World*; White, "The Limit of Fears"; Nathalie Dessens, "The Saint-Domingue Refugees and the Preservation of Gallic Culture in Early American New Orleans," *French Colonial History* 8 (2007): 53-69.

affected opinions on slavery in their host societies, especially in slavery societies such as the southern part of the US, Cuba, and Brazil.

It is problematic that the refugee *colons* in the ex-metropole have been paid relatively little attention, even in this global map of Saint-Domingue refugees that has been drawn by academic research. Incorporating the refugee *colons* in France into this framework, we can ask the same question about their impact on the metropolitan society's view of slavery and colonies. In terms of slavery and abolition, the refugee *colons* formed a crucial link between the revolutionary and postrevolutionary eras in France. They carried the colonial revolution to the metropolitan public, reminding it of what revolutionary emancipation had wrought on the once-prosperous colony. Thus, we cannot fully understand the impact of the Haitian Revolution on French antislavery debate without investigating the refugee *colons* in France who led the anti-abolitionist opinion in the metropole.

If the *colons* were the refugees of the Haitian Revolution, they were simultaneously the exiles of the French Revolution, the *émigrés*. Many of rich planters had titles or aristocratic affiliations via their Old Regime practices, and the radicalization of the French Revolution in 1793-94 pushed them into the counterrevolutionary camp. During the Terror, most *colons*, suspected of counterrevolutionary conspiracy, joined the royalist *émigrés*. Meadows suggests that the aristocratic *émigrés* and Saint-Domingue refugees should be understood in terms of “the French Atlantic community,” who shared transatlantic links of kinship and business in their “engineering exiles,”¹⁴ thus putting together otherwise separated fields of study. In this sense, the *colons*' coming to France was part of the “great return” of the *émigrés*, and their struggle for

¹⁴ Meadows, “Engineering Exiles.”

indemnity was also part of the émigrés' demand for reparation. Joachim's works show that they shared much in their social position, but more importantly they also shared a political position—counterrevolutionary politics. The refugee planters belonged to the most hard-line counterrevolutionary party of the Restoration, accusing the Revolution of being responsible for their misery and loss.

Here, the dual position of the *colons* in Paris as both royalist émigrés of the metropolitan revolution and as refugees of the world's first antislavery/anti-racism revolution gives us a particularly integrated perspective from which to observe the impact of the French and Haitian Revolutions on French antislavery. In other words, their presence enables us to bring a transatlantic perspective into the studies of metropolitan antislavery, as well as locate it in the context of French domestic politics of the Restoration. In fact, it was the refugee *colons* themselves who most passionately insisted that the two revolutions should be considered to be one and the same thing, demanding to be recognized, as émigrés, as part of the victims of the French Revolution. At the same time, as the victims and witnesses of the world's first slave revolution that they insisted was incurred by antislavery, they spearheaded the proslavery—or, more accurately, anti-abolitionist—campaign in the Restoration. Their proslavery position was empowered by their émigré status and the counterrevolutionary politics of the time.

Therefore, I suggest that it is vital to examine the campaign of the refugee *colons* and their allies as a means of analyzing the postrevolutionary French antislavery debate as a dialogue. These ex-*colons* of Saint-Domingue were at the head of the proslavery and colonial parties, and thus were a central interlocutor of the French antislavery camp under the Restoration. Whoever suggested reforming or abolishing colonial slavery had to have an answer

to their misfortunes. As the *colons* tried to discredit the whole idea of antislavery on the basis of revolutionary emancipation, the process in which the liberal opponents refuted their attacks brought forth antislavery during the Restoration.

In summation, this chapter investigates two major points—how the refugee *colons*' campaign tried to legitimize their claim of recognition and restitution in the metropole by advertising their victimization by the French and Haitian Revolutions and how this campaign affected the French antislavery debate. Probing into the politico-cultural dynamics involved in their campaign, it inquires into how the *colons*' battle was plugged into the heated politics of memory being fought during the Restoration between ultraroyalists and liberals. For this purpose, I analyze the narrative discourse of the *colons*' stories of the French and Haitian Revolutions. Through this narrative, they attached their cause to counterrevolutionary politics and also refashioned their challenged collective identity. In the process, this chapter attempts to reveal how the refugee *colons* tried to renegotiate their Frenchness in the aftermath of the two revolutions through their recurrence to counterrevolutionary politics and racial discourse.

The Refugee Colons' Campaign in Paris during the Restoration

How many of the *colons* of Saint-Domingue took refuge in France? It is very difficult to assess the exact number because the status of colon, which was eligible for state relief and compensation, was extended by their familial and business ties in the metropole. There were many absentee planters and creditors who had shares in colonial assets or who were related by family ties. Moreover, as the Revolution lasted for decades, new generations who barely

remembered or never even set foot on Saint-Domingue replaced their parents, multiplying the number of *colons*. Upon investigation of the relief roll, Meadows reckons there were more than 10,000 refugees from Saint-Domingue during the 1790s.¹⁵ In 1804 the *Comité des colons notables* estimated that 8,000 individuals were eligible for restitution.¹⁶ But by 1820, a pro-colon deputy insisted that 8,000 families were waiting for help,¹⁷ and in 1826, François Barbé-Marbois, a former Saint-Domingue administrator, offered the number of 25,000 persons.¹⁸ The royal government tried to restrict the ever-increasing number of ex-*colons*, while the refugee *colons* insisted that the government allow all their offspring to hold the same rights as the former *colons* of Saint-Domingue.¹⁹

The *colons*' connection to the power elite of the Old Regime held far more sway than their mere numbers. While many of the refugee planters did indeed lose their fortunes in Saint-Domingue as their propaganda insisted, the core group of the *colons* was attached to the most powerful families of France. In the second half of the eighteenth-century, the heyday of sugar plantation economy, the big planters of Saint-Domingue had succeeded in penetrating the

¹⁵ Meadows, "the Planters of Saint-Domingue", 3.

¹⁶ *Archive Nationale* F12 2717, *Comité des colons notables de Saint-Domingue*; Joachim, "L'indemnité coloniale de Saint-Domingue et la question des rapatriés," 368-71.

¹⁷ *Archives parlementaires de 1787 à 1860*, ed. Jérôme Mavidal and Émile Laurent (Paris: Dupont, 1862–), 2nd series, (hereafter AP), Chambre des Pairs (hereafter CP), on June 19, 1820, tome.28, 595.

¹⁸ Jean-François Brière, *Haïti et la France, 1804-1848: le rêve brisé* (Paris : Karthala, 2008), 14-15.

¹⁹ See Comte de Léaumont, *Réponse de M. le comte de Léaumont à MM. les colons de Saint-Domingue qui habitent les départements de France* (Paris: Marchand Du Breuil, 1823). About the state relief for the refugees of Saint-Domingue in the Restoration, see Jennifer Pierce, "Discourses of the Dispossessed: Saint-Domingue Colonists on Race, Revolution and Empire, 1789-1825" (PhD diss., State University of New York, 2005), 435-43.

metropolitan aristocracy through marital unions and financial investments. Many of refugees took advantage of their connections and entered into public office during the Empire and the Restoration. Bênoit Joachim's research produces an impressive list of refugee *colon*' families that overlapped with the most respected nobility of France. The list includes leading Restoration figures in the government, military, commerce, and finance.²⁰ It comes to no surprise that many high-ranking politicians who dealt with colonial matters were closely involved in the *colons*' affairs: Pierre-Victor Malouet and Baron Portal (the Ministry of Marine and Colonies), and Joseph de Villèle (Prime Minister, a colon of Bourbon).

It was through this powerful network that the *colons* were able to organize a vigorous political campaign. The return of the Bourbons greatly boosted the ex-*colons*' chances to achieve their goals, although they never failed to idolize Napoleon as a savior. They welcomed the return of the king with a flood of eulogies for Louis XVIII, asserting that the legitimate ruler of France could not bear to see Saint-Domingue, a glorious royal colony, in ruins.²¹ A good example of an ex-*colons*' lobby was the *Société des colons propriétaires de Saint-Domingue*, which was organized by Comte de Léaumont in 1819.²² They convinced many peers and deputies to back their cause and were prolific publishers of pamphlets, petitions, and books, including their organ,

²⁰ Joachim, "L'indemnité coloniale de Saint-Domingue et la question des réparties," 367-72.

²¹ Berquin Duvallon, *Le retour des Bourbons, ode, adressée à S. M. Louis XVIII,au nom des colons de Saint-Domingue réfugiés en France* (Paris: Chez Charles, 1814); Berquin Duvallon, "Déclaration des *colons* de Saint-Domingue" in *Ami du Roi*, April 14, 1814, which was published as *Sentimens des colons de Saint-Domingue, envers leur monarque et leur patrie* (Paris: Panckoucke, 1814).

²² Jean-Michel Deveau, *La France au temps des négriers* (Paris: France-Empire, 1994), 284; Gaston Martin, *Histoire de l'esclavage dans les colonies française* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1948), 257-58.

le Défenseur des colonies.²³ The royalist journals, such as *l'Ami du Roi*, *le Conservateur*, *la Quotidienne*, and *le Drapeau Blanc*, upheld their cause. As a testament to their vociferous campaign in the capital, Abbé Grégoire lamented that the spiteful works of the *colons* dominated public opinion about the Saint-Domingue Revolution.²⁴ Adolph Thiers's recollection of the Restoration also complained that the *colons* had "filled Paris with their groans."²⁵

What exactly were the *colons* pursuing with this campaign? As early as August 1814, Pierre-Marc-Gaston de Lévis (Duc de Lévis) presented to the Chamber of Peers petitions on behalf of the former property owners of Saint-Domingue who were residing in Paris.²⁶ In his report, the multiple claims of the refugee planters toward the metropolitan government were summarized largely into three categories: the reconquest of Saint-Domingue, compensation for their dispossession as émigrés, and concessions from metropolitan creditors.

At first, the most stubborn of the refugee *colons* tenaciously insisted on another military expedition to restore Saint-Domingue's prerevolutionary state. Laurent-Marie de Léaumont (Comte de Léaumont), a leader of the ultraconservative *colons* in Paris, was at the head of this party. The more realistic *colons* preferred nonmilitaristic negotiations to regain French

²³ Many of their propaganda works are preserved the *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*, series Lk9 and Lk12. For the general outline of the *colons*' campaign, see David Geggus, "Haiti and the Abolitionists," in *Abolition and Its Aftermath: The Historical Context, 1790-1916*, ed. David Richardson (London and Totowa, NJ: F. Cass, 1985), 113-40; Christian Schefer, *La France moderne et le problème colonial* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1907), 106-7. For more on the petitions of the ex-*colons*, see Meadows, "The Planters of Saint-Domingue, 1750-1804," 214-22.

²⁴ Henri Grégoire, *De la noblesse de la peau, ou, du préjugé des blancs contre la couleur des africains et celle de leurs descendants noirs et sang-melés* (Paris : Baudouin, 1826,) 40-41.

²⁵ Requoted from Marcel B. Auguste, "L'armée française de Saint-Domingue: dernière armée de la révolution," in *La révolution française et Haïti*, vol. 2, 275.

²⁶ AP, CP, 6, August 13 and 16, 1814, tome 12, 240-41, 342-45, and 639-42.

sovereignty. Both groups were convinced that conquering or cajoling blacks into France would be not difficult. At the beginning of the Restoration, reconquest still seemed to be a promising option, and in the Congress of Vienna, French diplomats even set up a secret arrangement with Britain for reconquest. But the monarchy gradually realized that another overseas expedition was impossible in both material and diplomatic terms.²⁷ A military expedition to Haiti would not only cost a great deal, but also could incite political and diplomatic issues with Britain and the USA. Moreover, only the *ex-colons* were convinced of victory. Haiti was protected by the Atlantic Ocean, yellow fever, and ex-slaves who were ready to fight to the death to preserve their freedom. The shocking defeat of the Napoleonic expedition in 1802-3 was a very dissuasive precedent: who could succeed where Napoleon failed?²⁸

Since reconquest was deemed impracticable, the *colons* argued that the second-best option was monetary restitution by the state.²⁹ They incorporated their case into that of the royalist émigrés demanding reparation, which was one of the most burning issues in the Restoration. If the metropolitan aristocrats were to receive indemnity for their properties that were confiscated during the French Revolution, then why should the planters, who had been

²⁷ On the process of the governmental negotiations and arrangements with Haiti, see Robert Stein, "From Saint-Domingue to Haïti," *Journal of Caribbean History* 19 (November 1984): 189-226; Brière, *Haïti et la France*; Brière, "La France et la reconnaissance de l'indépendance Haïtienne," *French Colonial History* 5 (2004): 125-38; Ghislain Gouraige, *L'Indépendance d'Haïti devant la France* (Port-au-Prince: Imprimerie de l'État, 1995).

²⁸ See the debate on the petition for the reconquest by Comte de Léaumont in the Chamber of Deputies in January 22, 1822 (AP, CD, tome 34, 113-15).

²⁹ Even if not full restitution, the *ex-colons* had received subsidies from the government included into the relief roll since the Thermidorian government. In case of 1821-22, the budget of the year allocated 900,000 francs for subsidizing the *ex-colons* and refugees. See AP, CD, June 16, 1821, tome 32, 197.

equally or more severely devastated by the Haitian Revolution, not be entitled to such compensation as well? The *ex-colons* insisted that they had been expropriated by the abolition decree of the National Convention in 1794 and were therefore eligible for indemnity by the state.³⁰ Charles X issued the law for émigrés' compensation in 1825 and wrote that it was most of all for "the most miserable and innocent of those unhappy men [émigrés]," the refugee planters of Saint-Domingue.³¹

Lastly, the most imminent concern for the refugee planters was the protection from the pressing metropolitan creditors. As previously mentioned, the planters depended heavily on metropolitan capital when they were under the mercantile system of the Old Regime. In the aftermath of the Haitian Revolution, Nantes traders alone were owed 78 million *livres tournois* in debts by Saint-Domingue planters.³² Since their colonial assets were ruined by the Revolution, the *colons* insisted that the state protect them from the pressing demands of their metropolitan creditors. The French government, first under Napoleon and then the Bourbon monarchy, had temporarily alleviated the debts of the *colons* by regularly deferring repayments.³³

However the sixth deferment was met with a strong objection in the summer of 1820—

³⁰ The *colons* recurred to the article 10 of the Charter that the state could demand the sacrifice of private property only in the condition of indemnity.

³¹ Joachim, "Décolonisation ou néocolonialisme?," 68.

³² Albane Forestier, "A 'Considerable Credit' in the Late Eighteenth-century French West Indian Trade: the Chaurands of Nantes," *French History* 25 (2011), 48. According to Forestier, Nantes traders lost ninety-eight million *livres tournois* in the colonial trade by the Haitian Revolution. It is estimated that the fortune of Nantes merchants was approximately 120 million *livres tournois* in 1789.

³³ Prior deferments included the Napoleon legislations of 19 *fructidor* year X, 23 *germinal* year XI, July 20, 1807, and June 24, 1808, as well as the Restoration decrees of December 2, 1814, February 21, 1816, and April 15, 1818.

the liberals regarded this suspension as part of the ultraroyalist scheme to pass the bill indemnifying the émigrés. In the Chamber of Deputies the liberals' spokesman was Jean-Denis Lanjuinais, a member of the *Société de la morale chrétienne*. He converted his polemics into the anti-émigrés case and asserted that favoring the ex-*colons* was the same as privileging the aristocratic émigrés, given the Old Regime affiliations between the two groups. His arguments neutralized the sufferings of the ex-*colons*—when considering the suffering all of the French went through during the French Revolution, what was so special in the misfortunes of the *colons*? Had France ever compensated for the lives and properties sacrificed in the Terror? Besides, as Lanjuinais cynically noted, many of the purportedly dispossessed *colons* were still richer in comparison to their poor French creditors. Is it possible for one to forget how those planters had amassed wealth on both sides of the Atlantic before 1789?³⁴

More importantly, the liberals questioned the *colons*' status as victims. The issue of the *colons*' debts became the battlefield on which opposing parties contested not only the legitimacy of the *colons*' claims, but also the origins of the Haitian Revolution. Lanjuinais questioned the widespread idea that the decree of abolition by the National Convention had brought on the tragedy of Saint-Domingue. Borrowing from the anti-*colon* discourses of the revolutionary era, he claimed that the colonial revolution was the *colons*' own making: the long-term instability and injustice of slavery portended the general insurrection of black slaves. He thus argued that the Haitian Revolution was the natural result of the accumulated injustice of the old social system, as was the case for the French Revolution. His discourse illustrates the liberals' apologetics for the

³⁴ AP, CP on June 19, 1820, tome 28, 590-95.

Haitian Revolution during the Restoration.³⁵

The position of the refugee planters was indeed strong, but certainly did not go unchallenged. The duality of the *ex-colons*' status as émigrés and ex-planters put them in a rather complicated position. When asking for reparation, they presented themselves as part of the émigrés, which strengthened their argument in the political milieu of the Restoration. They also, however, emphasized the supposedly extraordinary nature of their status, arguing that their downfall by the loss of the island could not be compared to any other case. Some of the *colons* of Saint-Domingue insisted they should monopolize the status of refugee, even at the expense of other refugees whom they considered to have not suffered enough.³⁶ Their unparalleled misfortune was supposed to legitimize a favor from the state, especially a collective concession of colonial debts, which the liberals regarded as an infringement on private property. So in order to justify their multiple claims, how did the refugee *colons* fashion and fortify their status as victims?

The Refugee Colons and Politics of Memory in the Restoration

In order to win their desperate battle to survive in the metropole, the refugee planters of Saint-Domingue carried out a vigorous propaganda war. What was remarkable was that they published many propagandist works in the form of historical narratives or “narrativizing”

³⁵ AP, CP on June 19, 1820, tome 28, 590; Jean-Denis Lanjuinais, comte, *Contre les privilèges de surséance des dettes privées* (reprinted from his Chamber of Peers speech in June 20[19], 1820) (Paris: Baudouin Fils, 1820). His discourse is analyzed in details in the next chapter.

³⁶ *Lettre du'un colon de Saint-Domingue à MM. Les membres de la Chambre des Députés* (Paris: Marchand du Breuil, 1824).

discourses, which aimed to elucidate the nature of the revolution in Saint-Domingue. They believed that their endangered interest hinged on telling “a true story” of the Saint-Domingue Revolution—what had really happened in the colony before and after the French Revolution, and what the real situation of Haiti was after 1804—to a metropolitan public that had been deceived by the liberals and philanthropists. Whenever any different interpretation of the Saint-Domingue Revolution appeared in the Parisian journals or on the platform of the Chambers, the *ex-colons* angrily wrestled with those “incendiary” or “ill-informed” opinions so as to “enlighten” the misguided public.

The refugee planters relied on their status as eyewitnesses in order to deem themselves as the narrators of the “true” story of the Haitian Revolution. In 1814, France was filled with eyewitnesses of the French Revolution, but had a dearth of those who had witnessed the colonial upheavals. From the fall of 1802, Napoleon banned the publication of all materials concerning the doomed expedition to Saint-Domingue,³⁷ and information on the colonial situations was very difficult to obtain due to the war conditions. The situation changed little under the Restoration—the slave-owners attempted to protect their properties against the impact of Haiti’s rebellious presence, but the lack of adequate information prevented them from making an accurate assessment of the situation.³⁸ By filling this vacuum with their “testimonies,” the *ex-colons* could easily penetrate public opinion and display their accounts as the only reliable sources. An emphasis on eyewitness testimony abounds in their accounts. For example, a *colon* narrator

³⁷ On the colonial policy under Napoleon, see Bénot, *La démence coloniale sous Napoléon*.

³⁸ See Michel L. Martin and André G. Cabanis, “Ignorance et malentendus: l’indépendance d’Haïti devant l’opinion en France sous le Consulat et L’Empire,” in *La révolution française et Haïti*, tome II, 358-74; Stein, “From Saint-Domingue to Haiti, 1804-1825.”

named L.-J. Clausson repeatedly highlighted that he “watched” the prerevolutionary splendors of Saint-Domingue, “kept an eye on the events that brought about both its decadence and its ruin,” and finally “witnessed all the horrors and all the crimes” in the War of Haitian Independence.³⁹

As expected, many refugee *colons* published their own “history” of the Saint-Domingue Revolution. One of the pioneering works was the two-volume *Histoire de la révolution de Saint-Domingue*, published in 1814 by Antoine Dalmas.⁴⁰ Dalmas was a white French surgeon from a Saint-Domingue plantation who had escaped to the USA after the burning of Le Cap in 1793 and published what he had written during his exile later in France. A royalist and supporter of reconquest, his accounts were filled with vivid descriptions of black savagery committed in the early years of the Haitian Revolution and were spread widely in the metropole, becoming raw material for subsequent works on the Haitian Revolution published later. Another example was L.-J. Clausson’s book of, *Précis historique de la révolution de Saint-Domingue*. The author was an ex-proprietor and magistrate of Saint-Domingue who trumpeted the *colons*’ agenda in Paris during the revolutionary years.⁴¹ In hopes of retaking his property he accompanied the expedition of General Leclerc but returned in despair. He next served as a secretary of the above-mentioned

³⁹ L.-J. Clausson, *Précis historique de la révolution de Saint-Domingue: réfutation de certains ouvrages publiés sur les causes de cette révolution* (Paris : Chez Pillet Ainé, 1819), vii-viii.

⁴⁰ Antoine Dalmas, *Histoire de la révolution de Saint-Domingue* (Paris: Mame frères, 1814). This book is well-known as the first written account of the Bois-Caïman ceremony. See Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, 82-90.

⁴¹ He belonged to the accusers in the famous debate between the colonial commissioners who had proclaimed abolition in Saint-Domingue and the *colons* in 1795, and had an experience of arrest under the Convention; see Colin Lucas ed., *French Revolution Research Collection* (Oxford & New York: Pergamon Press, 1990-95), Section 11.2/48, Clausson, Millet, Thomas, “Les accusateurs incarcérés de Polverel et Santhonax, accusés et libres.”

refugee *colons*' organization headed by the Comte de Léaumont.⁴² Clausson's work was published in 1819 and was intended as a counterattack against the imagined onset of the revolutionary party in the midst of the *Affaire Grégoire*. As shown in these examples, politics and historical narrative were inseparable in the *colons*' works.

At that time, the refugee planters were not the only group in the metropole eager to use history as a political tool. As mentioned in the introduction, their readiness to use narrative discourse was only a part of a larger and ongoing political battle in France. Under the Restoration, French politics was dominated by two conflicting political parties: the counterrevolutionaries and the liberals. They clashed over how to interpret the French Revolution and where to place it within the context of French history. While the counterrevolutionaries asserted that the Revolution was a conspiracy to be purged, the liberals were desperate to justify it as the inevitable result of a longer historical process. A result of this dispute was what a contemporary called a "historical fever," a passionate history boom.⁴³ It was more than just history books becoming a best-selling genre; historical discourse was also at the center of political language during the Restoration. Contemporary political issues, both international and domestic, were very often discussed with historical references and narrating the revolutionary experiences was itself a political act.⁴⁴

As the refugee *colons* of Saint-Domingue publicized and transmitted their narratives of

⁴² Ruth F. Necheles, *The Abbé Grégoire, 1787-1831: The Odyssey of an Egalitarian* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1971), 211-21.

⁴³ Baron Amable-Guillaume-Prosper Brugière de Barante's *Mélanges historiques et littéraires* (1835) is quoted in Mellon, *The Political Uses of History*, 3.

⁴⁴ Mellon, *The Political Uses of History*, 1-4.

the colonial revolution, they entered into the most impassioned political contestation of the Restoration. To most of contemporary French society, the colonial revolution was a part of the metropolitan revolution—they understood the Haitian Revolution through the lens of the French Revolution. The refugee planters attached their revolutionary experiences to the counterrevolutionary interpretation of the French Revolution. As the pitiful, exiled victims of the Revolution, they were the staunchest ultraroyalists in the counterrevolutionary fight against the maneuvers of the revolutionary party. So far as the rebel colony stood independent, the Revolution had not yet ended for the *colons*.

The *Affaire Grégoire* of 1819 illustrates how the refugee *colons* joined the battle of revolutionary memory in the Restoration and how in the wake of the French Revolution the two revolutions, metropolitan and colonial, were deemed as entwined.⁴⁵ It also betrays the complex nature of “silencing” and “forgetting” the Revolution in the Restoration. The affair began when Abbé Grégoire was nominated for a deputy position in Isère in the summer of 1819. This celebrated revolutionary priest—a former member of the *Société des amis des noirs*, presumed regicide, and fierce defender of the Haitian independence—was the sworn enemy of both the royalists and the colonial party. Abbé Grégoire was elected after a turbulent electoral campaign, which led to a bitter conflict in the Chambers. Although the liberal left insisted that the Restoration policy of *Oubli* (forgetting of the revolutionary past) stipulated silence on revolutionary careers, the ultras succeeded in nullifying the election of Grégoire on the ground

⁴⁵ On the affair, see Alyssa Goldstein Sepinwall, *The Abbé Grégoire and the French Revolution: The Making of Modern Universalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 164; Necheles *The Abbé Grégoire*, 216-7.

that a regicide seated in the Chamber was “dishonorable.”⁴⁶

The refugee planters took this event as obvious proof that the revolutionary party was revived. They warned against the magnetic power of Grégoire’s seditious words in the colonies, which had been proven in Saint-Domingue.⁴⁷ To the refugee planters, the republican priest embodied the revolutionary disaster itself as he was one of the few remaining members of the *Amis des noirs*: the planters called antislavery liberals “the troupe of Grégoire” or “soldiers of Grégoire.”⁴⁸ Their rage was reflected in the intense press campaign and the development of their organ *Défenseur des colonies* in 1819. The ex-colons called the journal a mockery of the “defenders of humanity,” the antislavery philanthropists who destroyed their grand colony in the name of humanity.⁴⁹ Refugee *colons* intervened similarly when other candidates for public positions seemed to have questionable career histories or appeared sympathetic towards revolutionary abolitionism or colonial reforms. When General Étienne Maynard Laveaux came forward as a candidate in Saône-et-Loire, the ex-colons interjected into the electoral campaign to disclose to “the oblivious electorate” that he was a former governor of Saint-Domingue during the Directory and a supporter of Toussaint Louverture.⁵⁰

This agitation ran counter to the *Oubli*, which ordered amnesia of the revolutionary

⁴⁶ AP, Chambre des Députés (hereafter CD), on 2-7, December 1819, tome 25, 712-739.

⁴⁷ *Le Défenseur des colonies*, no.1 (1819): 31-32.

⁴⁸ See *le Défenseur des colonies* (1819-1820) and *l’Observateur* (1820).

⁴⁹ *Le Défenseur des colonies*, no.1 (1819): 8-9.

⁵⁰ *Le cri d’un colon de Saint-Domingue contre les prétentions électorales de M. le lieutenant général Maynaud, comte de Laveaux* (Paris: Chez les marchands de nouveautés, 1820).

past.⁵¹ Even if the restored monarchy could not avoid some degree of vengeance, especially after the Hundred Days, the Bourbons could not afford to allow the “white terror” to prevail. Given the record of long-term and extensive collaboration between the French elites and the revolutionary and Napoleonic regimes, the *Oubli* was necessary to reunite France, and the left eagerly agreed. However the work of Sheryl Kroen shows how the two pillars of the monarchy, the ultras and the Catholic priests, defied the *Oubli* and continuously recalled revolutionary memories, calling for punishment and vengeance.⁵² Here the refugee planters joined the ultraroyalists in their fight against the treacherous *Oubli*. They diligently attacked ex-revolutionaries and colonial officials, whom they judged to be responsible for the destruction of the colony. The last thing they wanted was for the Haitian Revolution to be silenced and forgotten.

What were the refugee *colons* pursuing when they joined the counterrevolutionary politics of memory? They adopted counterrevolutionary memory as a politico-discursive strategy to adjust their discordant pasts and present themselves as the most royalist of all of the subjects who had been victimized by the French Revolution. In fact, the discourse of Saint-Domingue planters did not remain royalist throughout the French Revolution. Their political languages and loyalty adapted to the changing regimes from revolutionary governments to the Napoleonic Empire.⁵³ The failure of the Napoleonic expedition and the return of the Bourbons curtailed divergent views among the *colons* and brought them even closer to their Old Regime allies.

⁵¹ Jennifer Pierce also mentions this problem. See Pierce, “Discourse of Dispossessed,” 394-95.

⁵² On the counterrevolutionaries’ opposition to the *Oubli*, see Sheryl Kroen, “Revolutionizing Religious Politics during the Restoration,” *French Historical Studies* 21, no. 1 (1998): 27-53.

⁵³ For reviewing this history, see Pierce, “Discourses of the Dispossessed.”

Adopting a counterrevolutionary framework was also a way for them to legitimize their status as innocent victims. It was true that after 1804 French public opinion had become more sympathetic to the refugee *colons* than ever.⁵⁴ Demonstrating such an atmosphere, François-René de Chateaubriand indignantly asked, “Who still dares to support the cause of the blacks after all the crimes they have committed?”⁵⁵ However not every party unquestionably agreed with him. The image of the colonial planter as an icon of cruelty and tyranny was widely distributed in the anticolonial literature of the late eighteenth-century and lingered on into the nineteenth-century. Liberals and republicans argued that the slave owners were only reaping what they had sown. A key to transforming their images from victimizers to victims lay in appropriating the counterrevolutionary framework—doing so enabled the refugee *colons* to represent the Haitian Revolution as the pinnacle of the revolutionary crimes and insert their sufferings into the national ordeal of the French Revolution.

When the *colons* narrated what they had endured, it was not only interlinked to external politics, but also to the inner dynamics of identity formation. Here I do not approach the narrative discourses of the *colons* as “reflecting” the events of the Haitian Revolution, nor merely as a window to look into a preexisting mindset of a social group. Rather, their historical narratives are analyzed as “performative.” Geoffrey White says, “[C]ommunicative practices are of interest not as a means of expressing prior cultural meanings but as acts that actively create the past, or at least create the past as understood and felt by social actors within particular social

⁵⁴ For the Parisian opinion, see Stein, “From Saint-Domingue to Haiti 1804-1825”; for that of the port cities, see Dwain C. Pruitt, “Nantes Noir: Living Race in the City of Slavers” (PhD diss., Emory University, 2005).

⁵⁵ René-François Chateaubriand, *Le génie du Christianisme* (Paris: Migneret, 1803), 454.

and historical circumstances.”⁵⁶ It is not particularly important here how those planters “distorted” the facts of the Haitian Revolution, because in fact, their efforts to deny or censor some facts can be even more revealing than what they present to the public. My question is how the historical narratives affected the community’s self-fashioning process and how such narratives were revised to accommodate changing historical contexts. The refugee planters’ narratives of the Haitian Revolution register both their peculiar *colon* identity inherited from prerevolutionary era and their efforts to deal with the profound crisis incurred by the Revolution.

Refugee Planters’ Plot of the Haitian Revolution:

From the Golden Days of Saint Domingue to Haiti’s Degeneration into “a Land of Africa”

I attempt, therefore, to grasp the politics of refugee *colons*’ campaign at this juncture between the larger political context of the Restoration and their communal practice of rebuilding challenged identity. In other words, the narrative discourse of the refugee *colons* was a communicative practice meant to reconstruct their fractured group identity and to demand public recognition and compensation from French society. While I acknowledge the inner diversity and complexity of the *colons*’ narratives,⁵⁷ I intend to focus on the politicized discourse of the ex-planters’ propaganda and analyze their shared central plot structure, especially the strategic points within their narratives at which the ex-*colons* tried to justify their multiple claims.

The *colons*’ narrative always begins with nostalgic longing for the golden days of

⁵⁶ Geoffrey M. White, “Histories and subjectivities,” *Ethos* 28, no. 4 (December 2000): 495.

⁵⁷ For observing diversity, individuality and complexity of the *colons*’ narratives as captive narratives, see Popkin, *Facing Racial Revolution*.

prerevolutionary Saint-Domingue. Similar to the counterrevolutionaries who waxed lyrical about a happy French kingdom that had been tragically destroyed by the French Revolution, the *colons* conjured up the image of a prosperous tropical island. In their nostalgic accounts, Saint-Domingue was an idyllic paradise, a place of lush natural landscapes and opulent lifestyles, populated by content slaves living under the care of generous masters. Dalmas's book opens with a panoramic view of prerevolutionary Saint-Domingue, presenting its geography, fertile environment, a variety of export crops, splendid colonial cities, efficient administration, and the hospitality and generosity of the white masters so slandered in the metropole.⁵⁸

This was hardly a new approach. From the late eighteenth-century the *colons* had cultivated this planter version of tropical exoticism to counteract metropolitan criticism of plantocracy and colonial degeneration.⁵⁹ The *colon* writers described colonial slavery as a bulwark against the harsh realities of the labor market. They often compared the miserable lives of urban industry workers or agricultural laborers in the metropole to the purportedly more comfortable lives of black slaves who were under the care of their masters. A *colon*'s pamphlet argued, "Slavery in Saint-Domingue, far from being as cruel as one was inclined to say, was gentle and beneficial to the Negroes. The work of farmers in France is a thousand times much more toilsome than that which the Negroes were subjected."⁶⁰ The planters tried to declare slavery as a necessity for the socioeconomic wellbeing of black slaves, thus removing it from the narrative of universal liberty propelled by the liberals.

⁵⁸ Dalmas, *Histoire de la révolution de Saint-Domingue*, i-xvi, and 1-21.

⁵⁹ See Pierre H. Boulle, "Une description idyllique de la condition des noirs aux Antilles en 1789, d'après le lobby esclavagiste," *Revue Française d'Histoire d'Outre-Mer* LXXII no.266 (1985): 55-60.

⁶⁰ Anonymous, *Saint-Domingue* (Paris: unknown publisher, 1824), 2-3.

The basis of this “happy island” fantasy lay in the glory of the prerevolutionary colonial economy. The Saint-Domingue sugar economy surged after the 1750s, attained an acme of prosperity in the 1780s, and was so striking that it created the legend of Saint-Domingue’s mythical wealth. In the aftermath of the Haitian Revolution, the refugee planters had to oppose the anticolonial sentiments in France that had been brought forth by the loss of Saint-Domingue. Economists in favor of free trade contended that the colonies became too economically burdensome to preserve. The prominent economist and historian Simond de Sismondi condemned slavery and the slave trade as not only morally disgusting but also economically unsound, which meant that reconquest promised nothing in return for the dangerous expedition.⁶¹ There were also suggestions that a more sensible policy would be to give up Saint-Domingue entirely and instead colonizing other territories, particularly those on the African coast.⁶² To the refugee *colons*, those anticolonial or neocolonial opinions represented a great threat: their whole existence and identity relied on the preservation of the old colonial system based in the Caribbean sugar islands, among which Saint-Domingue had predominated.

The ex-planters were therefore devoted to nourishing the myth of “Saint-Domingue produced everything,” asserting that reconquest would be a panacea for economic depression.⁶³ The sweet memory of the French colonial trade’s golden days looked all the more seductive,

⁶¹ Jean Charles Léonard Simonde de Sismondi, *De l'intérêt de la France à l'égard de la traite des nègres: Contenant de nouvelles réflexions sur la traite des nègres* (Genève; Paris: Paschoud, 1814), 100. A colon writer F. Mazères’ book, *De l'utilité des colonies* (Paris: Renard, 1814) was a critique of Sismondi’s argument.

⁶² Christopher L. Miller, *The French Atlantic Triangle: Literature and Culture of the Slave Trade* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 246–73.

⁶³ For example, see the *colons*’ organ, *l'Observateur* (prior *le Défenseur des colonies*) 13 (March 1820): 266–71.

especially when compared with the depression of French foreign trade in the early nineteenth-century.⁶⁴ Many of the *colons*' discourse began with the impressive statistical data of the prerevolutionary colonial economy. An anonymous *colon*'s pamphlet insisted that upon comparing the 140 millions of production of the island in 1789 to the present state, the case for retaking Saint-Domingue would be obvious.⁶⁵ The refugee planters stressed their significant contribution to the French national economy—they depicted colonial economy as a patriotic business and diagnosed its loss as a national crisis. After presenting a series of tables on the economy of Saint-Domingue before 1789, Clausson exclaims: “Was this not important to the power that possessed it, a colony that by itself provided a trade in imports and exports, benefits of shipping and more, in a total of...735,449,932 francs? And who through such measures gave vitality and a way of life to several millions of French people?”⁶⁶ Comte de Léaumont similarly claimed that the national wealth of France depended on commerce and its most-prized colony, urging “Remember sugar, coffee and gold from Saint-Domingue.”⁶⁷ The memoirs of the Prime Minister Villèle who was a former *colon* of Île Bourbon recalled the splendor of the colonial economy before the Revolution: “Nothing in the world was comparable to the spectacle on offer in Saint-Domingue for showing the development of cultivation and commerce, a product of efficient administration.” His statement suggests how widespread the myth of the wealth of

⁶⁴ About the early nineteenth-century French foreign trades, Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery*, 475-81.

⁶⁵ Anonymous (signed as L. P. from Havre), *Lettre de M. L. P., adressée aux Chambres le 5 juillet 1819* (Paris: Impr. de P. Didot aîné, 1819).

⁶⁶ Clausson, *Précis historique de la révolution de Saint-Domingue*, 48

⁶⁷ Comte de Léaumont, *La France demande Saint-Domingue* (Paris: Le Normant, 1817), 9.

prerevolutionary Saint-Domingue was in this period.⁶⁸

Emphasizing the splendor of prerevolutionary Saint-Domingue society led the *colons* to dramatize their experiences of ultimate loss and dispossession, and thus stressed their victimhood. According to Svetlana Boym's theory of modern nostalgia, there are two kinds of nostalgia: "restorative" and "reflective."⁶⁹ While "reflective nostalgia" thrives on wistful dreams and longing, "restorative nostalgia" emphasizes the recovery of a lost past. "Restorative nostalgia" is typical of national or religious revival movements and can be seen as a desire to project the image of an uninterrupted tradition or truth. It is preoccupied with the restoration of authentic origins and often attempts to logicize history in terms of tradition being threatened by conspiracy. In this Manichean worldview, "home" should always be protected from the evil, treasonous schemers.⁷⁰ The refugee planters' narratives display precisely these restorative nostalgic traits. Their vision of Saint-Domingue before 1789 paralleled the atmosphere of metropolitan France in the aftermath of the French Revolution: "In France it is not only the ancient regime that produced revolution, but in some respects the revolution produced the ancient regime, giving it a shape, a sense of closure and a gilded aura."⁷¹ In the *colons'* recollections, prerevolutionary Saint-Domingue was cast as a society flourishing in all manners, the epitome of prosperity, while all the warnings about Saint-Domingue's social crisis were

⁶⁸ Comte de Villèle, *Mémoires et correspondance de Comte de Villèle*, 2nd edition, vol.1 (Paris: Perrin, 1888), 21–23.

⁶⁹ Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 41–43.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid., xvi.

forgotten. In contrast to the Chateaubriandesque aristocratic nostalgia for a lost world,⁷² the nostalgia of the planters rarely deflated into melancholia, but remained a political project forging through the Restoration.

What muddled this lovely vision was the difficulty of explaining the outbreak of slave insurrections on such a supposedly “joyful” island. The *colons* confronted the same dilemma encountered by the counterrevolutionaries in accounting for the outbreak of the French Revolution in an allegedly happy kingdom. Both *ex-colons* and counterrevolutionaries explained the origin of the Revolution through conspiracy theories. Following conservative theorists such as Edmund Burke, Abbé Barruel, and Joseph de Maistre, the counterrevolutionaries argued that the French Revolution was the result of a pan-European conspiracy, prepared by the *philosophes* and their Jacobin adepts. As Darrin McMahon shows in his book, counterrevolutionary polemicists fused the *philosophes*, revolutionaries, and liberals into one comprehensive party of conspiracy.⁷³ This party of the *philosophes* destroyed the precious edifice of French society through its blind belief in metaphysical principles. The refugee *colons* expanded this theoretical plot into a global version—the revolutionaries were prowling in not just Europe, but also in the New World. For them Abbé Grégoire’s career was the clearest testament to their claim that the same party of conspiracy orchestrated the two revolutions, metropolitan and colonial.

The short-lived *Société des amis des noirs*, founded in 1788 as the first French antislavery association, was identified in particular as the chief conspirator. In the *colons’* map of

⁷² Peter Fritzsche, “Chateaubriand’s Ruins: Loss and Memory after the French Revolution,” *History and Memory* 10 (1998): 102–17.

⁷³ Darrin M. McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment: The French Counter-Enlightenment and the Making of Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 262.

conspiracy, the plot began with Britain's envy of Saint-Domingue's prosperity and the *Amis des noirs*—a very agent of Britain—was behind the general insurrection of slaves.⁷⁴ Although the society had in fact little direct effect on revolutionary colonial policy making, the colonial party identified it as a key player in the loss of the colony. A *colon* named F. Mazères blamed “these so-called *amis des noirs* responsible for all the bloodshed as a result of their eloquence and their intrigues.”⁷⁵

The exclusion of an important sequence of events in the early phase of the Haitian Revolution engendered this narrative of external conspiracy. In fact, the colonial revolution started with inner strife among the white population.⁷⁶ Some planters had welcomed the outbreak of the French Revolution, expecting to be able to use it as a way of claiming more colonial autonomy from the metropole. The coming of the French Revolution created civil war between royalists and so-called patriots, which was complicated by the intervention of free people of color. The general insurrection of black slaves in 1791 took advantage of this rift among the governing classes. This phase was especially problematic for the refugee planters under the restored monarchy because it meant that they had not only launched the civil war, but also defied royal authority in favor of colonial autonomy. Liberal journals did not hesitate to point out that it was the *colons*' agitations that had started the colonial revolution.⁷⁷ By both expurgating and

⁷⁴ Clausson, *Précis historique de la révolution de Saint-Domingue*, 34-40.

⁷⁵ F. Mazères, *De l'utilité des colonies, des causes intérieures de la perte de Saint-Domingue et des moyens d'en recouvrer la possession* (Paris: Renard, 1814), 59-60.

⁷⁶ For example, see the classical narrative of James, *The Black Jacobins*, 62–84. For a more recent version, see Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, 76–88.

⁷⁷ For example, see *le Journal du commerce*, April 12 and 13, 1819.

trivializing this stage of the white civil war, the *colons* tried to conceal their previous disloyalty and simplified the complicated battle lines into a single struggle between loyal *colons* and treacherous conspirators.

The armed slaves took center stage in the Haitian Revolution with their general insurrection in 1791. Starting in the north, the insurrection quickly spread into the other parts of Saint-Domingue. The entire island was soon plunged into a state of war and disorder, which was aggravated by British and Spanish invasions. To the *colons* and the ultras, the parallel between the revolutions in the metropole and the colonies could not be more obvious—the insurrection and the following war were regarded as a duplication of the metropolitan Terror and popular violence. Sonthonax and Polverel were dubbed tropical Robespierres.⁷⁸ According to a refugee *colon* who alleged to have witnessed the event, it was the two civil commissioners who incited the otherwise calm and obedient black slaves to take up the insurrection.⁷⁹ Clausson argued that the two commissioners, with secret instruction from the *Amis des noirs*, transplanted revolutionary doctrine into the colony.⁸⁰

The abolition decree issued by the National Convention on February 4, 1794 sealed the fate of the colony's demise. If the Terror was the crux of the French Revolution for the counterrevolutionaries, then the *colons* considered this abolition decree as a perfect equivalent of

⁷⁸ During and after the Revolution, a lot of libelous material on Sonthonax and Polverel was published. As the most critical case, see the confrontation between the planters of Saint-Domingue and the two commissioners in the revolutionary tribunal in 1795, which was published in *Débats entre les accusateurs et les accusés, dans l'affaire des colonies* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, an III [1795]. 7 vols.)

⁷⁹ Hippolyte de Frasans, *Saint-Domingue et Santhonax* (Paris: Dentu, 1822), 7, which was originally published in *Annales Universelles*, June 6, 1797.

⁸⁰ Clausson, *Précis historique de la révolution de Saint-Domingue*, 82-92.

the Terror in the colony. The decree was the very basis of the *colons*' claim that the metropole was responsible for the devastation of the colony, and they should therefore be indemnified by the state. Moreover, the decree would become a landmark of memory, a pinnacle of the Haitian Revolution for both proslavery and antislavery parties. The name of Robespierre overshadowed the French commissioners and slaves' prior struggles for emancipation, obscuring the fact that the decree of February 4 was a postfact ratification of what the colonial people had pressed the commissioners to proclaim in the colony. Guillermin de Montpinay, a military officer who fought in Saint-Domingue, blamed Robespierre for all of the disasters: "With the ambition of the celebrity of Herostratus (ancient Greek arsonist), Robespierre provoked the burning of Saint-Domingue, and the loss of this flourishing colony was the prelude to all the furor which, in 1793, spared neither people nor properties."⁸¹

The *colons* sardonically asked their audience what the universal liberty so magnanimously championed by the metropolitan philanthropists meant to those in the colony. To the "Negroes," general liberty supposedly meant anarchy, libertinage, and indolence.⁸² The *colons* believed that the metropolitan idealists' greatest failure was their inability to perceive differences of colonies, and especially the nature of the Negroes. One colon argued that the colonial system had been based on "wisely limited liberty" in accordance with the uncivilized nature of black slaves. The revolutionaries' "imprudent philanthropism" then demolished this system of moderation. The *colons* warned against the danger of the principle of universal liberty:

⁸¹ Gilbert de Guillermin de Montpinay, *Colonies de Saint-Domingue, ou Appel à la sollicitude du roi et de la France* (Paris: Delaunay, 1819), 17.

⁸² *Droits de souveraineté de la France sur St-Domingue: Mémoire des colons de Saint-Domingue présenté au roi et aux Chambres* (Paris: Dondey-Dupré, 1821).

The colony of Saint-Domingue offers an especially striking example of the danger of these political transitions, which make people precipitously pass from childhood to maturity. Liberty is without doubt a benefit for men when they know how to use it with discretion and wisdom; but it was a veritable scourge for the Negroes who were incapable of understanding the meanings of all the responsibilities that it requires. It was in the name of this liberty that thousands of whites perished in the flames, or by the weapons of murderers.⁸³

The notorious phrase “Perish the colonies, rather than any of the principles,” attributed to Robespierre, became the colonial party’s favorite catchphrase and was used to display the absurd idealism of the revolutionary party.⁸⁴

A great part of the *colons*’ polemic was drawn from their prerevolutionary political language, which was constructed by their ambiguous relationship to the metropole. The planters of Saint-Domingue had harbored a deep-seated resentment towards metropolitan interventionism and mercantilism. In particular, the French Enlightenment threatened plantocracy and slavery with its ideas of colonial reform. The planters thereupon developed a discourse of “colonial particularity” and claimed that metropolitan bureaucrats and idealists were unable to understand the colonial idiosyncrasy derived from the peculiar climate, history, economy, and social composition that engendered slavery and the order of racial discrimination. The refugee planters’ authority was constructed on a foundation of direct experience in the colony. They alleged that those who had set foot on colonial soil and met black slaves could not help but accept slavery as a civilizing institution, or at least a necessary evil. It led the *colons* to imagine themselves as qualified mediators between the metropole and the colonies. While anti-*colon* polemics disqualified the planters’ opinions on the grounds of their interest-permeated bias, the *colons*

⁸³ Ibid., 10.

⁸⁴ Amongst others, see *le Défenseur des Colonies* 2 (January 1820): 46–48.

asserted that only they who were directly attached and devoted to the colonial life were able to guide France toward a true national interest in the colonial affairs. Mazères asked who the true representative of colonies was:

It [this observation] responds in advance to the group of people who, regarding the *colons*' opinion as being affected by interest, always appear to be ready to reject it.....So who else will speak of colonies with reason, if it were not them? The academicians? Those *philosophes* who ruined colonies with their own abstractedness? The so-called friends of blacks, guilty of all the bloodshed through their declamations and their intrigues? Will it be the soldiers and administrators escaping from the disastrous expedition of General Leclerc?⁸⁵

According to him, the metropolitans were inclined to measure the Negroes and free people of color by European standards and therefore might be disgusted by slavery, while the *colons* who “knew” the true nature of the Negroes understood that slavery fitted with the Negroes well and did not cause them much pain.⁸⁶

The French and Haitian Revolutions made the *colons*' old resentments run to an extreme. They insisted that the loss of Saint-Domingue proved the truth of their position and justified their anger at the metropole's meddling in issues for which they were unqualified. Although the planters fervently defended their authentic “Frenchness,” they felt at the same time that they were victimized by the wrongful intervention of “Europeans” imbued with idealism. This binarism between metropolitan abstractedness and colonial practical reason penetrated the entire corpus of the *colons*' writings.

If the story of the Haitian Revolution was meant to be understood in this manner, then what place did the black slaves have here? The ex-*colons*' attitude towards the black slaves was

⁸⁵ Mazères, *De l'utilité des colonies*, 59-60.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 60-61.

peculiarly ambivalent. On the one hand, black slaves living the plantation life were depicted as innocent children—they were simple, ignorant, obedient, and were happy to work under the care of their white masters. On the other hand, once the revolutionary conspirators convinced the slaves that they deserved freedom, they were believed to revert to their original, savage nature. Here the *colons*' narrative reveals the ambivalent attitude of the West towards the colonies: Europeans saw a colony as a space of expansion, production, and dominance that also carried a risk of danger, decadence, and degeneration.⁸⁷ Likewise, the *colons* believed that they civilized the African slaves upon converting them to Christianity, an act that was supposed to be proof of their superiority as Frenchmen. But deep-rooted African barbarity was a constant threat to colonial society; without the pacifying influence of the *colons*, the inherent barbarity of the African race would erupt and shatter the fragile edifice of the colony. According to the *colons*, the abolition decree unleashed this suppressed barbarity and allowed it to rampage.

The black slaves were therefore stripped of any agency in this story, regardless of the role in which the *colons* had cast them. As a group, black slaves were most often designated as “an instrument”⁸⁸—they were first tools of labor for colonial prosperity. Next, with the sedition of the conspirators, the blacks were transformed into weapons of violence for British spies, French philanthropists, and ambitious mulattoes. The planters lamented that the greatest tragedy was that the severity of the black slaves' innate barbarity exceeded all of the conspirators' expectations and reduced the “Pearl of the Antilles” to ashes.

Herein lies an explanation for why the planters' narratives of the Haitian Revolution

⁸⁷ See Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: New York: Routledge, 1992), 257.

⁸⁸ Among many, this expression is frequently found in Mazères, *De l'utilité des colonies*.

strangely fail to mention the origin of all the conflicts and bloodshed—the institution of slavery. The *colon* writers referred to slavery only as a part of the prerevolutionary colonial setting and allowed little room for the issue to intervene in the course of the colonial revolution. It comes to no surprise that these former slave-owners do not mention for what the black slaves were fighting or how abolition and its revocation changed the course of events. The *colon* writers thereby removed slavery from the central causality of the Haitian Revolution and denied the collective ability of slaves and free-colored people to act as political subjects. This is why the abolition decree in 1794 became the greatest landmark of memory, overshadowing all other colonial events. The course of events at Saint-Domingue was supposed to have been swayed by the metropolitan decision, not the acts of slaves and people of color. This perspective was relayed to the French abolitionists, who regarded the colonial revolution as an extension of the universal liberty proclaimed by the French Revolution.

The last phase of the War of Haitian independence was the most violent and destructive—in 1802, the Napoleonic army led by General Leclerc invaded Saint-Domingue. The war displayed unprecedented mass violence and left both sides with heavy losses. It was at this point the term “African barbarity” came to the fore of the *colons*’ discourse. The expedition was expected to punish the black and colored rebels and restore the colony to its legitimate rulers—in fact, many colons followed along the expeditionary army in hopes of recovering their lost homes and fortunes. Instead, the shocking defeat of Napoleon’s troops nullified the *colons*’ only legitimate narrative.

Confronted by this crushing defeat, the *colons*’ story turned into a series of nightmares. If the mission of the counterrevolutionary memory was to produce accounts of the crimes of the

Revolution,⁸⁹ then the colons were definitely fervent contributing authors. Their narratives meticulously cataloged anecdotes of massacres, infanticide, rapes, and destruction of property to fully highlight their victimhood.⁹⁰ Such accounts of colonial atrocities greatly amplified the counterrevolutionary narratives. Many terms used by the colons to describe the slaves in revolt corresponded with the counterrevolutionaries' adjectives used to condemn the popular violence, such as "*féroces*," "*brigands*," "*barbarie*," and "*bande presque nue*."⁹¹ In the elites' horror-filled imagination, their fears of the revolutionary mob and the black slaves fed off of each other. The refugee *colons* pitted their irrefutable misfortune against the liberals' apology about the Revolution: in spite of all the liberal embellishments, the ex-*colons* argued, it was in the massacres and bloodshed of this tropical Terror that the stark nature of the Revolution was laid bare.

Another key memory of the Haitian Revolution installed by the planters' narratives was that of *incendie*—the burning of colonial cities and the massacre of whites at the hands of black “cannibals.”⁹² Danielle Begot and Marcel Chatillon unearthed numerous visual depictions of the Haitian Revolution that the refugee *colons* had commissioned or inspired in Europe, thus

⁸⁹ Mellon, *The Political Uses of History*, 58-100.

⁹⁰ Clausson, *Précis historique de la révolution de Saint-Domingue*, 71-73. Also see the detailed description of the blacks' atrocities in Dalmas, *Histoire de la Révolution de Saint-Domingue*, 113-49.

⁹¹ Martin & Cabanis, “Ignorance et malentendus: l’indépendance d’Haïti devant l’opinion en France sous le Consulat et L’Empire,” 362. Through studying the key terms of the colons, especially “*brigands*,” during the Empire, Danielle Begot points out how much those vocabularies, drawn from the metropolitan situations, blocked the *colons*' awareness of the new dimensions in the colony. Danielle Begot, “À l’origine de l’imaginaire de violence à Saint-Domingue,” in *Mourir pour les Antilles*, 118-19, 122-27. Also see the pro-slavery association between Saint-Domingue and Vendée excavated by Malick Ghachem, “The Colonial Vendée,” in *The World of the Haitian Revolution*.

⁹² Marcel Chatillon, *Images de la Révolution aux Antilles* (Basse-Terre: Société d’Histoire de la Guadeloupe, 1989), 11(not paged).

demonstrating that the image of “*incendie*,” the conflagration of the colonial cities, had become a stereotypical representation of the Haitian Revolution.⁹³ When we consider that conflagration was the contemporary description of the fall of the Roman Empire, this parallel implies that the *colons* envisaged the colonial revolution as a barbarian invasion upon a grand civilization.⁹⁴ The distressing evacuation of Le Cap, “the West Indian Paris,” as it was being engulfed by flames would be the final episode of the *colons*’ tragic memories.⁹⁵ The scene of Le Cap aflame became a primary image of the colonial revolution, especially since Le Cap endured an earlier burning in 1793.⁹⁶ The story of the *colons* therefore described the Haitian Revolution as neither a political nor military process, but as sheer catastrophe beyond human control.

As the refugee planters’ recollections draw to a close, the term “African” or “African barbarity” appeared more frequently and emphatically. The use of these phrases reveals how the planters’ memory racialized or “Africanized” the Haitian Revolution. As the events unfolded, increasingly pejorative connotations were added to the African stereotype, which was presented as an antithesis to French citizenship and civilization and was extended to the entire colored population.⁹⁷ As the *colons* monitored the events in Haiti, they asked their audiences what the result of the Saint-Domingue Revolution was. The *colons* answered themselves with the

⁹³ Begot, “A l’origine de l’imaginaire de violence à Saint-Domingue”; Chatillon, *Images de la Révolution aux Antilles*, 11.

⁹⁴ Chatillon, ed., *Images de la Révolution aux Antilles*, 11.

⁹⁵ Clausson, *Précis historique de la révolution de Saint-Domingue*, 114-19.

⁹⁶ Jeremy Popkin defines this event as the decisive turning point in the Haitian Revolution. See Popkin, *You Are All Free*.

⁹⁷ Vertus Saint-Louis, “Le surgissement du terme “Africain” pendant la Révolution de Saint-Domingue,” *Ethnologies* (Canada) 28 (2006) : 147–71.

observation that once the prosperous colony fell into the hands of “Africans,” it degenerated into “a land of Africa.” A stock phrase of the proslavery party was that Saint-Domingue was turning into “the second Guinea.”⁹⁸ The racial invective of the *colons* was much more intense when they confronted the mulatto “usurpers,” whom the *colons* supposed simply replaced the ex-masters. Mulattoes were, they asserted, inevitably tainted by the African blood and doubly degenerated by miscegenation.⁹⁹

This “Africanizing” rhetoric was used to negate the independence of Haiti and discredit the following governments of the island. After the northern kingdom of Henri Christophe fell in 1820, Haiti was ruled by the mulatto government of President Boyer. As the metropolitan opinions of 1820 leaned toward negotiation with Haiti instead of reconquest, the colonial party railed against Haiti’s mulatto leaders. An ex-*colon* considered the diplomatic negotiation with Haiti a surrender to “Africans,” indignantly exclaiming, “What! Africa would conquer America, despite the enlightenment of Europe?”¹⁰⁰ When General Maximilien Sébastien Foy suggested in the Chamber of Deputies negotiation with President Pétion, the ex-*colons* cried that there was no negotiating with the perfidious mulattoes. How could you, a *colon* exclaimed, imagine that those “Africans” are capable of governing? The so-called liberty of Haiti was nothing but the tyranny of mulattoes over Negroes, which was the most widespread belief the *colons* had about Haiti.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Among many, Comte de Léaumont, *Lettre au rédacteur du Drapeau Blanc*, 20 Juillet 1824 (Paris : Marchand Du Breuil, 1824).

⁹⁹ *Le cri des colons propriétaires à Saint-Domingue, expropriés et réfugiés en France, ou Appel à la nation* (Paris: Goujon, 1822), 7.

¹⁰⁰ Anonymous (signed as Le comte de..., colon échappé à l’incendie du Cap), *Lettre d’un colon de Saint-Domingue* (Paris: Boucher, 1822), 4.

¹⁰¹ Anonymous, *Lettre à M. le Général Foy par un colon de Saint-Domingue* (Paris: Chez les

In a refugee *colon*'s fierce criticism of the governmental negotiation with Haiti, the liberals are reproached for abandoning the blacks to an even worse form of slavery, as the mulatto masters lacked the paternalism of the white ones:

Ah, what! The friends of the blacks would allow slavery in favor of mulattoes, when it is obvious that the black slaves are more mistreated by the former free blacks and mulattoes than by the Europeans!; What are these rights the mulattoes have over the unfortunate blacks and over the soil of Saint-Domingue that were cleared by the French?¹⁰²

Therefore, the colonial party insisted that France had just two options in Saint-Domingue: allow it to regress to African barbarity or preserve what was left of European civilization. Ultraroyalists agreed with this point. Louis André de Bruges (Comte de Bruges) was a former officer in the Saint-Domingue army and aide-de-camp of the future Charles X, and he published an article in *le Conservateur* asserting that the reconquest of Saint-Domingue was imperative for the security of all European colonies.¹⁰³ He urged that the French should face up to the reality of the "black" Saint-Domingue, where everything lay in ruins after the "white" people of Saint-Domingue had left.

If the difference in the physical constitution of Negroes presented to the observer is insufficient for explaining this moral phenomenon, then to what cause should it be attributed? Tell me why, that the moment Europe was forced to flee the devastated land of Saint-Domingue, the Negroes are found there as they are in Africa, creatures rebellious toward every principle of morality, justice and liberty;.....¹⁰⁴

Marchands de Nouveautés, 1822), 6-8.

¹⁰² Anonymous (signed M. D. A. L. F.), *La vérité sur Saint-Domingue et les mulâtres* (Paris: unknown publication, 1824), 3.

¹⁰³ Comte de Bruges, "Des Antilles," *Le Conservateur*, tome 2, livraison 23, 450-51.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 452.

Advocating for reconquest, Comte de Bruges asserted that France had to choose between “the African government, with the inherent liabilities of the black race that will make [Saint-Domingue] the scourge of all the nations, or the establishment of an order strong enough to protect the whites and force the Negroes to labor.”¹⁰⁵

The fact that the refugee planters still spoke of the easiness of reconquest proved that they still lived in self-delusion. Against the overriding public opinion that it was impossible to defeat the armed ex-slaves, the *ex-colons* argued the French army did not need to fight the black army as it had in 1802. They asserted that if the French expedition or royal commissaries merely rid the island of some mulatto chiefs, then the blacks who were suffering under the harsh slavery of the mulattoes would welcome the return of the old masters.¹⁰⁶ They believed that only the planters knew the best interests of the blacks; “We ourselves are also the Friends of Blacks!”¹⁰⁷ The *ex-colons* cast the mulattoes as the antagonists of their narrative, and continued to depict the blacks as passive creatures who were manipulated by the mulattoes and had to endure great suffering.

This “Africanizing” discourse isolated the Saint-Domingue Revolution from the ongoing colonial revolutions around the world: during that time, the Spanish colonies in South America were close to being independent, and in Greece an insurrection broke out against Turkish rule. The French liberals were enthused by these events as they found a common struggle among these

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 455.

¹⁰⁶ This was a major opinion among the colons. Among many, see Mazères, *De l'utilité des colonies*, 90-107; and Charault, *Coup d'oeil sur Saint-Domingue* (Paris: Panckoucke, 1814).

¹⁰⁷ *Le Défenseur des Colonies*, no.2 (1820): 48.

revolutions—resistance against tyranny.¹⁰⁸ In fact, Pétion helped Simón Bolívar to raise an expedition in 1816 for an independence movement.¹⁰⁹ Abbé Grégoire advised President Boyer to send support to Greece in order to advertize the young Haiti's liberal cause throughout the world, although Boyer, who had more pressing issues, dismissed the proposal.¹¹⁰ In particular, the independence of Spanish colonies, which was about to be officially recognized by the French government, placed the independence of Haiti in a new light: hadn't the American colonies' secession from European powers become a general trend around the world?

The *colons* warned against such an analogy and asserted that Haiti's existence was an anomaly that had nothing to do with the political processes sweeping through South America. A pamphlet of the refugee *colons* urged readers not to compare Haiti to other cases of the American independence. It argued that independence was possible only on the basis of property, religion, and morals, but that system was overturned and ignored in a Saint-Domingue governed by African barbarians.¹¹¹ A *colon* named Coustelin also contended that the issue of Saint-Domingue should be defined in terms of the *colons*' perfectly legal property rights in owning black slaves, not in terms of political liberty. He maintained that regarding Negroes as political subjects was

¹⁰⁸ For example, see the works of Civique de Gastine that is analyzed in the next chapter; *Histoire de la république d'Haïti ou Saint-Domingue, l'esclavage et les colons* (Paris: Plancher, 1819); and *Lettre au Roi sur l'indépendance de la république d'Haïti et l'abolition de l'esclavage dans les colonies françaises* (Paris: Marchands de nouveautés, 1821).

¹⁰⁹ About this topic, see Paul Verna, *Pétion y Bolívar* (Caracas, Venezuela: unknown publication, 1969).

¹¹⁰ Geggus, "Haiti and the Abolitionists," 128; E. G. Sideris and A. A. Konsta, "A Letter from Jean-Pierre Boyer to Greek Revolutionaries" *Journal of Haitian Studies* 11, no. 1 (2005): 167-71.

¹¹¹ *Le cri des colons propriétaires à Saint-Domingue*, 8-9.

pure nonsense.¹¹² Comte de Bruges insisted that the independence of the Spanish colonies was completely different from that of Saint-Domingue because the former would continue to trade with Europe and preserve their ties with European civilization. That had not happened with the “black” Saint-Domingue that had turned into another “Africa.” As a result, the birth of Haiti was narrated in the *colons*’ counterrevolutionary framework as a by-product of the French Revolution, but at the same time its racial dynamics distinguished it from a larger historical movement that the French Revolution had stirred in the Americas. A nation of self-liberated “African” slaves was to be nothing more than an historical aberration, which was neither repeatable nor imitable.

Consequently, the story of the Haitian Revolution as narrated by the *colons* was not about slavery and freedom. They omitted from their narratives the two elementary factors in colonial history: the internal divisions among the whites and the institution of slavery. These omissions enabled the *colons* to articulate the colonial revolution as their own tragic but patriotic struggle to preserve the colony for France against multiple enemies, such as British agents, revolutionary conspirators, mulatto usurpers, and, most of all, the barbaric “Africans.” The refugee planters inserted colonial events into the counterrevolutionary memory and also “Africanized” the colonial revolution by reworking their traditional language of color.

These interconnected narrative strategies had largely two effects for their campaign. First, the narrative strategies helped the refugee *colons* suppress the troublesome inner conflicts within their own ranks and reaffirm their group identity. There were a variety of differences within their own ranks in terms of property ownership, political orientation, generation, and

¹¹² Coustelin, *Sur l’émancipation de Saint-Domingue* (Paris: Le Normant Père, 1825), 1-10.

itineraries as refugees. Contrary to their assertion of collective sufferings, the refugee *colons*' experiences of the Revolution were very heterogeneous.¹¹³ Some planters complied with the new colonial regime led by Toussaint Louverture, or even with the British army. Some of the *colons*' families had not even set foot on the island they dearly called "home." By appropriating the counterrevolutionary framework, the refugee *colons* resolved these unsettling differences and recast their complicated revolutionary careers as one grand battle between revolutionary conspirators and French royalists. They homogenized the revolutionary era as "our suffering for twenty-five years" caused by liberal ideas.¹¹⁴ For this purpose, "African" was used as a denominator to indicate all the non-white population, while "whiteness" was the strongest title under which the *colons* would unite as the victims of the atrocities committed by "African" rebels. Therefore, when the refugee planters' propaganda repeatedly relayed the story of their innocent victimhood it became a paradigmatic experience for the ambiguous social group called "the former *colons* of Saint-Domingue."¹¹⁵

Second, counterrevolutionary memory and racial discourse fortified the *colons*' claim of Frenchness. The Frenchness of the creoles moving around the Atlantic world was always precarious. The revolutionary experiments in the colonies jeopardized the *colon* identity by devising equal rights for free-coloreds and even trying to convert liberated slaves into French citizens. During the Restoration, the *colons*' opponents questioned the legitimacy of their

¹¹³ To look into the diverse and complicated nature of the white colonists' personal experiences of the Haitian Revolution, see Popkin, *Facing Racial Revolution*.

¹¹⁴ Berquin Duvalon, *Vœux des colons de Saint-Domingue au pied du trône et présentés depuis peu à Sa Majesté par un de ces colons, agissant au nom de tous* (Paris: Panckoucke, 1814).

¹¹⁵ On the dynamics in which a certain set of experiences became "paradigmatic" among community members, see C. Linde, *Life Stories: The Creation of Coherence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

entitlement to public compensation by mentioning their dubious loyalty, the “un-French” lifestyle of planters, and their prior claim of autonomy. In the counterrevolutionary memory, the refugee *colons* found an ideal politico-cultural tool for connecting their singular experiences to French public memory, and thus for legitimizing their sectional interest in a larger framework of the French nation. Also, the *colons* used racial stereotypes to simplify the Haitian Revolution as a clash between “civilized” Frenchmen and “barbaric” Africans and to depict themselves as the patriotic victims in a lost national cause. They underscored the belief that the refugee planters suffered much more than other émigrés because their tormentors were not fellow Europeans but African barbarians. Thus, the refugee *colons* claimed that they had been victimized by both the French Revolution and “African barbarity.”

The Recognition of Haiti in 1825:

Indemnity for the Refugee Colons and the Meanings of Haitian Independence

Just after Charles X ascended the throne in September 1824, a law for indemnifying the émigrés was proposed to the Chamber of Deputies. The polarized conservatives and liberals clashed throughout the autumn and winter, and the émigrés were finally indemnified by the passing of the law on January 3, 1825.¹¹⁶ This law could have simultaneously empowered and damaged the refugee *colons*’ claim for indemnity.¹¹⁷ On the one hand, as their demand to be

¹¹⁶ On the indemnity law’s effect, see Almut Franke, “*Le milliard des émigrés*: The Impact of the Indemnity Bill of 1825 on French Society,” in *The French Émigrés in Europe and the Struggle against Revolution, 1789-1814*. ed. Kristy Carpenter and Philip Mansel (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999), 124-37.

¹¹⁷ See Pierce, “Discourses of the Dispossessed,” 452.

recognized as part of the émigrés was largely accepted, the example of “*milliard* (billion)” for the royalist émigrés had the potential to bolster the refugee *colons*’ claim. The *colons* did not hesitate to demand their own indemnity in the name of equity.¹¹⁸ But on the other hand, as the confrontation between the ultras and the liberals intensified over the issue of the émigrés’ indemnity, the law had the potential to also work against the *colons*’ demand by antagonizing liberals who were otherwise indifferent to the lot of the *colons*. Moreover, the government’s coffers after this generous indemnity for the émigrés were too depleted to pay another large sum of money.

Meanwhile, the Minister of the Navy and Colonies was seeking a more practical and less expensive solution to the problem of Haiti and the *ex-colons*. Although the ultraroyalist and pro-*colon* Prime Minister Villèle was against any concession to “a Black Empire founded upon insurrection and upon a Massacre of the White Population,”¹¹⁹ the commercial lobby was remarkably persuasive and powerful, especially the merchants of Bordeaux, Nantes, and Le Havre who expected to profit from the reopening of Franco-Haitian trade.¹²⁰ Alarmed by the government’s changing attitude toward the rebel colony, Comte de Léaumont fired a broadside at this betrayal, insisting that the *colons* were at that moment the victims of the French

¹¹⁸ Among many, see A. Reverdy jeune, *Affaire de Saint-Domingue : Observations sur le projet de loi en ce moment soumis aux Chambres* (Paris: Imprimerie de C. J. Trouvé, 1826).

¹¹⁹ Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier*, 4.

¹²⁰ Brière highlights the role of baron de Portal, minister of Navy and Colonies (1819-21), in promoting commercial interest against reconquest, which led to France abandoning claims of sovereignty. Jean-François Brière, “Le baron Portal et l’indépendance d’Haïti, 1818–1821,” *French Colonial History* 10 (2009): 97–108.

government's machination.¹²¹

The French government's choice to exchange the recognition of independence for indemnity and commercial privileges opened the door to a diplomatic solution. After a series of failed negotiations in Paris with Haitian agents, Armand de Mackau (Baron de Mackau), was sent to Haiti in April 1825 with an ultimatum stipulating the French conditions for recognizing Haitian independence. It was in fact a threat, given that a fleet of French warships blockaded the port of the capital city during the negotiation. Despite of some angry protests, President Boyer and his cabinet found this proposal acceptable because for the first time in this conflict, France was willing to relinquish sovereignty. Both Boyer and Mackau were keen to reviving Franco-Haitian commerce. On July 11, 1825 the ordinance was endorsed in the Senate of Haiti and the event was celebrated with festivities.¹²²

In France, a royal ordinance of April 17, 1825 was finally publicized on August 12, 1825.¹²³ According to the ordinance, an indemnity totaling 150 million francs was due to the "former *colons*" of Saint-Domingue, not to the French government, and it was to be paid in five installments. The total sum was evaluated as one tenth of the landed properties before 1789, excluding slaves and facilities.¹²⁴ Additionally, French merchants and ships would enjoy

¹²¹ Comte de Léaumont, *Lettre au rédacteur du Drapeau Blanc*.

¹²² About the negotiation, see *Pièces officielles relatives aux négociations du gouvernement français avec le gouvernement haytien pour traiter de la formalité de la reconnaissance de l'indépendance d'Haïti* (Paris: Peytieux, 1825); also see Brière, 107-21.

¹²³ *Le Moniteur*, April 17, 1825.

¹²⁴ In fact the 1825 ordinance and the ensuing distribution procedure reveal a preferential definition of the "former colons" in favor of sugar planters, because it excluded not only men and women of color but also white but non-planter colons such as manufacturers, businessmen, and shopkeepers. See Brière, *Haïti et la France*, 141; Pierce, "Discourses of the Dispossessed," 462.

privileges in Franco-Haitian trade. After a heated controversy in the Chamber of Deputies, the law of April 30, 1826 approved the ordinance and stipulated the procedure for redistributing the indemnity from Haiti among the *colons*. The first payment of thirty million francs in December 1825 was made by a loan from French banks at a high interest.¹²⁵ The Haitian government, suffering from political instability and financial deficit, would continue to renegotiate the terms of the 1825 treaty.

For the *colons* who still obsessed with reconquest, the royal ordinance of 1825 was a complete shock that led to violent protests against the ordinance and the Villèle Ministry. As other *colons* realized that they had no other option, they struggled to obtain better conditions from the promised indemnity. They had numerous concerns, such as who would be eligible to receive an indemnity, how the government severely underestimated Saint-Domingue's prerevolutionary wealth, how they would secure a full payment from Haiti when the French government had not vouched for the payment of indemnity, and how they could prevent their metropolitan creditors from snatching away the already meager sum of indemnity. This occasion thus further invigorated the ex-*colons'* campaign—their refusal to let this treaty justify the Haitian Revolution and tarnish their legitimacy induced them to accentuate their victimhood and sacrifice even more.

The refugee *colons'* principal oppositions to the 1825 ordinance can be divided into two categories: in terms of principle and practical interests. First of all, many *colons* contended that the royal ordinance itself was illegitimate—how could the restored monarchy issue an ordinance

¹²⁵ About redistribution of indemnity and loan to Haiti, see Brière, *Haïti et la France*, 140-52, 161-66.

that acknowledged an offspring of the French Revolution? The *colon* Coustelin lamented, “It’s done! The emancipation of Saint-Domingue is finalized; the principles of the revolt and spoliation are officially recognized and legitimized!”¹²⁶ In the celebration of the 1825 ordinance, Coustelin found only “a repeat of the scene of our memorable July 14.”¹²⁷

Upon the ratification of the 1825 ordinance, which confirmed the loss of Saint-Domingue, the most important issue for the refugee *colons* was to identify who was truly responsible for this tragedy. As seen in their narrative of the Haitian Revolution, their contention was that the French state was first and foremost accountable for the Revolution, and this was the foundation on which their claims for indemnity and other favor were built. The *colons* were enraged that Villèle’s wily presentation of the royal ordinance reduced the painful history of the Haitian Revolution to simply the mutual escalation of violence on both sides.¹²⁸ A petition of the *colons* protested,

France unleashed the winds; and you want to make those who were their deplorable victims responsible for the storms and tempests that it provoked!....Examine with calm and impartiality the sad series of events that overwhelmed us, you will see that our cause is that of misfortune, and that it deserves all the interest of a metropole whose deviations and faults brought us down.¹²⁹

Once the refugee *colons* abandoned the idea of reconquest, they focused on implicating

¹²⁶ Coustelin, *Contre la reconnaissance de la République haïtienne* (Paris: Le Normant père, 1825), 15.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 17.

¹²⁸ *Le Moniteur*, March 10, 1826.

¹²⁹ *Sur l’indépendance de Saint-Domingue, et sur l’indemnité, due aux anciens habitants de cette colonie* (Paris: C. J. Trouvé, 1826), 63. Articles and petitions published in the monarchist newspaper *Aristarque français* were collectively published in this book.

the French state in the indemnity business. According to the 1825 ordinance and the 1826 law of indemnity, the liquidation of indemnity was to be a direct affair between the interested parties and the Haitian government; the French government and royal treasury were not to be involved in any transactions.¹³⁰ The refugee *colons* opposed this position and argued that the 1825 ordinance was “an act of expropriation,” and therefore they deserved a guarantee of the French government’s obligation in regards to the indemnity payment.¹³¹ This demand became more desperate as the Haitian government ceased payments after the first installment in 1825.

As Haiti’s independence was recognized, the refugee *colons*’ perpetuated their narrative of being victimized by the metropole. They claimed to have been twice “expropriated” by the metropole: first by revolutionary emancipation, and then by the 1825 ordinance. A pamphlet by ex-*colons* narrated how they had been betrayed by a metropole to which they had always been loyal: “Revolutionary France revolutionized Saint-Domingue; it declared that slavery of Negroes was abolished (the decree of the Convention of 16 Pluviôse Year II), and, by this act, unleashed without precaution 400,000 Africans almost savage....”¹³² After that act of perfidy, the French government then abandoned their duty of serving the *colons*: “[The metropole] profited from [Saint-Domingue’s] prosperity, and then, as if tired of an inexhaustible source of wealth, it

¹³⁰ Pressed by the *colons*’ claims, the French government made sure in the *Gazette de France* (December 16, 1827), that France had nothing to do with the payment of indemnity from Haiti.

¹³¹ Among many, see A. Reverdy jeune, *Affaire de Saint-Domingue; Sur l’indemnité des anciens colons de Saint-Domingue, mémoire publié au nom de plusieurs anciens colons-propriétaires résidant à Nantes* (Nantes : imprimerie de Forest, 1828); *Réclamations et droits des anciens colons de Saint-Domingue* (Paris : J.-M. Chaignieau, 1829); *Pétition à la Chambre des députés par des anciens colons de Saint-Domingue* (Paris : P. Renouard, 1829); Constant Lamarque, *Considérations sur l’acte d’émancipation de Saint-Domingue* (Paris: Chez Guiraudet, 1828).

¹³² *Recours à justice du Roi, des Chambres, de la nation, contre le projet de loi pour la réparation de 150 millions aux colons, par un colon de Saint-Domingue* (Paris : C. J. Trouvé, February 14, 1826), 7.

handed this colony to devastation and its inhabitants to death.”¹³³ The property right over the Negroes was first sanctioned by the French government, and then later nullified by the metropolitan decree of emancipation. And once again, the 1825 ordinance violated the property rights of the *colons* over the black slaves by excluding them from the assessment of indemnity. An unnamed *colon* writer argued that the engine of Saint-Domingue economy was black labor, not land, and all the capital borrowed from metropolitan creditors was spent on purchasing slaves. This “spoliation” is only comparable to what the revolutionary assemblies, Sonthonax, and Polverel had done.¹³⁴ A *colon* named Reverdy jeune summarized all of this as a double tragedy of the *colons*: in the name of public interest, they were deprived of property by the Revolution and of rights by the monarchy.¹³⁵

Another *colon* attack on the 1825 ordinance was that it was of no use to French interests, contrary to the hopeful prospects of the French government and merchants. First, although the government expected the recognition of Haiti to ensure peace in other French colonies, the *colons* argued that only the opposite was true. There was plentiful discourse about the contagiousness of the Haitian slaves’ rebellion. In 1815, Robertjot Lartigue, a refugee *colon*, alleged to have uncovered a conspiracy by Dessalines to overthrow Martinique and Guadeloupe.¹³⁶ Similar stories about Haitian aid in slave insurrections abounded in the American

¹³³ Ibid., 8.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 11-12.

¹³⁵ A. Reverdy jeune (*colon réfugié*), *Saint-Domingue, Quatre mots encore en faveur des réfugiés* (Paris: C.-J. Trouvé, 1826).

¹³⁶ Roberjot Lartigue, *Rapport de la conduite qu'a tenue, M. Roberjot Lartigue au sujet de l'entreprise formée par Dessalines pour soulever la Martinique, la Guadeloupe et Marie-Galante... Du 26 mai 1806* (Paris: impr. de Dubray, 1815).

colonies that relied heavily on slavery.¹³⁷ Couteslin argued that by acknowledging this independence brought about by violence and massacres, France was endangering not only other French colonies but also those of other European countries; the Haitian ships floating in colonial ports would always instigate resistance. When one considers the independence of Spanish colonies, Coustelin argued, it portends that the newly liberated American states would soon be united against Europe.¹³⁸ A series of articles by refugee *colons* published in the monarchist *l'Aristarque français* warned that “Won’t the Negroes and mulattoes of Martinique, Guadeloupe, and Cayenne see that the revolt of those of Saint-Domingue ended up in gaining independence for them? Is such an example not the surest vehicle for pushing themselves to revolt?”¹³⁹

Moreover, since the French merchants were an elemental force behind the 1825 ordinance, the *colons* antagonized them by claiming that the recognition of Haitian independence would never be advantageous to French commerce. Most *colons* regarded the treaty as a result of a British conspiracy to monopolize West Indian trade and achieve maritime supremacy. They also questioned the credibility of the Haitian government: how could one expect such an unstable government of mulattoes and ex-slaves to last? They asserted that Haiti would not have anything to offer Europeans because the “Negroes,” when left to their own devices, would not work. They argued that this was demonstrated by what had happened at the time of the emancipation proclamation: as soon as liberty was proclaimed, the blacks deserted the workshops and

¹³⁷ For example, see Adda Ferrer, “Speaking of Haiti: Slavery, Revolution and Freedom in Cuban Slave Testimony” in *The World of the Haitian Revolution*.

¹³⁸ Coustelin, *Contre la reconnaissance de la République haïtienne*, 42-43, 47.

¹³⁹ *Sur l’indépendance de Saint-Domingue, et sur l’indemnité*, 45-46.

plantations. The *colons*' articles in *l'Aristarque français* asserted that the ordinance was deceptive in its rosy prospect of the Franco-Haitian commerce. We cannot expect much commerce from what Saint-Domingue would become without masters—that is, a new Africa.¹⁴⁰

What items for trade will [Haitians] offer to our merchants? Money!....We know well that they don't have it because we were obliged to loan them the first one-fifth of the alleged indemnity, and loan it to them with a *twenty-five*-year period. Sugar, coffee, cotton, and indigo!...They have none or almost none of that left: the cultivation of lands has diminished year after year. The Negroes, left to themselves, regress to their original indolence: the great affair of their life is to sleep all day long, dance the *bamboula* during the night; and when they feel hungry they need only some bananas that appear to them without work, to satisfy them. Soon those of the republic of Haiti will become again those who are on the coast of Guinea, unless a slave trade established to provide cultivators for them; which may be an ulterior motive of our philanthropists!¹⁴¹

The antislavery liberals and republicans had to contend with the claim that Haiti had become another Africa, as it became a strong argument for slavery.

However, all the *colons*' prior efforts to glorify the legendary wealth of Saint-Domingue somehow backfired against them. Despite Saint-Domingue's many changes, it still brought to French minds visions of opulence and prosperity. The French government had high expectations of Franco-Haitian trade and reiterated what the *colons* themselves had said: Saint-Domingue was naturally rich. When French bankers advertised Haitian bonds, they depicted Haiti as a land of promise and relied on the grand image of "Saint-Domingue produced everything."¹⁴² How this

¹⁴⁰ *Sur l'indépendance de Saint-Domingue, et sur l'indemnité*, 30-31.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² The Parisian bank Ternaux-Gandolphe was responsible for the loan to Haiti. The bank advertised Haiti as a kind of new Eldorado for French commerce and industry. See Louis-Guillaume Ternaux, *Considérations sur l'emprunt d'Haïti* (Paris: les marchands de nouveautés, 1825), 22-25.

“dream”¹⁴³ was gradually broken will be the subject of following chapters.

The Affaire Blanchet: Ex-colons, Haitian Independence, and Frenchness

In 1827, a trial was held at the French port city of Le Havre. The son of an ex-*colon* of Saint-Domingue was pitted against the President of the Republic of Haiti.¹⁴⁴ Louis-Antoine Blanchet, a barrister of the Royal Court of Paris, accused President Boyer of not fully paying him for his legal work for the Haitian government.¹⁴⁵ The trial took place during a particularly sensitive time because the metropole was still arguing over the conditions of the 1825 ordinance and the legitimacy of the independence of Haiti. The refugee *colons* of Saint-Domingue and the colonial party rallied support for Blanchet. Boyer’s legal counsel was François-André Isambert, a liberal lawyer already renowned as a defender of the *hommes de couleur libres* because of his defense of Cyrille Bissette and his friends.¹⁴⁶ The case drew a good deal of public interest and soon took the form of a confrontation between an anti-Haitian colonial party and the pro-Haitian

¹⁴³ Brière’s *Haïti et la France* is subtitled “Le rêve brisé (broken dream).”

¹⁴⁴ About the case, I consulted François-André Isambert and etc., *Consultation pour S. Exc. le Président de la République d’Haïti Jean-Pierre Boyer* (Paris: E. Duverger, 1827); Prudent Vignard, *Procès entre M. Blanchet et son Exc. Le Président de la République d’Haïti* (Paris: Chez le marchands de nouveautés, 1827); Louis-Antoine Blanchet, *Plaidoyer de Me Blanchet, avocat à la cour royale de Paris, contre le président de la République d’Haïti* (Paris: Gaultier-Laguionie, 1827) ; *le Journal du Havre*, 4-25 May 1827; *Gazette des tribunaux*, Jan 5, Feb 4, May 6-7, May 11, May 27, 1827.

¹⁴⁵ In September 1826 Blanchet had requested the seizure of the cargo loaded in a ship from Haiti, which was then at anchor in Le Havre, for his unfulfilled payment, and it led to the trial in the spring of 1827.

¹⁴⁶ In the court, Berryer stood for Boyer, and Robion for Blanchet. Isambert was not Boyer’s defense lawyer, but a legal counsel. But, as Boyer’s pleading was organized by his consultation and also he was determined to politicize the issue, Blanchet and his lawyers addressed Isambert as their main opponent.

liberals, with each side revealing their conflicting understanding of the independence of Haiti.

To refugee *colons*, the most important aspect of the trial was that it problematized the identity of the refugee *colons* as French citizens. One of Isambert's major legal strategies was to dismiss the case by declaring that Blanchet was not a French citizen, but a Haitian.¹⁴⁷ If the latter was true, then the French tribune could not intervene in the business of two foreigners.¹⁴⁸

Blanchet's party regarded this as an insufferable affront to a French citizen and respectable lawyer. Each party presented different versions of Blanchet's biography to either make his case or dismiss it. His complicated family history was susceptible to conflicting interpretations, which were all the more confounded by the 1825 royal ordinance.

Blanchet's own story was that of a French citizen victimized by the colonial revolution, the treacherous rulers of Haiti, and metropolitan liberals ignorant of the colonial situation. Pleading for himself, Blanchet captured the sympathy of the audience by narrating the story of how he and his family had been taken advantage of by the ungrateful and unfaithful rulers of Haiti, which the *Gazette des tribunaux* of Paris reproduced in length.¹⁴⁹ His father, General Blanchet, was a good-hearted man who sided with the Republic of Pétion, contributed to the drafting of the Haitian Constitution in 1806, and died fighting against Christophe's forces in 1807. For all this, the Haitian government rewarded him only with ignorance of his memory. Blanchet was born on Saint-Domingue in 1798 in the midst of the Revolution and fled from the massacres to France at the age of three. Since then, he had lived as a respectable French citizen

¹⁴⁷ The confrontation over the independence of Haiti is analyzed in the next chapter.

¹⁴⁸ Isambert et als., *Consultation pour Boyer*, 4-33.

¹⁴⁹ *Le Journal du Havre*, May 4, 1827.

and lawyer. In 1825, he returned to Haiti at the invitation of Boyer to offer legal counsel for legislation. As most of the Haitians on the legislative committee were ignorant of legal work, Blanchet presided over drafting and correcting not only the Civil Code but also other legislative works. Yet he was a victim of an arbitrary arrest set up by President Boyer, who wanted to take full credit for the legislation, and Blanchet left the island in 1826 without any of the promised compensation.

On the defendant's side, the counsel for Boyer argued that Blanchet was a Haitian as he was born in Haiti to Haitian parents: "He is thus three times Haitian."¹⁵⁰ The independence of Haiti, which was officially recognized in 1825, separated the colony and its citizens from the mother country. Blanchet was recognized as a French man until 1825 only because the independence issue had remained unsettled until then. How, then, could one explain the fact that all his other family members were living in Haiti where only Haitian citizens could legally own landed property? As one of the authors of the Haitian Constitution, his father was clearly devoted to the Republic of Haiti. Moreover, Isambert argued that if Blanchet was not a Haitian by birth, then he was by naturalization. He left France with no intention of returning and vowed before the Haitian tribune to take public office. His untimely departure from Haiti was only in order to avoid a police charge against him.¹⁵¹ Since the Haitian Constitution forbade whites to hold public office, Boyer's advocates implied that Blanchet was not a white, but a man of color.¹⁵²

Enraged by this argument, Blanchet insisted that his Frenchness was unquestionable.

¹⁵⁰ Defense of Robion in May 2, 1827; see Vignard, *Procès entre M. Blanchet et Boyer*, 38.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 35-42.

¹⁵² A footnote on "as a white" says that "we learned that M. Blanchet was a man of color, which fortifies the argument." Isambert et als, *Consultation pour Boyer*, 17.

When he was born in 1798,¹⁵³ Saint-Domingue was still a French colony, and his father was still a French citizen (albeit one who died an *ex-colon*).¹⁵⁴ Blanchet's team argued that contrary to the liberal interpretation, the 1825 treaty did not encompass all those who were involved in the whole revolutionary process: it concerned only the actual inhabitants of the rebel colony at the time of its "emancipation" by the king in 1825.¹⁵⁵ They argued that Isambert, in his zeal to vindicate the black republic, tried to compromise the rightful status of the *ex-colons* of Saint-Domingue. Did the 1825 treaty allow the poor *ex-colons* of Saint-Domingue to be abandoned in this way?¹⁵⁶ In support of Blanchet, a royal prosecutor named Lizot blamed the enemies of Blanchet for insulting the victims of the colonial revolution: "How is it possible to consider him to be a Haitian without implicating into this all the French *colons* whose quality is incontestable?"¹⁵⁷

Skin color was one of the most provocative issues of this trial. Blanchet's advocates argued that his whiteness was obvious to anyone's eyes and erased any doubts about his

¹⁵³ 12 pluviôse Year 6 (9 février 1798).

¹⁵⁴ In fact, he was not eligible to be included into the indemnity list as "veritable *colons*," because the burning of Le Cap in 1793 was the cut-off date set by the French government. It is also questionable that his father was white. The Haitian sources indicate that his father Jacques-Antoine Blanchet and his uncle Bruno Blanchet were light-skinned mulattoes who were very rich and well-established property owners. The Blanchet brothers belonged to the main circle who erected the Republic of Haiti after the assassination of Dessalines. Bruno Blanchet served as an acting president of Haiti in 1807 before Pétion took the office. It is possible that the father Blanchet and his brother had different mothers. Blanchet's defense team argued that his certificate of birth without any mention of his color proved his whiteness, because the prerevolutionary segregation policy of Saint-Domingue required color to be mentioned in official documents.

¹⁵⁵ Vignard, *Procès entre M. Blanchet et Boyer*, 4-20.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁵⁷ Lizot, in Vignard, *Procès entre M. Blanchet et Boyer*, 164.

Frenchness: “Monsieur Blanchet was not obliged to provide the proof that he was white because he bore it on himself.”¹⁵⁸ The white blood was the ultimate mark of Frenchness in prerevolutionary Saint-Domingue—how was he allowed Haitian nationality when the Haitian Constitution required its citizens to be *les hommes de couleur*? “Thus, he is three times not Haitian. He is one time French.”¹⁵⁹ To Blanchet, the most scandalous episode occurred during the debate about his Frenchness; the incident was immediately pounced on and publicized by the *Gazette des tribunaux* and other journals. Blanchet was asked by an auditor, “Aren’t you a man of color?”¹⁶⁰ Although both the tribunal and Boyer’s lawyers dismissed the story as contrary to the facts, Blanchet and his lawyers never ceased to mention this episode as evidence that the metropole was biased against the *ex-colons* and had little regard for their dignity.

Both the dignity of the *ex-colons* and the dignity of the newborn republic were at stake in this trial. Similar to Blanchet’s Frenchness, the Haitian rulers’ capability of establishing a secure and just government came under scrutiny in the courtroom. Blanchet and his defenders explained that he returned to Haiti as a benevolent legislator—he was offering his services to Haitians who were trying to imitate the superior French Codes.¹⁶¹ As Blanchet narrated how he was betrayed by the ungrateful tyrants, he warned the French judges against any “illusion” they might have about Haiti, repeating the *ex-colons*’ discourse of the Haitians’ incapability of

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 165.

¹⁵⁹ *Le Journal du Havre*, May 5, 1827.

¹⁶⁰ This episode was publicized in the *Gazette des tribunaux*, (May 7 and 27, 1827) and *le Journal du Havre* (May 11, 1827). Isambert’s letter of protest to *le Journal du Havre* was printed in Vignard, *Procès entre M. Blanchet et Boyer*, 177-79. The source of this episode seemed to be a personal word from Isambert who argued that this was not intended as an offense.

¹⁶¹ Vignard, *Procès entre M. Blanchet et Boyer*, v; Blanchet, *Plaidoyer de Me Blanchet*, 1-2, 13.

governance. He said: “They [the facts Blanchet presented in the prior proceeding] had the purpose of proving to the tribunal that there exists in Haiti no political, civil, or judicial guarantee; that the law of nations is ignored there by the trustees of power; that its administration and legalities are reduced to observing no other rules but the capricious will of the chief.”¹⁶² Anyone who believes in the goodwill of the black republic would become a victim of its deception. He said, “Messieurs, I am the first Frenchman who went to Haiti on specious appearances; we know how I was treated; others succeeded me, and they were no happier; it is up to you, French judges, to deliver to Haitian leaders an example of justice; so that this land, where the spoliation of foreigners had been built into system, learns to respect equity...”¹⁶³

Blanchet did not win his case. The judgment dismissed the argument that Blanchet was a Haitian because it ruled that the 1825 ordinance did not change the status of the refugee *colons* as French. However, the court accepted the defense’s argument of incompetency of the French tribunal to rule on business contracted under a foreign law.¹⁶⁴ This trial lays bare the ambiguous relationship between nation and race in defining French citizenship in both transatlantic and revolutionary contexts. Although the Saint-Domingue of the 1780s solidified the racial barrier and defined Frenchness primarily in terms of whiteness, the revolutionary process challenged the close association of color with citizenship. Moreover, the king’s acknowledgment of the “rebel

¹⁶² Vignard, *Procès entre M. Blanchet et Boyer*, 69-70. An extract from the audience of May 10, 1827.

¹⁶³ *Gazette des tribunaux*, May 7, 1827.

¹⁶⁴ “Jugement” in Vignard, *Procès entre M. Blanchet et Boyer*, 169-75. There followed similar cases to seize Haitian cargo for the payment of Haitian debts. The French tribunal judged according to the same ground as Blanchet’s case, in terms of the incompetence of French tribune on the independent states. See *Pièces pour la République d’Haïti* (BNF, Factum 4-FM-14968).

colony”’s independence spawned numerous questions regarding the status of the *colon* émigrés. Contrary to the *ex-colons*’ insistence, a clear line between “white French” and “black Haitian” did not always exist. Many of Haiti’s “black” ruling class were light-skinned social elites who before the 1770s could have been deemed white. For his part, Blanchet, whose complicated family history was open to conflicting interpretations, tried to appropriate the standard narrative of the *ex-colons*’ sufferings and victimization for his own sake. Combined with the anti-Haitian campaign of the proslavery party, the trial became another instance for them to discredit the ability of the newborn republic to rule itself.

Conclusion: “The Example of Saint-Domingue” in French Antislavery Debates

Was the campaign of the refugee *colons* ultimately successful? The French government was generally sympathetic to the misery of the *ex-colons*—documents concerning subsidies for the *ex-colons* can be found even up to the Second Empire.¹⁶⁵ Under the restored monarchy, their political position was strengthened upon joining the counterrevolutionary politics and merging their status with the émigrés. But their crusade for revenge and reconquest came to a disappointing finale in 1825: it was pitted not only against sheer impracticability, but also against another powerful bloc of the Restoration—the merchants and bankers who wanted to resume Franco-Haitian trade. The 1825 royal ordinance marked the beginning of the *Affaire d’Haïti*, the prolonged negotiations and contestations over the indemnity and solvency of Haiti. The *ex-colons* of Saint-Domingue found their collective cause lost for good in 1847 when the whole

¹⁶⁵ Brière, *Haïti et la France*, 148-152.

indemnity issue was finally dropped.

However, the *ex-colons'* campaign was not entirely unsuccessful as it gifted the proslavery position a powerful weapon—their lived experiences of the Saint-Domingue Revolution. The Haitian Revolution did not provide a wholly new set of arguments for the proslavery party; the old apologetics for the slave trade and slavery of the last century were reiterated in the nineteenth-century proslavery discourses. Rather, the *ex-colons'* most significant contribution to the proslavery discourse was found in their enthusiasm for denigrating the cause of antislavery and accentuating the perils of emancipation in the most dramatic fashion.

The noisy presence of the refugee planters in France served to remind the French public of the disaster that revolutionary emancipation had brought to their once-prosperous colony, both embodying and fueling the terror of the Haitian Revolution. Proslavery polemicists could argue that although slavery might be a necessary evil at most, rashly abolishing it would incur greater disasters and destroy the colonies, which was exactly what had happened in Saint-Domingue from 1789 to 1804. The counterrevolutionary discourse of the *ex-colons* linked antislavery with the Terror and radicalism of the French Revolution. Thus, in their vivid accounts of horrors and destruction, the Saint-Domingue Revolution came to signify the dangers of abolitionism, the peril of blind philanthropy and humanitarianism, and Jacobin scheming. As part of the refugee *colons'* efforts to persuade the metropole to acknowledge their victimhood, they contributed to traducing the moral prestige of French abolitionism and yoked antislavery with the most radical politics.

Moreover, the *colons'* “Africanizing” rhetoric reduced the colonial revolution into a Manichean confrontation between two races; it depicted the destruction and massacres of the

Haitian Revolution as a manifestation of the African barbarity that slavery had barely been able to suppress.¹⁶⁶ When the French government, merchants, and liberals entertained an optimistic prediction of the future Franco-Haitian relationship, both commercially and politically, the refugee *colons* condemned the first emancipation society as “a land of Africa” in the Americas. They utilized the old proslavery ideology and attributed the failure of sugar production in Haiti to the incapability of the “African race” to work without the restraint of slavery. For proslavery apologists, it meant that without a careful program to educate and refashion the blacks into diligent laborers, which according to their ever-procrastinating calculation could take forever, emancipation would devastate the colonial economy. Throughout the nineteenth-century, the proslavery party’s rhetoric found a long-lasting echo due to Haiti’s sociopolitical instability, which was attributed to the people of color’s incapability of self-rule—this echo implicated the antislavery spokesmen in the contestation over the result of this first example of emancipation.

Consequently, the “example of Saint-Domingue” became a powerful deterrent to postrevolutionary French colonial controversies. Even if the colonial party lowered themselves and admitted that abolition might be a good idea, Saint-Domingue gave them every reason to be extremely cautious and prudent in dealing with colonial affairs. Many refugee *colons* insisted that attempted innovation in the colonial system had proved disastrous. Under both postrevolutionary monarchies, the motions for colonial reforms in the Chambers were often interrupted by the shouts of “Saint-Domingue!,” “Amis des noirs!,” and “Robespierre!”¹⁶⁷ When

¹⁶⁶ Paul Brasseur suggests that the “repressed but vivid memory of the events of Saint-Domingue” migrated into the negative images of Africa and Africans” in the nineteenth-century French discourse of race and ethnicity. See Paul Brasseur, “Les Campagnes abolitionnistes en France(1815-1848),” in Daget ed., *De la traite à l’esclavage*, 338-41.

¹⁶⁷ For example, look at how a discussion in the Chamber of Deputies on colonial sugar provoked

Benjamin Constant defended the rights of the *gens de couleur libres* in the Chamber of Deputies, he ran into the assembly's paranoid response that "with the smallest word pronounced in favor of a Negro or a mulatto, it believed having seen the massacres of Saint-Domingue start again."¹⁶⁸

It was not long before "Remember Saint-Domingue" was transformed from the reconquest propaganda of the refugee *colons* into the mantra of the French proslavery party. The disaster of Saint-Domingue legitimized the *status quo* and argued that slavery and plantocracy were the only sound and practical colonial policies. While the refugee *colons* dominated the debate on slavery by recounting their lived experiences of the horrors of overhasty emancipation and African barbarity, the French antislavery supporters would have to struggle hard to recast emancipation as a proper sociopolitical project.

the memories of the Haitian Revolution, in AP, CD, 12 July 1821, tome. 32, 759-63.

¹⁶⁸ Louis Viel-Castel, *Histoire de la restauration* (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1860), tome XIII, 553.

CHAPTER III. Revolutionary Apologetics during the Restoration: French Antislavery Liberals' Discourse on the French and Haitian Revolutions and Haiti

Introduction

This chapter examines how French liberals struggled to revive the antislavery cause under the Restoration. It focuses on the narrativizing discourse involved in the debates on colonial slavery, especially the strenuous efforts of the French antislavery advocates to restore abolitionism's legitimacy after being stigmatized by the French and Haitian Revolution. The interpretation of the Haitian Revolution was inevitably bound to that of the French Revolution, whose political meanings were intensely contested within domestic politics. This chapter therefore integrates antislavery issues with the politics of memory of the Restoration and elucidates how antislavery was interwoven with the liberal opposition's larger project of legitimizing the French Revolution as a challenge to the reactionary Bourbon regime and the ultraroyals then in power. In the process, it shows how the liberals' efforts to shed the revolutionary stigma over abolitionism led them to support the cause of Haiti as the outcome of the colonial revolution and the first nation born from emancipation.

As we investigate "silencing the Haitian Revolution" as a historical process, this phase of the Restoration offers a fascinating picture about the contradictory modes of "silence" practiced and challenged by opposing parties. As seen in the first chapter, the procolonial party tried to impose silence on the subject of the Haitian Revolution and Haiti because it was a potentially dangerous issue that threatened colonial security. Yet references to Saint-

Domingue/Haiti abounded in procolonial/proslavery discourse and were mobilized to impede colonial reform. The refugee planters in France never allowed the metropole to forget the fate of their dear island. Thus, their order of “silence” was more like monopolizing the meaning of Saint-Domingue/Haiti in their own terms: the immeasurable danger of hastily-enacted colonial reform and the constant threat of “African” barbarity embedded in black slaves.

The “terror” of the Haitian Revolution thus contributed to suffocating discussions on colonial reforms. On December 21, 1816, Jean Augustin Ernouf raised in the Chamber of Deputies the pressing issue of subduing the chaotic colonial administration. His proposal was far from being radical: he was a Napoleonic general ennobled by the Bourbon monarchy. He recalled the time-long chaos of the colonial legal and administrative system, supposedly worsened by the revolutionary attempt to integrate colonies into metropolitan institutions. His apparently moderate agenda was nonetheless indefinitely postponed after a series of fierce objections from the conservatives, which accentuated how an imprudent motion in the metropole might provoke blind hope in the colonies and lead to another Saint-Domingue.¹ This incident demonstrates how the proslavery party appropriated the reference of Saint-Domingue/Haiti for justifying the *status quo* and silencing the calls for colonial reforms.

The French liberals intervened in this monopoly of meaning, tried to normalize the colonial violence manifested in the Haitian Revolution, and vindicate the newborn nation of Haiti. Their goal was to redirect the reputation of Saint-Domingue/Haiti to benefit the antislavery cause. Moreover, in spite of a supposed taboo on mentioning Haiti, all the parties were bound to speak about Saint-Domingue/Haiti, as France officially recognized Haitian independence in

¹ AP, CD on December 21, 1816, tome. 17, 656–57.

1825, after two decades of denial. Positioned between proslavery calls for silence and governmental recognition, how did antislavery liberals represent the Haitian Revolution and Haiti?

In what follows, this chapter first introduces the historical context of the Restoration in which French antislavery managed to raise its voice, in spite of unfavorable conditions. In order to reconstruct the antislavery discourse of the oppositional liberals, we examine four areas in which French liberals attempted to reshape the challenging legacies of the revolutionary years and to reestablish abolitionism as a legitimately proper liberal project: the historical narratives of the French and Haitian Revolutions politicized by antislavery liberals; the issue of equal rights for free people of color and the uses of narrativizing discourse in courtroom politics, best seen in the *Affaire Bissette*; the controversy over the official recognition of Haitian independence and the present state of Haiti in support of abolitionism; and the meaning of Haiti's independence in terms of rethinking French colonialism. By way of the conclusion, we can see how this moment of prolific discourse and official recognition can be situated in the overall "silence"-building process.

The Bourbon Restoration and Antislavery Liberals: The Société de la morale chrétienne and French Opinions on the Slave Trade and Slavery around 1820

At the beginning of the Restoration, the French antislavery movement was at its nadir: the opposition to slavery was associated with British conquerors, black slaves in revolt, and, worst of all, Robespierre and the Terror. The loss of Saint-Domingue and the massacres of white

colons appeared to signal the demise of the abolitionist movement in France. In the early 1820s, however, the French antislavery movement staged a modest comeback. The main motivation for this was pressure from Britain—after Britain abolished the slave trade in its colonies in 1807, it pressured the French government to observe the international anti-slave-trade treaty, which French merchants and slave traders were openly defying. British abolitionists propagated antislavery materials in order to win over French public opinion. Liberal and republican journals diligently transmitted anti-slave-trade news from Britain while closely observing the resurrected British fight against slavery of the 1820s.²

To deal with the increasing pressure from both inside and outside its borders, the French government promised to enforce anti-slave-trade measures strictly, but this was only lip service paid to the victorious power.³ In fact, the royal government was contriving to restore the slave trade because it was loath to appear subordinate to foreign pressures and did not want to alienate the merchants and colonists from the monarchy. The French slave trade soon recovered to almost the same level as the prerevolutionary era.⁴ Denouncing anti-slave-trade measures as a conspiracy of Britain to destroy French colonies, the French colonial party attempted to dress

² Britain abolished slave trade by the Slave Trade Act in 1807. Thereafter, British antislavery movement came into a temporary respite, mainly due to the French Revolution, till the British Anti-Slavery Society took up the abolition of slavery from 1823. It was derived from the realization that the abolition of slave trade was not likely to lead to the natural extinction of slavery, against the widely held belief. Britain abolished slavery in 1833 throughout the British Empire, except India.

³ For example, see the discourses of the Ministry of Marine and Colonies under Comte Molé on the anti-slave-trade measures, from February to April in 1818 in the Chamber of Deputies.

⁴ About the postrevolutionary French slave trade, see Serge Daget, *Répertoire des expéditions négrières françaises à la traite illégale* (Nantes: Université de Nantes, 1988); Serge Daget, *La répression de la traite des Noirs au XIXe siècle* (Paris: Karthala, 1997); Serge Daget, “France, Suppression of the Illegal Slave Trade, and England,” in *The Abolition of the Atlantic Slave Trade: Origins and Effects in Europe, Africa, and the Americas*, ed. David Eltis and James Walvin (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1981); Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France*.

their ill-motivated actions in patriotic colors. They also presented the continuation of the slave trade as an essential element of royalism—because only the enemies of the monarchy had proclaimed the abolition of slavery: first, Robespierre in 1794, and then Napoleon during the Hundred Days.⁵

However, several cases testify to the increasing public attention paid to anti-slave-trade issues in France. In 1816, the wreck of *la Méduse*, a French naval frigate, on African shores, provoked a famous scandal that drew public attention toward colonial issues.⁶ Under the initiative of the *Journal des débats*, the affair was soon cited as evidence of the incompetency and corruption of the government, marines, and the ultraroyals. With its underlying implications of cannibalism, it unleashed the public's wild imagination and led to growing repulsion toward colonial violence, which was closely associated with the slave trade and slavery. The well-received narrative of the survivors was an overtly anti-slave-trade text.⁷

Moreover, testimonies about the ongoing French slave trade turned into public scandals in Paris. In 1820, Josephe Morénas and Abbé Giudicelly, two republicans in support of revolutionary abolitionism, presented a petition to the Chamber of Deputies exposing how the slave trade was being revived in French Senegal with the collaboration of royal officials.⁸ In

⁵ Albert Boime, "Géricault's African Slave Trade and the Physiognomy of the Oppressed" in *Géricault: Louvre conférences et colloques*, ed. Régis Michel (Paris: La Documentation Française, 1996), 572-73.

⁶ About the Affaire Méduse, see Philippe Masson, *L'Affaire de la Méduse: le naufrage et le procès* (Paris: Tallandier, 1989).

⁷ A. Corréard and H. Savigny, *Naufrage de la frégate la Méduse, faisant partie de l'expédition du Sénégal en 1816* (Paris: Corréard, 1818).

⁸ J. Morénas, *Pétition contre la traite des noirs, qui se fait au Sénégal, présentée à la Chambre des députés le 14 juin 1820* (Paris: Corréard, 1820).

1822, *la Vigilante*, a French slave trade ship, was captured off the African coast and utilized as an appeal to French audiences to imagine the horrors of the Middle Passage.⁹ The anti-slave-trade issue began to attract more attention as it was combined with criticism of the immorality and incompetency of the Bourbon monarchy. In Maureen Ryan's study of the production and reception of Théodore Géricault's widely acclaimed 1819 painting *Le Radeau de la Méduse* (*The Raft of the Medusa*), she suggests that the undercurrent of contemporary anti-slave-trade discourse was the embattled liberals' metanarrative of their struggle against the powerful reactionary forces, which fascinated the French public.¹⁰ Attesting to this growing interest, the *Académie française* chose the abolition of the slave trade as a topic for a poetry prize in 1823.¹¹

One result of these changes was the foundation of the *Société de la morale chrétienne* in 1821 (hereafter SMC).¹² Born from a liberal clique surrounding Madame de Staël, the organization was unquestionably liberal and elitist, and it was under the leadership of moderate

⁹ See a widely circulated anti-slave-trade pamphlet, *Affaire de la Vigilante, bâtiment négrier de Nantes* (Paris: Crapelet, 1823).

¹⁰ Maureen Ryan, "Liberal Ironies, Colonial Narratives and the Rhetoric of Art: Reconsidering Géricault's *Radeau de la Méduse* and the *traité des nègres*," in *Théodore Géricault: The Alien Body, Tradition in Chaos*, ed. Serge Guilbaut et al (Vancouver: Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, University of British Columbia, 1997).

¹¹ See Yvan Debbasch, "Poésie et traité : l'opinion française sur le commerce négrier au début du XIXe" in *Revue d'histoire d'outre mer* 48 (1961): 311-52.

¹² About the SMC's antislavery activities, see Jennings, *French Anti-slavery*, 1-24; Lawrence Jennings, "French Anti-slavery under the Restoration: The *Société de la morale chrétienne*," *Revue française d'histoire d'outre-mer* LXXXI, no.304 (1994): 321-31; Daget, "A Model of the French Abolitionist Movement and Its Variations," in *Anti-Slavery, Religion, and Reform*; Francis Arzalier, "Les Mutations de l'idéologie coloniale en France avant 1848: De l'esclavagisme à l'abolitionnisme," in *Les Abolitions de l'esclavage*. The journal of the SMC was published as *Le combat pour la liberté des noirs dans le Journal de la Société de la Morale Chrétienne*, ed. Marie-Laure Aurenche (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2011).

liberal elites who opposed the reactionary policies of the royal government. With fewer than 400 members even at its peak and membership fluctuating between 200 and 300, its power was not found in its numbers but in the influence wielded by individual members. Its list of members was “a veritable ‘Who’s Who’ of the leaders of the liberal opposition in the 1820s and of the future governing elite of the July Monarchy.”¹³ This list included the Duc de Broglie, August de Staël (son of Madame de Staël), Charles de Rémusat, Horace Sébastiani, François Guizot, Benjamin Constant, Adolphe Thiers, François-André Isambert, and the Duc d’Orleans himself.¹⁴ Commenting on the importance of the antislavery movement in a larger political context, Serge Daget argues, “With its numerous committees the Société (SMC) provided a training ground for the theorists of the opposition, who came into power in July 1830.”¹⁵

In fact, the SMC was not devoted exclusively to antislavery, but was a society covering general philanthropic issues. Still, with its well-staffed and active committee for the abolition of the slave trade directed by August de Staël, it was the first French organization to fight the slave trade and slavery since the *Société des amis des noirs et colonies* in 1797-99, which was the short-lived successor to the *Amis des noirs*.¹⁶ The committee provided a meeting ground for antislavery figures to gather and share opinions, away from the hostile environment of the Restoration. With the Duc de Broglie as the chair, the committee included few but celebrated

¹³ Jennings, *French Anti-Slavery*, 10.

¹⁴ About the social composition of the society and other prominent figures, see Daget, “A Model of the French Abolitionist Movement and Its Variations,” 71-72.

¹⁵ Daget, “A Model of the French Abolitionist Movement,” 72.

¹⁶ About the *Société des amis des noirs et colonies*, see Dorigny and Gainot, *La société des amis des noirs 1788-1799*.

liberals: August de Staël, Charles de Rémusat, and Charles Coquerel, together with honorary British members and a few Haitian correspondents.¹⁷

The principal model of the revived French antislavery movement was its successful British counterpart, the Anti-slavery Society. In both ideas and organization, the SMC owed a great deal to the British influences. British abolitionists had encouraged and helped their French friends to form a philanthropist association similar to theirs. French antislavery spokesmen relied on the intelligence and data gathered by British informants.¹⁸ Moreover, most of the French antislavery liberals were attracted to the British political system, especially the parliamentary system and constitutional liberty. In this sense, their antislavery mission was intertwined with the political project of French liberals—that of establishing a stable constitutional monarchy—because they believed the British crusade’s victory against the slave trade came from the superior political system of the Hanoverian monarchy. The search for a compromise between monarchy and emancipation would continue until finally yielding to the republican solution of the February Revolution in 1848.

French antislavery differed from the British model at critical points, however. As the title of the *Société de la morale chrétienne* suggested, they pursued Christian morals, but the society itself had few traces of the evangelicalism that prevailed in Anglo-American abolitionism—they never relied on specific religious communities or networks as their British colleagues did. They had a largely Catholic membership, along with a considerable portion of Protestants brought in

¹⁷ See the member list updated in the *Journal de la Société de la morale chrétienne* (hereafter *Journal de SMC*), vol.5 (1825): 207.

¹⁸ About the British influence on the French antislavery association, see Jennings, *French Reaction to British Slave Emancipation* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988); and Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France*.

by the de Staël family. Rather, their common denominator was anticlericalism, which was inherited from the last century and enhanced by the revived alliance of the church and monarchy in the Restoration. The SMC's religious beliefs were closer to universal philanthropy—ecumenical and non-denominational—and their antislavery language was thereby mostly secular, appealing only to universalism of Christianity.

Another difference between French and British antislavery associations was their tactics. Although French liberals admired the widespread popularity of abolitionism in Britain, the French elites left from the aftermath of the French Revolution were more precautionary with popular mobilization. Since many SMC members held seats in the Chamber of Deputies, many of the society's activities took place in the rostrum and the anteroom of the Parliament. Another medium was the press; antislavery opinions were disseminated by the journals of liberal, center-right, and anti-ministerial inclinations, such as *le Journal des débats*, *le Globe*, *l'Indépendant*, *le Constitutionnel*, *le Minerve*, *la Revue encyclopédique*, *le Journal du commerce*, *le Courrier français* and *la Chronique religieuse*. The editors and authors of antislavery publications were often the members of the SMC, which reveals the smallness of the French antislavery circle. For example, Coquerel was the secretary of the SMC, a member of the anti-slave-trade committee, and also a contributor to the *Revue encyclopédique*. Jean-Denis Lanjuinais, a member of the SMC and a peer, submitted anti-slave trade articles to the liberal journals. Rémusat of the SMC published many antislavery articles in *le Globe*, a journal of young liberal opposition.¹⁹

¹⁹ About *le Globe*, see Jean-Jacques Goblot, *La jeune France libérale: Le Globe et son groupe littéraire, 1824–1830*, (Paris: Plon, 1995); Alan Spitzer, “The Globe: Flagship for a generation” in *The French Generation of 1820* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), 97-128.

In following their British model, the anti-slave-trade committee established that their primary task was to end the already-illegal slave trade—they expected slavery itself to die off naturally once the supply of slaves ceased. The abolition of slavery officially appeared on the SMC agenda only in 1829,²⁰ as the members felt that black slaves had to be prepared for freedom through conversion to Christianity and education. Therefore, at this stage, moralization and amelioration were their central means of fighting slavery. French liberals embraced the idea of gradual emancipation as the only sensible option between the two extremes of immediate abolition and another slave rebellion.

These characteristics of the Restoration French antislavery movement were summarized in the Duc de Broglie's historic, three-hour-long speech in the Chamber of Peers in 1822 against the slave trade, which announced the revival of French antislavery.²¹ He lamented the present condition in which any mention of black slaves was met with the condemnation of revolutionary crimes and excesses. He attempted to define the anti-slave-trade movement as a matter of common sense that should transcend any political faction. He also maintained the position of "slave trade is the first question" until the end of that institution. As late as 1827, the Duc de Broglie continued to impress that the slave trade was the worst crime against humanity, but that the institution of slavery was still legitimate and even necessary for the present. He urged postponement of the abolition of slavery until the day when "the word of emancipation of blacks

²⁰ Schmidt, *Abolitionnistes de l'esclavage*, 37; and Jennings, *French Anti-slavery*, 13.

²¹ Victor de Broglie, *Discours prononcé par M. le duc de Broglie, à la Chambre des Pairs, le 28 mars 1822, sur la traite des nègres* (Paris: L.-E. Herhan, 1822).

will be no more synonymous with pillage, devastation, and massacre.”²² The mission of antislavery liberals under the Restoration was to dismantle this very association.

Consequently, the phrase “antislavery liberals” in the context of the Restoration needed to be more clearly defined. Strictly speaking, they were not so much against slavery as against the slave trade—they neither formed a uniform camp to fight slavery, nor were they exclusively engaged in an antislavery campaign. What, then, was the appeal of antislavery to the liberal elites of the Restoration who had little direct interest in colonial slavery? This question is best answered by investigating the wider implications of abolitionism and its political stakes in postrevolutionary French politics. Despite the conventional tendency to isolate antislavery as either a moral position or colonial issue, it should be noted that French liberals got involved in the larger meaning of the antislavery struggle through their commitments to various sociopolitical issues such as colonial reforms, opposition to the reactionary regime, and the reaction to British influence. In this period, the debate on colonial reforms led the way in forming the antislavery opinion. Colonial reforms included various issues, such as discrimination against free people of color in colonies, the conflict of competency between the king and Parliament concerning colonies, legal inequity between metropole and colonies, and privileges bestowed on colonial sugar cane growers.

Charles de Rémusat (1797-1875), a young nobleman in the SMC, is an illustrative example of how antislavery liberal elites were raised under the Restoration. His predilection for British ideas and close friendship with de Staël family led him to the anti-slave-trade circle. During his apprenticeship in the Ministry of Marine and Colonies in 1817-18, he learned about

²² AP, CP on 24 January 1827; Cottias, ed., *D'une abolition à l'autre*, 48-52.

the situation in Haiti and wrote reports on colonial affairs, including the Haitian Revolution.²³ As Rémusat belonged to the group of Doctrinaires (liberal royalists in favor of a constitutional monarchy), his published works fiercely attacked the reactionary regime. His unpublished play, *L'Habitation de Saint-Domingue ou l'insurrection* (*The Saint-Domingue Plantation, or, the Insurrection*, 1826), reveals how his keen interest in the French Revolution and aversion to colonial slavery came together in this narrative of the Saint-Domingue Revolution.²⁴

***Fighting Revolutionary Stigma:
Narrating the French and Haitian Revolutions Together***

In spite of their professed moderate attitudes and precautions, revived French antislavery could not stop itself from being branded a party of “revolutionaries.” When the SMC convened for the first time in 1821, the Parisian police were convinced they found an antimonarchical faction hiding under a cloak of philanthropism.²⁵ The procolonial party regarded the birth of the society as the revivification of Jacobin threats to the colonies and commerce. The French and Haitian Revolutions had struck a great blow to the organized French antislavery movement. In fact, the celebrated *Société des amis des noirs* (often simply “*Amis*”) founded in 1788 had little direct impact on the historical process culminating in the abolition of slavery in 1794 or the

²³ Charles de Rémusat, *Mémoires de ma vie: présentés et annotés par Charles H. Pouthas* (Paris: Plon, 1958-67), vol.1, 330-31.

²⁴ Charles de Rémusat, *The Saint-Domingue plantation, or, The Insurrection: a Drama in Five Acts*, translated by Norman R. Shapiro (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008).

²⁵ Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression*, 114-15.

subsequent colonial war. Nevertheless, the *Amis* was still widely denounced as the central source of sedition and as an agent of the British bent on destroying French colonies.

The French antislavery liberals were aware of these troublesome revolutionary legacies and took precautions to keep a distance from their eighteenth-century predecessors. This was demonstrated by the antislavery/liberal groups' desertion of Abbé Grégoire in the Restoration. One of the very few living members of the *Amis*, Grégoire was the last remaining link to the revolutionary past.²⁶ Since the Empire, he had been a solitary voice against slavery in France. However, his reputation was so tainted by his revolutionary career—regicide, the Terror, and the slave rebellion in Saint-Domingue—that the old priest was ostracized from the liberal circles of the Restoration. His election to the Chamber of Deputies in 1819 produced anxiety rather than hope among the elite liberals, as they shunned his involvement in the radical and violent phase of the Revolution. In Rémusat's correspondence with his family and friends during the summer to December of 1819, he testifies to liberals' apprehension over this political scandal—to him, Grégoire was a revolutionary fanatic, albeit now innocuous and obsolete, and Rémusat did not wanted to be associated with someone who represented 1793-94.²⁷

As seen here, the foremost mission of the new organization was to overcome the revolutionary stigma attached to the antislavery cause. This task took them to the heart of French politics in the wake of the French Revolution. The Restoration was an era in which the politics of

²⁶ For the radicals and republicans, the all-around career of Grégoire during the French Revolution was a reminder of the glorious revolutionary years. See Audiguier, *Épître à M. Grégoire, ancien évêque de Blois* (Paris: Delauney, 1820). The Gregoire symbolizing revolutionary universality would be resurrected in the July Monarchy.

²⁷ Charles de Rémusat, *Correspondance de M. de Rémusat pendant les premières années de la restauration* (Paris: C. Lévy, 1883-86), vol. vi, 96-382.

two opposing memories, or two histories, prevailed. The ultraroyalists and liberals confronted each other over the meanings of the French Revolution, on which the political identity of each party and the future of the French polity hinged. On one side, the conservatives, royalists, and clerics condemned the revolutionary crimes and the Jacobin conspiracy and urged the nation to return to its pre-1789 state. For them, the Charter of 1814 was a royal favor given benevolently to the French subjects. On the other side, the liberals struggled to defend the achievements of the French Revolution and preserve the civil and political liberty it endorsed. They considered the Charter a new contract between the king and the French citizens, a basis of the new constitutional monarchy, and the royal recognition of revolutionary changes.²⁸ This contestation over the revolutionary past was an engine for historical discourse in politics.

For the liberals on defensive, the primary mission was to justify the French Revolution against the charges of counterrevolutionaries. As Stanley Mellon neatly summarizes, “The first political task faced by the Liberals... was to sell the French Revolution. Their very existence during this period depended upon their ability to justify the Revolution, to acquit it of crimes, to explain away its criminals.”²⁹ For the liberals, historical discourse was “a way to defend the Revolution, while freeing themselves from the charge of *being revolutionary*.”³⁰ How did French liberals of the Restoration approach such an intricate task? And how were the strategies they employed to justify the French Revolution connected to their representation of the Haitian Revolution?

²⁸ About the conflicting interpretation of the Charter, see Alexander, *Re-writing Revolutionary Tradition*, 1-29.

²⁹ Mellon, *The Political Uses of History*, 3.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

The Restoration liberals contrived several strategies to vindicate the view of the Revolution, and the most contentious issue was its origin. In the liberals' explanation of why the Revolution broke out, they put forth the idea of continuity against the counterrevolutionaries' charge of Jacobin conspiracy. According to the liberal writers, the Revolution was far from being a violent and conspiratorial break with the French past. The event since 1789 was nothing more than the most recent and dramatic manifestation of French history—the French quest for liberty. Madame de Staël succinctly formulated this catechism of Restoration liberals: “In France, liberty is ancient.” Augustin Thierry pursued a “historiography of French liberty”³¹ and probed the history of conquered races, such as the Gauls and Saxons, thereby making history a dichotomy between the oppressed and their oppressors. One effect of this line of thought was that the outbreak of the Revolution, once projected into longer history, came to be seen as inevitable and irreversible.

The liberals found it more difficult to explain what followed the glorious events of 1789. Most liberals embraced the achievements of the early revolutionary assemblies, such as the National Assembly to the Constituent Assembly. But what of the decrees of the National Convention and the Committee of Public Safety, the guillotine, the widespread popular violence, the Empire and the Napoleonic wars? The liberals' tactic was to “divide” the Revolution. In order to fight the conservatives' attempt to conflate the Jacobins and liberals, they asserted that there were two revolutions: the legitimate movement of the Revolution before 1791 or up until the Constituent Assembly, and the later deviations aggravated by the counterrevolutionary attacks.

³¹ Ibid., 11.

The most challenging task for liberals was treating the excesses of the Revolution—that is, the revolutionary violence, the Terror, and Robespierre. Liberal writers tried to mitigate revolutionary violence through a comparative approach. By enumerating the misdeeds and recounting the macabre histories of the French monarchs and the Catholic Church, they presented a kind of comparative criminology in which they expected the revolutionary violence to be normalized. What is the Terror, they argued, in comparison to the night of Saint-Bartholomew?³² Liberals also asserted that the violence of the revolutionaries should be excused in terms of its noble purpose and result. Thierry and his colleagues argued that violence, though deplorable, was nonetheless an inevitable and necessary part of the civilization's natural development. Along these lines, liberal apologists insisted that “the crimes of the Revolution are to be judged by the results that were achieved, the forces that had to be overcome.”³³

These two strategies were pieced together by Adolphe Thiers and François Mignet, the two main architects of liberal historiography, to produce a final version of the liberal narrative.³⁴ Dubbed “the chiefs of the fatalist school” by Chateaubriand,³⁵ both historians described the outbreak of the French Revolution as the inevitable product of the longtime abuses and errors of the Old Regime. The early phases of the Revolution were hailed as its essence and the triumph of the bourgeoisie. The Terror and the revolutionary excesses were explained through historical

³² Ibid., 26-8.

³³ Ibid., 28.

³⁴ See the multivolume bestsellers of Adolphe Thiers, *Histoire de la révolution française* (1823-1830) and a shorter book of François Mignet, *Histoire de la révolution française depuis 1789 jusqu'en 1814* (1824).

³⁵ Jacques Droz, “Historiographie de la révolution française pendant la monarchie de Juillet,” *Congrès national des sociétés savants* 89 (1964): 465.

determinism: the Terror was accordingly viewed as quite deplorable, but unavoidable given the resistance of counterrevolutionary forces and moreover, it was necessary to preserve the French state.³⁶

The liberals' defense of the French Revolution was then applied onto that of the Haitian Revolution. Although Trouillot defines the colonial revolution as "unthinkable," the Great Revolution had provided for nineteenth-century French people a ready framework for understanding the colonial uprising. Under the Restoration, both proslavery and antislavery parties reckoned the Haitian Revolution to be a part or an effect of the French Revolution. In response to the conservatives' accusation that the colonial revolution was the final proof of the revolutionary crimes, the liberal elites incorporated the colonial revolution into their defense of the French Revolution. In fact, much of their interest in the Haitian Revolution stemmed from their irrepressible curiosity about the French Revolution. For Rémusat, the Haitian Revolution was a kind of microcosm that illustrated the dynamics of the metropolitan revolution more clearly: "The revolution of Saint-Domingue offers in a more close-knit circle, but with more salient characters, the same passions, the same interests, the same prejudices with those of our revolution."³⁷

How were French liberals' narratives of the colonial revolution embedded with their campaign to legitimize the metropolitan revolution? In the confrontation between proslavery

³⁶ About the pair of Thiers and Mignet in Restoration historiography, see Pieter Geyl, "French Historians for and against the French Revolution," in *Encounters in History* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1977), 95-99; Alice Gérard, *La révolution française, mythes et interprétations (1789-1970)* (Paris: Flammarion, 1970), 34-36; Ceri Crossley, *French Historians and Romanticism; Thierry, Guizot, the Saint-Simonians, Quinet, Michelet* (London & New York: Routledge, 1993), 30-34.

³⁷ *Le Globe*, t.3, no.40 (1826): 215.

conservatives and antislavery liberals, the most decisive question concerned the origin of the colonial revolution—why and how did such an unprecedented event occur in the colony? The ultraroyals relied heavily on conspiracy theory in order to explain the outbreak of the Haitian Revolution as well as that of the French Revolution. The refugee *colons* asserted that they had observed revolutionaries, mulatto rebels, and British spies instigating black slaves to riot. They pointed in particular to the abolition decree of the National Convention in 1794 as the ultimate cause of the colonial upheaval and predicted that the overeager abolition of slavery would result in another revolt of blacks.

In accordance with the liberals' continuing goal of defending the metropolitan revolution, they countered these arguments by situating the colonial revolution in the longer history of the island. In opposition to the preferential treatment given to the ex-*colon* creditors, Lanjuinais, a peer and member of the SMC, presented an anti-*colon* history of the colonial revolution.³⁸ He insisted that the colonial revolution was the *colons*' own making: "Saint-Domingue contained in itself the origin of its misfortunes."³⁹ What, then, was the source of these misfortunes which had taken root in the island? Contrary to the golden images of prerevolutionary Saint-Domingue painted by the ex-*colons*, the antislavery spokesmen emphasized the island's horrific history of slavery and the *colons*' tyranny, whose accumulated evils could be resolved only by means of a violent convulsion. According to Lanjuinais, the centuries of slavery, the caste system, and

³⁸ He relied on the discourse of Jean-Philippe Garran-Coulon, *Débats entre les accusateurs et les accusés, dans l'affaire des colonies* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, an III [1795]. 7 vol.). Garran-Coulon's discourse was strongly anti-*colon*, identifying the *colons* with counterrevolutionaries.

³⁹ AP, CP on June 19, 1820, tome 28, 590; Jean-Denis Lanjuinais, *Contre les privilèges de surséance des dettes privées* (reprinted from his Chamber of Peers speech in June 20, 1820) (Paris: Baudouin Fils, 1820).

injustice had prepared the way for revolution, which was presaged by the frequent slave revolts. The decree of 1794 was only a formal surrender to the unavoidable tide of events. In a similar way Michel-Placide Justin, a liberal writer, asserted in his book, *Histoire politique et statistique de l'île d'Hayti* (1826), that it was the eighteenth-century and its “colonial system” that led up to the Haitian Revolution. This absurd system was sustained by the two pillars of *Exclusif* and slavery: the *Exclusif* (the French colonial system based on mercantilism) fomented the resentments of the *colons* against the metropole and slavery paved the way for insurrection and wars.⁴⁰

When Rémusat reviewed Justin's book, he took this line of argument and placed social conflicts at the center of the colonial revolution. Given how the *colons* resented France and how the blacks resented the *colons*, prerevolutionary Saint-Domingue was a society ridden with conflict between “three principal classes”: white colons, free people of color, and black slaves.⁴¹ Rémusat asserts, “The revolution of Saint-Domingue was born and written in the earlier situation of blacks and *colons*.” Is it surprising, he asks, that this society, after eighty years of discontentment, would explode into a revolution? The revolution was quite a natural result.⁴² For Rémusat, the comparative social analogy of the two revolutions was crucial. The aristocrats, bourgeoisie, and populace of the Old Regime were likened to the planters, free-coloreds, and black slaves in the colony, respectively. In particular, Rémusat targeted the ex-*colons* who allied

⁴⁰ Michel-Placide Justin, *Histoire politique et statistique de l'île d'Hayt, Saint-Domingue* (Paris: Brière, 1826).

⁴¹ *Le Globe*, t.3, no.40 (1826): 213.

⁴² *Le Globe*, t.3, no.33 (1826): 174-75.

themselves with the ultras—with their absurd claim for white privilege worsened by their revolutionary ordeals, the refugee *colons* amounted to the “ultra of the tropical.”⁴³

The liberal writers of the Restoration thus forged the counterargument that both the French and Haitian Revolutions were the inevitable results of long-term processes. While the liberals asserted the French Revolution was a manifestation of French freedom against the oppressive Old Regime, anti-*colon* polemics blamed the accumulated evils of slavery for the colonial revolution. A vital conclusion of such narratives was that the Revolution in Saint-Domingue, as well as in France, was inevitable, irrepressible, and thereby irreversible. To the ex-*colons* who urged reconquest of the island, N. A. de Salvandy, a well-known writer and opposing politician, asserted that it was unimaginable that after the revolutionary turmoil life could return to the old ways in Saint-Domingue. The revolutionary memories would never allow the possibility of masters and slaves coexisting in peace.⁴⁴ In a published letter to the king, Civique de Gastine, a young French republican, united the support of Haiti with criticism of the ultraroyals and clerics. He claimed that the current of the French and Haitian Revolutions was a force of nature, against which the counterrevolutionaries were fighting in vain. The *colons* and ultras were seized by the same anachronism and thought the Revolution could be undone.⁴⁵

However, the most problematic issue for the metropolitan liberals was how to justify the colonial violence—the most highlighted feature of the colonial revolution in France. As in the

⁴³ Rémusat, *Correspondance*, v.5, 457.

⁴⁴ N. A. de Salvandy, *De l'émancipation de Saint-Domingue dans ses rapports avec la politique intérieure et extérieure de la France* (Paris: Chez Ponthieu, Delaunay, Dentu, 1825), 31-35.

⁴⁵ Civique de Gastine, *Lettre au roi sur l'indépendance de la République d'Haïti et l'abolition de l'esclavage dans les colonies françaises* (Paris: Marchands de Nouveautés, 1821), 30-49.

case of the French Revolution, their apology for the Haitian Revolution concentrated on explaining revolutionary excesses—rebellion, destruction and massacre—in a rational and excusable manner. Here it should be noted that the mention of violence and bloodshed was not uncommon in the writings of the Restoration French historians, in spite of their precautions against revolutionary excesses.⁴⁶ Rather, they celebrated the resistance of the oppressed against their oppressors and attempted to justify the bloody, yet necessary revenge taken against tyrants by the populace.⁴⁷ Liberal historians demystified the golden, nostalgic images of medieval France upheld by royalist authors and substituted them with dark, violent, and bloody chronicles, whose only redemption lay in the people's progressing march towards freedom.⁴⁸ Thus, they were on not such unfamiliar ground when they proffered apologies for colonial violence.

As the liberal writers attempted to vindicate the colonial war, insurrection, and massacres, they utilized a variety of strategies similar to those used to apologize for the Terror. The most common one in the French pro-Haitian writings was to view it as a natural act of popular vengeance, which was lamentable but inevitable due to the weight of the past. In Madame de Staël's book on the French Revolution, which became a model for liberal historiography, she applied the same reasoning to the revolutionary populace of the Terror and to the black slaves in revolt:

⁴⁶ Lionel Gossman, "Augustin Thierry and Liberal Historiography," *History and Theory*, Beiheft 15 (1976): 3-83.

⁴⁷ For example, see how Thierry glorified Saxon resistance to the Norman lords in Thierry, *Histoire de la conquête d'Angleterre par les Normans* (Paris: 1825).

⁴⁸ For example, see how Auguste Trognon treated the popular vengeance on cleric tyranny in his work on the communes of Vézelay and Laon (*Le Globe*).

What should we conclude from this [the Terror]? No people had been as miserable for a hundred years as the French people. If the Negroes of Saint-Domingue have committed much more atrocities still, it is because they were more oppressed.⁴⁹

In his long history of contemporary France, Abbé Montgaillard, an anti-absolutist writer and politician, developed a similar thesis in his apology for revolutionary violence. According to Montgaillard, revolutionary violence was a reflex against the weight of the past: “However, when a people rose against its government, the violence of the uprising is and will be in proportion to the weights of the injustice of the oppression and of the moral degradation of the oppressed.”⁵⁰ He provided four examples to prove this thesis: the North Americans, the French, the blacks of Saint-Domingue, and the Swedish. Among the four, the North Americans and the Swedish were accustomed to justice and sense and did not lose control of themselves at the first cry of liberty. In contrast, the French had suffered too greatly from feudalism, fanaticism, and despotism, while the blacks of Saint-Domingue were too exhausted by slavery; consequently the latter two groups were inclined to excesses as a result of their impatience once they were thrown into revolutionary turmoil.⁵¹

Liberal writers compared the Haitian Revolution to other equally violent events to expose the color prejudice hidden in the public’s repulsion to the Haitian Revolution. The liberal journal *Journal du commerce* compared Saint-Domingue to the War of Greek Independence, which was the most popular liberal cause of the day. According to the journal, French people

⁴⁹ Madame de Staël, *Considérations sur la révolution française* (Paris: 1817; reprinted in Paris: Charpentier, 1862), 433.

⁵⁰ Abbé Montgaillard, *Histoire de la France depuis la fin du règne de Louis XVI jusqu’à l’année 1825* (Paris: Moutardier, 1827), vol.9, 231-2.

⁵¹ Ibid.

were repulsed by the Haitian Revolution because of color prejudice. Considering the terrors of slavery and the slave trade, one cannot condemn the violence incurred by the pursuit of independence of Haiti. Even the sufferings of the Greeks could not be compared to those of blacks under slavery—if the French people did not condemn the Greek insurgents for the pillage and massacre of Tripolizza in 1821, then how dare they denounce Haitians?⁵² Thus, if blacks had seemed more vehement in their reflexive revenge on tyranny, then it was because they suffered more, not because they were barbarians as had often been claimed.

Salvandy tried to normalize colonial violence by placing it in a wider context of pan-European revolutionary war and popular violence. He confronted the widespread charge that the new nation of Haiti was illegitimate because it was built upon bloodshed. Asking what was really “the crime of Haitians”, Salvandy argued that the massacre of the white colons ordered by Dessalines in 1803 was not an unique event when viewed with a backdrop of the bloody history of the late eighteenth century: “Was the *terror* of Le Cap the only one that covered the last century with blood, and the Saint-Bartholomew Day of the terrifying Dessalines, was it the invention of this barbarian?”⁵³

Regarding the last and most violent phase of the Haitian Revolution—the War of Independence (1802-3)—one possible strategy to justify or at least normalize violence undertaken by blacks was to compare it to the atrocities committed by the white colons and French expeditionary forces during this period. Nearly 100,000 blacks were killed in this period. It could have been a very effective tactic, especially given the liberal and republican writers’

⁵² *Le Journal du commerce*, February 16, 1826.

⁵³ Salvandy, *De l’émancipation de Saint-Domingue*, 49-50.

attempts to justify revolutionary violence as merely a response to counterrevolutionary violence. However, such a strategy ran against the patriotic feelings of the day and the still-powerful cult of Napoleon—it was too upsetting for French elites to blame the French soldiers who had fallen on the distant island. The shameful defeat of the seemingly-invincible Napoleonic army at the hands of the black rebels was still a sensitive subject in France.

Instead, it was the Haitian writers who broke that taboo and delivered the most severe criticism of French hypocrisy. The ruling elite of Haiti were often involved in the disputes in France over proslavery opinions. Among them was Pompée Valentin Vastey (Baron de Vastey), the mulatto secretary to King Henri Christophe of the northern kingdom. He attacked the one-sided perspective of the War of Independence in France.⁵⁴ Matching crimes with crimes, the author evoked the horrific acts committed by the French soldiers and *colons* during the expedition of General Leclerc and Rochambeau.⁵⁵ In Vastey's account, the vividness with which the ex-*colons* depicted their own sufferings at the hands of the black and colored rebels was surpassed by that of the Haitian witnesses, who described in detail how the French army burned blacks alive, and how the French *colons* fed blacks to Cuban dogs.⁵⁶ He thus concludes that the war was an inevitable response to such cruelties and atrocities. Another member of King Christophe's entourage, Juste Chanlatte, also presented first-hand accounts of the horrors

⁵⁴ Pompée Valentin Vastey, baron de, *Remark upon a letter addressed by M. Mazères, a French ex-colonist, to J. C. L. Simonde de Sismondi* (London: J. Hatchard, 1817); originally, *Réflexions sur une lettre de Mazères, ex-colon français, adressée à M. J. C. L. Simonde de Sismondi, sur les noirs et les blancs, la civilisation de l'Afrique, le royaume d'Hayti, etc.* (Cap-Henry [Haiti]: P. Roux, 1816).

⁵⁵ Ibid., 72.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 74-75.

committed by whites and insisted that the responsibility for the violence of the Haitian Revolution should fall on those whites who first provoked it.⁵⁷

Some metropolitan liberals did not stop at setting up a comparison between the two revolutions; they also endeavored to integrate the colonial revolution into the greater story of the French Revolution. In a review of Salvandy's book on Haiti, *le Globe* contended that the Haitian Revolution was an honorable extension of the French Revolution; in the same year that Britain declared liberty of commerce, France proclaimed liberty of blacks and equality of human races, and it should be remembered how the men of the Constitutional Assembly regarded Saint-Domingue with pity.⁵⁸ Rémusat suggests that the colonial revolution broke out as "a continuation of acquired practice by those unfortunate people to see coming from France the feeble reliefs that their misery sometimes received." It is not surprising, he proclaimed, that the great revolution in France was imitated by the oppressed in the colony.⁵⁹ Rémusat therefore agreed with conservatives on the point of colonial mimicry, but he elevated it as a glorious achievement, while the ultraroyals condemned it as a "bloody apéry."

The narratives constructed by French liberals therefore subsumed or subordinated the Haitian Revolution into the Great French Revolution as an effect of the latter, and the July Monarchy abolitionists would go on to develop this narrative strategy on a full scale. However, when their discourse was located in the Restoration controversy over the colonial revolution, it

⁵⁷ The book of Juste Chanlatte was reproduced in France by A. J. B. Bouvet de Cressé (pro-Haitian French marine officer) under the title of *Histoire de la catastrophe de Saint-Domingue* (Paris: Librairie de Peytieux, 1824), which was used as a source for French antislavery writers. See Doris Kadish, "Haiti and Abolitionism in 1825: the example of Sophie Doin," in *Yale French Studies* 107 (2005): 121-24.

⁵⁸ *Le Globe*, t.2, no.151 (1825): 781.

⁵⁹ *Le Globe*, t.3, no.40 (1826): 213.

was also positioned to contradict the proslavery arguments that aimed to depoliticize the Haitian Revolution. The proslavery party depicted the Haitian Revolution as a catastrophe, an event beyond explanation. To refute that notion, the French liberals linked the Haitian Revolution to the French Revolution and validated the Haitian Revolution as a political event, not as a catastrophe or an eruption of black barbarity. Moreover, in following revolutionary tradition, the antislavery liberals placed the struggle of black slaves within the narrative of political liberty, whereas proslavery polemics confined the controversy of slavery to a matter of the socioeconomic well-being of blacks.⁶⁰ For the latter, the crux of the controversy over slavery lay in whether the black slaves brought to the colonies were more well-provided for than blacks in Africa. Were it not for the sedition of philanthropists, there would have been no reason for the contented slaves to rise up against their generous masters. When antislavery liberals integrated the colonial revolution into the universal struggle for liberty and the strife between oppressors and oppressed, they challenged proslavery rationalization and installed the colonial rebels as political actors, despite their dependence on metropolitan initiatives.

Although the liberal apologetics for the colonial revolution strove to sever the association between abolitionism and the disaster of Saint-Domingue, the antislavery liberals still could not present the colonial revolution as a model of abolition and emancipation. The Restoration liberals were left with the quandary that, tainted as it was by its ensuing colonial disasters, they could not accept the revolutionary mode of abolition—general liberty proclaimed at the time of revolutionary upheaval without any preparatory measure or indemnity. In confronting the embarrassing memories of insurrection, abolition, and war, the metropolitan antislavery

⁶⁰ As a typical defense of slavery as a civilizing institution, see Abbé Henri Dillon, *Mémoire sur l'esclavage colonial, la nécessité des colonies et l'abolition de la traite des nègres* (Paris: Blaise, 1814).

advocates tended to make the colonial revolution an abstraction. Whenever the disasters brought by the Revolution on the colonies were evoked, it was usually the colonial party that delivered specific names and events, and the liberals would equivocate accordingly with the details involved in insurrection, general abolition, and the war.

The silence imposed on the subject of Sonthonax and Polverel, the two civil commissioners who proclaimed abolition in Saint-Domingue in 1793, demonstrates the liberals' reluctance to be identified with the revolutionary abolition. Sonthonax and Polverel were condemned as the destroyers of the colony by proslavery party and were given little credit even in the vindictory narratives of the Restoration liberals. Being a critical linkage in the radicalization of the Revolution on both sides of the Atlantic, their names were almost unanimously suppressed, and the two men were often condemned as impatient Jacobins or revolutionary fanatics, in accordance with what the procolonial/*ex-colon* writers wrote about them.⁶¹

In lieu of both the French and Haitian Revolutions, Restoration antislavery liberals searched for a safer ground on which to fight the slave trade and slavery. They wanted to dissociate abolitionism from the revolutionary or republican past and attempted to reconcile monarchy and antislavery. They believed that the stabilization of the constitutional monarchy was the key to reforming of social ills such as colonial slavery. As a result, they tried to install the cause of antislavery into the history of constitutional liberty, which liberals contended was consistent with the French monarchy's benevolence and tradition of enlightenment.

⁶¹ The rehabilitation of the civil commissioners would come very late even among the general revival of the memories of the Haitian Revolution. See Serge Barcellini, "À la recherche d'une mémoire disparue," in *Léger-Félicité Sonthonax: la première abolition de l'esclavage*, ed. Marcel Dorigny (Paris: Société Française d'Histoire d'Outre-Mer, 1997)

The antislavery liberals fabricated a monarchical tradition of emancipation and joined with governmental officials who were taking pains to apply anti-slave-trade measures in the face of strong Anglophobia. During the years of 1826-27, the slave trade became a matter of heated discussion, as the Ministry of Marine and Colonies presented a law to lay heavier penalties on slave ships in operation, an action which was pushed mainly by British complaints and the liberals' attack on the government's immoral complicity in the slave trade. In this, the Ministry and liberals conspired to construct a myth of the French monarchy's longtime initiative in humanitarianism. For the liberals, it was a strategy to mitigate Anglophobia and revolutionary stigma and to placate the monarchy's wounded pride. At the center of this myth-making was the *Code Noir*, a decree proclaimed by Louis XIV in 1685. Liberals interpreted this ambiguous text as prefiguring modern philanthropism, while bypassing the revolutionary episodes.⁶² In whatever ways the antislavery liberals found excuses for the French and Haitian Revolutions, they could not yet depend on the revolutionary precedents and general liberty for restoring legitimacy for the antislavery cause.

The Affaire Bissette, 1823-27: Legal Injustice, Rights for Free People of Color, and the Memories of the Revolutions in the Courtroom Politics

⁶² See the composition of the special commission for ex-colons and its positive report by Lally-Tollendal (AP, tome 27-29); Also see the Chamber debate on the anti-slave-trade measure in AP, tome. 49 (December 1826-February 1827); tome. 50 (February-April, 1827).

The *Affaire Bisette* (1823-27) was a *cause célèbre*, and the most influential single event in Restoration colonial affairs.⁶³ The prolonged legal confrontation between the ultra-colonial party and antislavery liberals shows how the legal injustice prevalent in French colonies propelled antislavery public opinion in Restoration France. It showcases the ways in which antislavery liberals mobilized the narratives of the Revolution to vindicate the antislavery cause and support colonial reform. It also shows how the courtroom functioned as a site on which colonial issues were addressed and advanced during the Restoration when other channels were obstructed by the reactionary regime. Lastly, the *Affaire Bisette* was a rallying point for liberals that demonstrated how antislavery issues of the Restoration were closely interwoven with the political struggle of French liberals in opposition.

The French Caribbean colonies were full of new anxieties and fears after the Haitian Revolution. The colonial authorities were obsessed with enforcing silence on any dissenting discourse on colonial situations, which led to strict censorship on “inflammatory” printed materials.⁶⁴ A major source of social commotion in the colonies was the conflict between the two free classes—the whites and the free-coloreds. In fear of another Saint-Domingue, the white plantocracy tried to increase the discrimination against and supervision of the *gens de couleur libres*. The revolutionary legislation that had integrated the metropole and the colonies was

⁶³ About the *Affaire Bisette*, see Melvin D. Kennedy, “The Bisette Affair and the French Colonial Question,” *The Journal of Negro History* 45, no.1 (1960), 1-10; Eric Mesnard, “Les mouvements de résistance dans les colonies françaises: l’affaire Bisette” in *Abolitions de l’esclavage*; and Françoise Thésée, *Le général Donzelot à la Martinique vers la fin de l’ancien régime colonial (1818-1826)* (Paris: Karthala, 1997); Stella Pâme, *Cyrille Bisette; le martyr de la liberté* (Fort-de-France, Martinique: Désormeaux, 1999); Stella Pâme, “L’Affaire Bisette,” in *L’Historial Antillais*, ed. Jacques Adélaïde-Merlande (Fort-de-France: Société Dajani, 1980), vol.3, 222-39. See the Chapter V for the whole career of Bisette.

⁶⁴ Thésée, *Le général Donzelot*, 147-50.

nullified with the return of the Bourbons and left colonial jurisdiction in the hands of elite planters. The only article about colonies in the Charter of 1814 was Article 73, which stated that the French colonies were to be governed by the particular laws and measures. As a result, slaves and free coloreds charged with conspiracy or poisoning were frequently convicted simply on suspicion of wrongdoing in summary trials. This reactionary policy clashed with the free-coloreds' heightened expectation of their rights after the French Revolution. The *Affaire Bissette* was born out of the opposing responses of the whites and mulattoes to the same revolutionary change.

In December 1823, the colonial authority of Martinique found in circulation copies of a pamphlet in favor of equal rights of free people of color.⁶⁵ The local court summarily prosecuted hundreds of free-colored elites as instigators of the (mostly fabricated) "plot" to overthrow the colonial order. The ringleaders were identified as Cyrille Bissette, a wealthy free-colored merchant, Louis Fabien and Jean-Baptiste Volny, two mulatto men. The Royal Tribunal of Martinique deported more than two hundred free coloreds, and Bissette and his friends were branded, whipped, and sentenced to the galley for life. They were given neither a public proceeding nor a chance of appeal in the colonies. Less than a month passed between Bissette's arrest and the final judgment, due to the planters' eagerness to wrap up the trial before any social repercussions arose.

However, the planters did not expect to see the *Affaire Bissette* find another life in the metropole. Bissette was imprisoned in Brest before deportation and he brought the case to the

⁶⁵ The pamphlet in question, *De la situation des gens de couleur libres aux Antilles françaises* (Paris: J. MacCarthy, 1823), first published without problem in France, was a plea for the metropole to intervene in colonial legal injustice. It was presumably written by Marquis de Sainte-Croix or Lâiné de Villévêque. See Thésée, *Le général Donzelot à la Martinique*.

Court of Cassation in Paris, the highest court of appeal in French jurisprudence. This provoked a sensation in the capital. With the *Journal des débats* broaching the issue, the liberal press publicized the case as a means of criticizing the plantocracy prevalent in the French colonies and the collusion of the royal government in colonial corruption and infringement on civil liberty.⁶⁶ François-André Isambert stood counsel for Bissette—he was the celebrated young liberal lawyer who would be a future leader of the July Monarchy antislavery movement.⁶⁷ Besides Bissette, Isambert also took on the Affair of Deported of Martinique, a mass of cases in which other free-coloreds had been sentenced for deportation to Africa, and integrated those cases into a campaign for colonial justice.⁶⁸

As a barrister of the Court of Cassation, Isambert was renowned for his unflagging resistance to legal abuses by the authoritarian regime and clerical reaction. For him, the suffering of free-coloreds seemed to embody the worst abuses of the law and restrictions on liberty imposed by the Bourbon Restoration. Isambert was frustrated by the determined rejection of the royal government to reexamine the case, so he concentrated his efforts on appealing to the public opinion through a publishing campaign and petitions to the two Chambers. His open challenge to the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Marine and Colonies, the staunchest branches of the

⁶⁶ *Journal des Débats*, July 22, 1824.

⁶⁷ About biographical information, see H.-Charles Laurent, “Isambert” in *Biographies et nécrologies des hommes marquants du XIXe siècle* (Paris, 1844-), 305-25 ; Louis Tisseron (T. de Lamathière), *Notice historique sur M. Isambert, conseiller à la cour de cassation, membre de la Chambre des députés, etc.* (Paris: Mme de Lacombe, 1847); Ferdinand Hoefer, *Nouvelle biographie générale* (Paris: Firmin-Didot frères, 1852-66), 42-6; Adolphe Robert et als., eds., *Dictionnaire des parlementaires français* (Paris: Bourloton, 1889-91), vol.3, 384.

⁶⁸ Although Isambert was known as the protagonist of this trial, he was not their official legal defendant. Isambert was teamed up with Claude Chauveau-Lagarde, the celebrated defender of Brissot and the royal family during the Revolution.

reactionary government, drew support from liberals. The proceedings were packed with spectators and journalists.

Through the intervention of Isambert and his liberal colleagues, the *Affaire Bissette* turned into a prominent case of “political pleading” that was placed at the center of liberal opposition under the Restoration.⁶⁹ Since the late Old Regime, the courtroom had become the principal site of “public” authority, as opposed to the monarchy.⁷⁰ The French Revolution crystallized this tendency by making legal proceedings public. In case of the *causes célèbres*, the *mémoires judiciaires* were widely publicized. In 1825, the *Gazette des tribunaux* was founded as a daily newspaper on legal affairs that depicted trials as public entertainment. One consequence was that the courtroom became the main battlefield between the ultraroyal regime and liberal opponents when the official political platform was occupied by the ultras from 1820 to 1828.

The colonial party and their ultraroyalist allies supported the decision of the governor and local court to condemn and deport Bissette and hundreds of other free coloreds, by a summary trial or even without trial, as a necessary measure for colonial security. They argued that the Haitian Revolution had produced an emergency situation in the colonies that permitted individual liberty to be curtailed for public safety. When the affairs of Bissette and other deportees became an issue in the two Chambers, the royalists and governmental officials all underlined the destructive force of words, printed materials in particular, to instigate the servile

⁶⁹ Lucien Karpik, *French Lawyers: a Study in Collective Action, 1274 to 1994*, translated by Nora Scott (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 122-27.

⁷⁰ For the political history of the French bar, I consulted Jean-Louis Debré, *Les républiques des avocats* (Paris: Perrin, 1984); Bernard Sur, *Histoire des avocats en France: des origines à nos jours* (Paris: Dalloz, 1998); Karpik, *French Lawyers*; David A. Bell, *Lawyers and Citizens: the Making of a Political Elite in Old Regime France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

population. Casimir Puymaurin, a royalist deputy, replied against the liberals' claim of justice with the typical evocation of Saint-Domingue and the Terror:

Monsieur, the colonies can exist only with a strong government, especially at this moment. We should face the truth. All the colonies of the Antilles, be they French or English, are left in a state of unrest that made us afraid of seeing the acts of Saint-Domingue renewed... I think it is very important to give the government of our colonies the greatest force possible, in order to repress this insurrectional movement which will sooner or later end up in depriving us of the only colonies left to us. We lost Saint-Domingue; let us fear losing Martinique. (Jean Casimir P rier in his place, "Do justice above all!") This reminds me of a phrase; "Let the colonies perish rather than the principles!" That is always the same system.⁷¹

On the opposite side Isambert contended that the crux of the *Affaire Bisette* was not colonial security, but the arbitrary nature of colonial justice. Isambert's defense of Bisette merged colonial affairs with metropolitan issues. To the liberal opposition, the French colonies appeared to be a distorted miniature of the metropole. An ardent supporter of the French Revolution, Isambert turned the *Affaire Bisette* into a grand defense of the liberty endorsed by the Great Revolution and the liberal interpretation of the Charter of 1814. He portrayed Bisette and his friends as victims of colonial tyranny in the same way he defended the metropolitan victims of arbitrary arrests, unjust prosecutions, and who were denied freedom of speech by the reactionary regime.⁷²

In the published defense of the deportees, Isambert summarized the history of the French colonies as a conflict between greedy slave owners and the metropolitan government's attempts

⁷¹ Casimir Puymaurin, AP, CD on January 8, 1825; Isambert (signed), *Affaire des d port s de la Martinique* (Paris: Constantine, 1825), 139-40. See also AP, CP January 20, 1825; *Affaire des d port s de la Martinique*, 154-59.

⁷² For example, see his famous article "Des arrestations arbitraires," *Gazette des tribunaux* on September 14, 1826.

to keep them in check, whose efforts culminated in the *Code Noir*.⁷³ Unfortunately this noble and enlightened effort had little effect in the colonies due to the persistent resistance of the planter class. Isambert placed the Haitian Revolution in this narrative frame. The resistance of the Saint-Domingue *colons* against revolutionary decrees was another instance in this long tradition of planters' defiance of metropolitan authority. Therefore it was the *colons* of Saint-Domingue themselves, Isambert insisted, who incited the armed revolt by resisting the metropolitan legislation.⁷⁴ This tyranny of plantocracy had continued and reinforced in other French colonies since planters undid the legal achievement of the French Revolution.

A symbol of colonial tyranny was the *Cour prévôtale* (Provostial Court) of Martinique, the colonial martial court whose main concern was to preserve social order for the interest of elite planters.⁷⁵ During the *Affaire Bissette*, Isambert took another case called *Affaire Marie-Louise Lambert*,⁷⁶ which he integrated into his attack on colonial legal degeneration. In 1823, a free black woman in Martinique named Marie-Louise Lambert was charged and convicted in the Provostial Court without any solid evidence; she had supposedly helped a female slave poison her white mistress. After Lambert was whipped and branded, she arrived in Rennes for imprisonment, where she found supporters and was able to bring her case to the Court of

⁷³ Isambert, *Affaire des déportés de la Martinique*, 9.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 6-12.

⁷⁵ About the Provostial Court, see John Savage, "'Black Magic' and White Terror: Slave Poisoning and Colonial Society in Early 19th Century Martinique," *Journal of Social History* 40, no.3 (Spring 2007), 635-62.

⁷⁶ About the case, see Isambert, *Au roi en son conseil, requête pour Marie-Louise Lambert, négresse libre de la Martinique, détenue dans la maison centrale de Rennes* (Paris: Duverger, 1827) and *Gazette des tribunaux*, August 26, October 29, October 31, November 26, 1826, February 24, 1827.

Cassation. The suffering of a woman under arbitrary justice, and the barbarous whipping, lent emotional impact to Isambert's argument.

According to the liberals' argument, the introduction of constitutional liberty into the colonies was guaranteed by the Charter of 1814, the most sacred document of the Restoration. Isambert insisted that the Charter's vague Article 73 stipulated that colonies would be governed by particular laws that "posed the basis of a legislative organization,"⁷⁷ which was the liberal interpretation of the Charter with respect to colonial issues. While the ultraroyalists continued to claim the colonies as royal assets—a realm of royal prerogative—the liberals asserted that that it was the Parliament that held authority over the colonies, as stipulated by the Charter. For the liberals, the *Affaire Bisette* proved that colonial reform was necessary to set up a legal equivalence between metropole and colonies.

The liberals then reversed the colonial party's argument and claimed that colonial injustice was damaging colonial security. They insisted that if France wanted to preserve its colonies in the Caribbean, what was necessary was not the reinforcement of the colonial garrison, but the reform of a colonial legal system so corrupted that it alienated most of the colonial population from the metropole. As the Bisette case lasted for several years, it was often enlisted to justify the necessity of colonial reforms and to urge the two Chambers to expedite the cessation of the slave trade. As Benjamin Constant defended Bisette and other deportees in the Chamber of Deputies, he insisted that the Charter bestowed the colonies with the law, not *colon-*

⁷⁷ Isambert, *Affaire des déportés de la Martinique*, 3.

preferential ordinances and laws that favored the plantocracy.⁷⁸ He warned against the danger of the plantocracy in the colonies:

This is therefore, Messieurs, how we govern the colonies; and in what a moment! In a moment when the emancipation of Haiti compels us more than ever to reunite under the same laws, the free population of these colonies, in integrating all of them, without any distinction of color or origin, in the maintenance of an equitable and impartial legislation.⁷⁹

Therefore, he asserted, the establishment of constitutional liberty in the colonies was the key to the pacifying them.

The *Affaire Bissette* provided an extraordinary occasion to publicize the antislavery cause or, more precisely, the issue of colonial reform—at this point, the French liberals did not yet dare to directly address the abolition of slavery. Similar to the opening of the French Revolution, the issue of free-coloreds' rights preceded that of slavery, as the rights of free-coloreds were seen as a practical stepping-stone toward colonial reforms. Isambert and his liberal colleagues bypassed the issues of the black slaves and instead concentrated on valorizing the free people of color as a loyal and useful intermediary class that would support metropolitan reform in the colonies. The true French patriots were not the *ex-colons*, but the free-coloreds who fought against both slaves in revolt and foreign invaders.⁸⁰ This stance was echoed in the *Journal des débats*, which

⁷⁸ AP, CD on June 3, 1826, “sur l’administration des colonies et les déportés de la Martinique.” Or in *Discours de M. Benjamin Constant à la Chambres des Députés* (Paris: Ambroise Dupont et Compagnie, 1828), tome II, 490-98. Also see the extract of the session of the Chamber of Deputies (January 8, 1825) in *Affaire des déportés de la Martinique* (1824), 142-45.

⁷⁹ Constant, *Discours de M. Benjamin Constant*, tome II, 495.

⁸⁰ Isambert, *Affaire des déportés de la Martinique*, 33-37; Isambert, *Plaidoyer de Me Isambert pour Bissette, Fabien et Volny, propriétaires, hommes de couleur libres de la Martinique* (Paris: E. Duverger, 1828), 51-53.

contended the real problem of the colonies lay not in Negroes, but in the discrimination against the free-coloreds.⁸¹

Yet as the *Affaire Bissette* continued, Isambert came to more directly condemn the original sin of colonial system—slavery. In his defense of Bissette published in 1828, Isambert made it clear that the planters were the real villains in colonial history, but insisted that it was slavery that had degenerated and corrupted the planters so much that they turned against natural laws. Free people of color born outside of slavery should be brought back to natural laws.⁸² He also reintroduced an incident in revolutionary history that was otherwise condemned or repressed during the Restoration—how the National Assembly in 1789 upheld natural laws by embracing the rights of free-coloreds. Isambert kept silent about the subsequent events, though, and never ventured past the glorious year of 1789.⁸³ As a result, he presented antislavery and the rights of free-coloreds not as a radical, revolutionary credo, but as part of a long-term mission to implant constitutional liberty in the colonies, championed by both the honorable French monarchs and the French Revolution.

After years of proceedings, the Court of Cassation finally annulled the judgment of the Court of Martinique in 1827. It was definitely a victory for the liberal party that had rallied for the cause of the deportees. In addition to shining a spotlight onto Restoration antislavery discourse, the *Affaire Bissette* produced two future leaders of the July Monarchy abolitionist movement by endowing them with experience and catapulting them to fame. Isambert, the future

⁸¹ *Journal des Débats*, July 21, 1824.

⁸² Isambert, *Plaidoyer de Me Isambert pour Bissette, Fabien et Volny*, 42-44.

⁸³ Isambert, *Plaidoyer de Me Isambert pour Bissette, Fabien et Volny*, 51-53, 102.

leader of the mainstream French antislavery movement, recalled how the *Affaire Bissette* was the debut for his “service to the cause of humanity” as a defender of the suffering colonial people.⁸⁴ And Bissette, building on his status as a victim and martyr, promoted himself as the leader of a more radical antislavery movement led by free people of color. Born from the same event, they would eventually reveal how the two brands of French abolitionism took overlapping but different courses in the July Monarchy.

***On the State of the Post-Independence Haiti I:
A Testing Ground of Emancipation, Cultivation, and Free Labor***

What preoccupied Restoration antislavery liberals was not only the colonial revolution’s past, but also a nation in the present day that had been born in a revolutionary vortex. For the Restoration antislavery movement, the year of 1825 marked a turning point, at which the French government finally recognized the independence of Haiti by a royal ordinance on April 17, 1825. When the government publicized the ordinance on August 12, 1825, the news took Paris by surprise despite the fact that several journals, including *le Journal du Commerce*, had been reporting the process of negotiations. Numerous books and pamphlets on the Haitian Revolution and Haiti were published and translated during this moment of enhanced public interest. In February 1826, when the government presented to the Chamber of Deputies the law regarding the distribution of the indemnity received from Haiti, heated disputes erupted over the

⁸⁴ Isambert, *Lettre de M. Isambert à M. Jollivet* (June 20, 1842) (Paris: Mme de Lacombe, 1842).

recognition of the newborn republic. Since the Chamber of Deputies could not intervene in the royal ordinance, this was the first chance the Chamber could speak about this issue.⁸⁵

In fact, the royal ordinance of April 17 was a desirable outcome for neither the ultras nor the liberals.⁸⁶ For the counterrevolutionary conservatives, accepting the impertinent claim of the rebel colony meant no less than approval for the Haitian Revolution. However, as shown in the discourse of Alexis de Noailles, a royalist deputy and son of Louis Marc Antoine de Noailles who died in the Saint-Domingue expedition, many of the royalist deputies shared the realist attitude held by the Ministry. Noailles insisted that there would be no recuperating any part of Haiti and that France should accept the inevitable and obtain as much as possible from the recognition.⁸⁷

Liberals in general welcomed the official recognition of the first nation born from emancipation, but they did not altogether agree with the ways the matter was handled. The recognition was bestowed upon Haiti by a royal ordinance without any public knowledge, discussion in the legislative body, or even the formality of a treaty. The oppositional liberals insisted that based on the Charter, the Parliament should have had a voice in this important matter. In spite of the SMC's grievance against the royal prerogative, it praised the magnitude of the event, which "entirely changes the question that occupies us," that is, the abolition of the

⁸⁵ See Jean-François Brière, "La France et la reconnaissance de l'indépendance Haïtienne: le débat sur l'ordonnance de 1825," *French Colonial History* 5 (2004): 126.

⁸⁶ The Chamber sessions of 1826 were very often occupied with this issue. In particular, see the sessions from February to May in 1826.

⁸⁷ See Jacques Adélaïde-Merlande, "Autour de la reconnaissance de l'indépendance d'Haïti: le discours d'Alexis de Noailles," in *Rétablissement de l'esclavage dans les colonies françaises*, 297-303.

slave trade and slavery.⁸⁸ The SMC believed the arrival of Haiti into the circle of civilized countries proved the equal capabilities of blacks and validated emancipation. Invigorated by this “victory,” they made the gradual abolition of slavery the subject of their monograph competition in 1826.⁸⁹ Although it was true that Britain was a great pioneer of antislavery, the SMC proclaimed:

France cannot remain indifferent to this grand achievement of Christian philanthropy and is now more enticed to playing an active role in it, since the recognition of the first African republic by the French government is the greatest step that has been made so far toward the liberation of a race that has been oppressed for far too long.⁹⁰

The French liberals redefined the royal ordinance produced out of necessity as a humanitarian or even antislavery act as they set out to represent the birth of Haiti as a triumph of liberty over slavery.

The Bourbon monarchy’s position was quite similar to that of the liberals. The royal government adhered to the political fiction that royal agents had invented about the ordinance of recognition. Charles X feigned ignorance of the fact that he had only made official what had been a *fait accompli* for two decades and maintained that he benevolently granted freedom to the Haitian people, making the ordinance a matter of royal philanthropy.⁹¹ Both the royal government and the oppositional liberals were reluctant to admit that Haitians broke free from

⁸⁸ *Le Journal de SMC*, t.7 (1826): 57.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 267–71.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 267–68.

⁹¹ A number of eulogies on the royal generosity were published. For example, see Vigor Renaudière, *Le chant haïtien, hommage à S. M. Charles X à l’occasion de l’émancipation d’Haïti* (Paris: Tous les Libraires Blancs ou Noirs, 1825); Anonymous, *Ode à Sa Majesté Charles X sur l’affranchissement de Saint-Domingue, par un homme de couleur* (Paris: Petit, 1825).

France by defeating the French army on their own. They also wanted to forget the fact that the French commissioners delivered the 1825 royal ordinance to Haiti with a military threat. Their position is reflected in the authoritative term they chose to designate the French recognition of Haitian independence—"emancipation" of Haiti in 1825.

Although France officially recognized the new nation, its doubts and fears about Haiti did not disappear; rather, the existence of Haiti created a new set of problems for French antislavery supporters. As Haiti became the first nation born from emancipation, the new republic turned into a live testing ground for the confrontation between proslavery and antislavery parties. Neither party was accurately informed about the reality of that distant and isolated island—the reports on Haiti provided by royal agents, foreign travelers, and *ex-colons* conflicted with one another. French journalists and polemicists in favor of Haiti depended on Haitian newspapers⁹² and the testimonies of merchants and travelers. From Britain, who had just launched a new battle to abolish slavery, both proslavery and antislavery testimonies regarding the present conditions of Haiti were poured into France.⁹³ The Haitian elites intervened quite often in the French dispute over the "true" condition of Haiti.

One major problem was that when the metropolitans were confronted with the first postemancipation society, they did not have any standards by which to judge the success or failure of the emancipation. The opposing parties approached the situation in Haiti from very

⁹² *Le Télégraphe* (Haitian official gazette), *le Propagateur Haïtien*, *la Feuille du commerce*, and *l'Abeille Haïtienne*.

⁹³ About the British publications on the actual state of Haiti, see Geggus, "Haiti and the Abolitionists," 131-37; David Geggus, "British Opinion and the Emergence of Haiti, 1795-1805," in *Slavery and British Society, 1776-1846*, ed. James Walvin (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982).

different directions. As Seymour Drescher observes Haiti in the British context: “The debate over Haiti thus offered a deeply mixed message to policy-makers and commentators. Both sides appealed to the revolution’s outcome because the implications of Haitian freedom were bivalent.”⁹⁴ When conflicting parties observed the situation of Haiti, the dividing line was drawn between economy and civilization. While the proslavery party bemoaned the fall of sugar production, abolitionists situated Haiti’s *raison d’être* in the “civilization,” or moral and cultural progress achieved by the blacks. In France, the “bivalent” meaning of Haitian freedom produced a similar pattern of dispute. The proslavery spokesmen started arguing first by presenting the economic situation of Haiti as the foremost evidence against the abolition of slavery. The colonial party confidently insisted that the retreat into a subsistence economy and the fall of sugar production in Haiti proved the impossibility of “free labor” (in fact, wage labor) after abolition. In response, the pro-Haitian liberals relied on what they saw to be the clearest indicator of emancipation’s success in Haiti: the growth of the population. From the late eighteenth century, critics of slavery had argued that the failure of the slave population to renew itself proved the untenability and cruelty of the system. After two decades of revolution and war, which had disastrously reduced the population of the island, Haiti now showed a considerably increased population. Although proslavery writers did not trust the census results of the Haitian government, the numbers carried conviction with the besieged antislavery supporters in France.

In a series of articles titled “On the Situation of Haiti,” *le Globe* insisted on breaking the “silence” on Haiti imposed by the colonial party. In France, the word Haiti has been “a signal of declamations,” a stigmatized subject in public discussions. It was now high time, *le Globe*

⁹⁴ Seymour Drescher, *The Mighty Experiment: Free Labor versus Slavery in British Emancipation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 104.

asserted, that the French cast off such obstinacy and approach the issue in more sensible terms—it suggested that Haiti could serve as a proving ground to test the two systems, slavery and free labor. Borrowing from the Scottish abolitionist paper *Edinburgh Review*, *le Globe* indicated that Haiti's population grew from 665,000 on the eve of the French Revolution to 935,000 in 1824, in spite of the bloody wars.⁹⁵ Population growth was considered a direct and natural result of a prosperous society. Auguste Billiard, a member of the SMC, took a similar approach in his anti-slave-trade memoir and declared that Haiti was formidable proof that abolition would lead to the real progress of colonial societies. He urged French readers to examine the case of “Saint-Domingue, which rises to a degree of prosperity that nobody there has ever known in the age of slavery; the population of this island was almost doubled in twenty years.”⁹⁶

A more critical and problematic standard by which to judge the system of freedom, however, was labor and cultivation: for Europeans interested in colonial affairs, the greatest concern was whether the colony could function at the same economic level as it had as before without slavery. Would the colony be able to produce export crops, especially sugar, after the abolition of slavery? And would the former slaves work voluntarily without force? French liberals craved hard evidence from Haiti that could be used to support emancipation, such as increased production, escalating trade figures, and regular working hours. Haiti was far from performing well on this score. In spite of the ruling class's efforts to enhance the production of cash crops, the Haitian populace was resistant to plantation labor after all the years under slavery and moved to small-holding peasantry, which resulted in depreciating trade figures for Haiti.

⁹⁵ *Le Globe*, t.2, no.129 (1825): 661–62. This number came from the census of the Haitian government, proclaimed in 6 January 1824.

⁹⁶ *Le Globe*, t.4, no.76 (1826): 403.

Coffee and indigo production replaced sugar as the larger component of Haitian foreign trade. In the 1820s, Haiti was supplying much of coffee consumed in France, reviving Franco-Haitian trades.⁹⁷ Yet to the sugar-obsessed minds of metropolitans, the deteriorating sugar production was the most ominous sign.

<i>Provenance</i>	<i>1821</i>	<i>1822</i>	<i>1823</i>	<i>1824</i>
French colonies	3,504,838	3,520,189	2,632,503	3,757,164
Haiti	3,464,414	4,454,718	3,309,508	5,236,164
Foreign colonies	343,464	1,174,041	2,266,959	1,280,287

Table 1: Importation of coffee into France in the 1820s.⁹⁸

This situation made the French antislavery liberals apologetic and defensive toward the labor regime in Haiti. In 1826, President Boyer attempted to revive strict labor discipline through new *Code Rural*. It was promulgated mainly in order to stipulate the amounts paid in rent by tenant farmers and to prevent vagabondage. It led to heated controversies in France over the Haitian labor regime. The proslavery spokesmen asserted that the *Code Rural* was merely slavery by another name that only proved the incapability of Negroes to engage in free labor. The SMC on the other hand, defended the severity of the *Code* and vindicated it as merely a transitional phase that must be endured until the Haitians reached the same degree of liberty enjoyed by the French.⁹⁹ The consensus among liberals was to give the former slaves' nation more time to adapt to free labor.

⁹⁷ Carolyn Fick, "Emancipation in Haiti: From Plantation Labour to Peasant Proprietorship," in *After Slavery: Emancipation and its Discontents*, 11-39; Brier, *Haïti et la France*, 82-85; Dupuy, *Haiti in the World*, 113.

⁹⁸ Reproduced from Brière, *Haïti et la France*, 83.

⁹⁹ *Le Journal de SMC*, t.8 (1828): 221-23. About British reactions, see Geggus, "Haiti and the Abolitionists," 135.

When confronting the disheartening cultivation practices in Haiti, the antislavery liberals often had to recourse to a favorite memory, which in this case was the short-lived regime of Toussaint Louverture in 1798-1802.¹⁰⁰ The system of *fermage* attempted by the black general was a kind of state-sponsored forced labor: the state leased abandoned plantations to tenants and a quarter of revenue went to the workers who were bound to their particular plantation.¹⁰¹ The antislavery liberals agreed with their enemies, the former planters of Saint-Domingue, on this point—many of the former planters found Louverture’s labor regime a sensible solution once slavery no longer existed.¹⁰²

For French liberals, Toussaint Louverture was a singularly extraordinary character who stood apart from the black masses: he was depicted as an acculturated French patriot and the only leader competent enough to reestablish production and order on the island. The black general’s devotion to France and its revolutionary ideals earned him their high esteem. In Placide Justin’s book on Haiti, Louverture is described as an exceptionally intelligent leader who reconciled liberty with order and prosperity and civilized the black masses. His deportation to France was tragic because it deprived both France and Haiti of the last chance of preserving French Saint-

¹⁰⁰ For earlier representation of Toussaint Louverture, see Charles Forsdick, “Situating Haiti: On Some Early Nineteenth-Century Representations of Toussaint Louverture,” *International Journal of Francophone Studies* 10, no. 1 (2007): 17–34.

¹⁰¹ About the regime of Toussaint Louverture, see Sabine Manigat, “Le régime de Toussaint Louverture en 1801: un modèle, une exception,” in *Rétablissement de l’esclavage dans les colonies françaises*, 109-26 ; and Dupuy, *Haiti in the World Economy*, 51–83.

¹⁰² Among many, see Alexandre Paul Marie de Laujon, *Moyens de rentrer en possession de la colonie de Saint-Domingue et d’y établir la tranquillité* (Paris: A. Égron, 1814), 30–31; *Mémoire des colons de Saint-Domingue, Droits de souveraineté de la France sur Saint-Domingue* (Paris, 1821). Or for the opinion of the advocate of free-coloreds, see Anonymous(un Créole), *Réponse à la lettre de M. le chevalier Delacroix à M. le comte Humbert de Sesmaisons, au sujet de Saint-Domingue* (Paris: Impr. de A. Bailleul, 1822), 4-5.

Domingue.¹⁰³ Thus, although the draconian labor regime estranged the black general from his own people and eventually brought about his downfall, both the antislavery and proslavery metropolitans found their own moments of redemption in Louverture's time in power. In the words of Rémusat, Louverture's regime was that of "discipline, order, and economy," and "maybe also the beautiful moment of Saint-Domingue."¹⁰⁴

In fact, Haiti was the first to experience a difficulty that proved to be common among postemancipation societies—the state required the preservation of an export-oriented economy based on wage labor, while the freedmen were eager to be small-holding farmers.¹⁰⁵ In Haiti, this conflict was intensified to an even greater degree by the imperative of the new state to preserve an oversized army.¹⁰⁶ Both Louverture's labor regime and the *Code Rural* represented the ruling class's response to such postemancipation and postcolonial conditions. Most French liberals failed to understand the freed people's struggle for economic autonomy as a continuation of their pursuit of freedom since the Haitian Revolution. Instead, they were afraid that the black peasants abandoned their responsibility of fulfilling the promise of emancipation and the Revolution. As a result, they sanctioned the authoritarian labor systems as an apprentice stage in which freed people had to acclimate to freedom until they could "live under laws similar to ours."¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ Justin, *Histoire politique et statistique d'île d'Hayti*, 334–91. This is shared by ex-colon writers. See *Le cri des colons propriétaires à Saint-Domingue, expropriés et réfugiés en France, ou Appel à la nation* (Paris: Goujon, 1822), 10–20.

¹⁰⁴ *Le Globe*, t. 3, no.40 (1826): 214.

¹⁰⁵ See Dupuy, *Haiti in the World Economy*, 51–103; and Crichlow, *Negotiating Caribbean Freedom*.

¹⁰⁶ About the overall review of the dilemma of Haitian rulers, see Trouillot, *Haiti, State Against*, 35–50.

¹⁰⁷ *Le Journal de SMC*, t.8 (1828): 223.

On the State of the Post-independence Haiti II: “Spectacle of African Race”

Whereas the proslavery party was obsessed with the survival of sugar production in Haiti, French antislavery supporters were emphasizing another mission that extended beyond endorsing free labor ideology. Haiti was to be a base of civilization built by Africans in the midst of the Americas, thereby testifying to their equal capability. Before then, those who fought against color prejudice had only a modicum of extraordinary blacks and free-coloreds, such as those who were collected by Abbé Grégoire in his anthology.¹⁰⁸ If Toussaint Louverture represented an exceptional black character, then the birth of Haiti signaled a far greater experiment—whether blacks would be able to rule themselves as a civilized nation. Now a whole island would serve as living laboratory to refute proslavery propaganda.

On what basis could one decide whether the Haitians were marching toward civilization? For nineteenth-century French observers, there were several indispensable features that they considered essential to a civilized society, such as laws, morals, sociability, a stable government, religion, family, and commerce. Abbé Grégoire accentuated the spread of Catholicism and the sponsorship of the Church by Haitian rulers as evidence of the mark of civilization in Haiti.¹⁰⁹ *La Chronique religieuse*, a liberal and Gallican journal, was especially interested in the state of

¹⁰⁸ Abbé Henri Grégoire, *De la littérature des nègres ou Recherches sur leurs facultés intellectuelles, leurs qualités morales et leur littérature* (Paris: Maradan, 1808).

¹⁰⁹ See Grégoire's *De la liberté de conscience et de culte à Haïti* (Paris: Baudouin Frères, 1824).

Catholicism in Haiti, which reflected the concerns of Grégoire.¹¹⁰ *La Revue encyclopédique* glorified the foundation of schools and journals in Haiti as evidence of the Haitians' desire for education and civilization.¹¹¹

Another sign of civilization was Haiti's participation in international antislavery. *La Chronique religieuse* depicted Haiti as a vanguard fortress from which to fight the slave trade. The journal presented one particular episode as a symbolic moment that defied both racist and proslavery ideologies. In 1817, Haiti captured a European slave trade ship near its shores. The Haitians transferred the naked slaves on board to the capital city and provided care for the now-free men and women because every slave, having once set foot on Haitian soil, was liberated. The journal asked in the end, "If we ask ourselves who had the greater humanity, would it be the Haitians or the slave traders?"¹¹² This was hardly an isolated incident at the time, as fugitive slaves often sought refuge on Haitian free soil.¹¹³ President Boyer even promoted a plan for free American blacks to emigrate to Haiti.¹¹⁴ Thus Haiti offered a mirror in which Frenchmen could view an inverted image of their society—white slavers and black liberators.

The liberal economist Simonde de Sismondi provided a grand vision of Haiti as a pioneer of the global emancipation of Africans. In a review of the great changes of the nineteenth

¹¹⁰ In *la Chronique religieuse*, see a review of abbé Grégoire's *Manuel de piété* (t.1, 1819), 161-64; "Extrait de l'abeille haïtien," (t.4, 1820) : 246-48; "Haiti (Saint-Domingue): The constitution of Haiti concerning religion and morals," (t 5, 1820) : 331-34.

¹¹¹ *La Revue encyclopédique*, t.16 (1822): 383.

¹¹² *La Chronique religieuse*, t.2 (1819): 42.

¹¹³ Brière, *Haïti et France*, 178-79.

¹¹⁴ Hunt, *Haiti's Influence on Antebellum America*, 165-67. Also see Prince Saunders, *Haytian Papers* (London: W. Reed, 1816).

century, Sismondi declared, “It is here that the sons of Africa have proven that they are humans, that they deserved to be free, and that they know how to appreciate enlightenment and virtue.”¹¹⁵ Sismondi cited Haiti as evidence of the superiority of freedom over slavery in civilizing black people: “Since Haiti was free, and the Negroes became their own masters, their ardor for learning has surpassed even their ardor for emancipation.”¹¹⁶ While the centuries of slavery had fomented only hatred, ignorance, and violence in the colony, just twenty years of liberty was sufficient “for transforming one who was regarded as a beast to a human figure in a civilized nation.”¹¹⁷

It is difficult to say, however, that their tributes to “African perfectibility” led to a substantial reconsideration of the negative views of Africa and Africans.¹¹⁸ In fact, the birth of Haiti cast Africa as a continent of barbarism, slavery, and lethargy, in a far more striking and dramatic contrast than before. While Africa suffered in darkness, Haiti and her black inhabitants were supposed to be thriving thanks to their ties with French civilization and their own struggle for liberty. As Haiti was regenerated in advance, it would be an intermediary that would deliver civilization to the African continent. This position was shared by the Francophile ruling elite of Haiti. In spite of their rhetorical glorification of “African” origin against European color

¹¹⁵ Sismondi, “Revue des efforts et des progrès des peuples dans les vingt-cinq dernières années,” *La Revue encyclopédique*, t. 25 (1825): 37.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 38.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ About the role of Caribbean colonies in the imagination of Africa, see François Manchuelle, “Le rôle des Antillais dans l'apparition du nationalisme culturel en Afrique noire francophone,” *Cahiers d'études africaines* 32, Cahier 127 (1992): 375-408; Paul Brasseur, “Les campagnes abolitionnistes en France : L’Afrique sans l’Afrique” in *De la traite à l’esclavage*, vol. II, ed. Serge Daget (Nantes & Paris: 1988): 333-41.

prejudice, the educated mulatto elite took for granted that the Africa of the present was a land of ignorance and misery in need of the arrival of civilization. Like their French supporters, Haitian elites detested “African” customs, especially voodoo, as backward and superstitious.¹¹⁹

Sophie Doin, a female abolitionist in the SMC, drew a well-defined line of contrast between the “Negro of Africa” and “Negro of Haiti.”¹²⁰ Deploing the fact that well-educated Frenchmen were unthinkingly immersed in proslavery propaganda, she urged readers to imagine a scene of the beach in Haiti, where a free and happy black man resided. He would be a consolation, she envisioned, to the miseries of his fellow Africans who were still living under slavery and tyranny. In a similar mode, *la Revue encyclopédique* presented Haiti as the vanguard of Africans moving toward civilization. The journal paid particular attention to Haiti because of “the desire to see its new citizens deliver the last remains [Africans] from barbarism, and soon occupy an honorable rank among the civilized peoples.”¹²¹

Moreover, in spite of all the praise of “African perfectibility,” metropolitan liberals had conflicted views on the presumably “African” population of Haiti. The inhabitants of the island were in fact divided by a variety of factors, such as shades of skin color, class, education, and birthplace. During and after the Haitian Revolution, there were unceasing inner conflicts between free-coloreds and ex-slaves, between landowners and laborers, and between those born in Saint-Domingue and others directly taken from Africa.¹²² Skin color was an important marker of status,

¹¹⁹ See Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier*, 41-46, 70-71, 80-81.

¹²⁰ Sophie Doin, “Le nègre d’Afrique et le nègre d’Haïti,” *Journal de SMC*, t. 5 (1825): 372-75.

¹²¹ *La Revue encyclopédique*, t. 27 (July-September, 1825): 647-48.

¹²² In the intriguing story of the origin of the name attached to Christophe’s citadel, Trouillot highlights the “war within the war”, a conflict between African-born slaves and black Creole elites. See

but it was relative to social and political positions. The division of Haiti after 1806 between two antagonistic governments and the conflicts between mulatto elites and black masses puzzled the French abolitionists, who expected to see the epitome of racial reconciliation and unity in Haiti once the white population was expelled. Between the two governments represented by different groups of people of color, which group was the favorite of metropolitan abolitionists in their tribute to “Africans”?

Of the two governments ruling Haiti, the northern kingdom was more distressing to metropolitan antislavery. Christophe (King Henry I) and his black entourage, regarded as a comical mockery of the European monarchy, were made a laughingstock in France. Many French observers made sarcastic remarks on the titles of Haitian nobility: “*Le noble vicomte de Limonade!* (The noble Viscount Lemonade!)”¹²³ To inveterate republicans like Abbé Grégoire, resurrecting monarchy in the land of the Revolution was a mortal sin.¹²⁴ In the journal of the SMC, Charles Coquerel lamented how color prejudice was worsened by “the extravagance that had happened in the ex-kingdom of Haiti.” In a highly suggestive tone, however, Coquerel asked if this “royal almanac of Negroes” was really a thing to be ridiculed in the present era of the Restoration, which was itself preoccupied with all the anachronistic gestures of royalism.¹²⁵ Although Christophe’s despotism alienated French abolitionists, most of whom were liberal or

Trouillot, ch. 2: “The Three Faces of Sans Souci” in *Silencing the Past*.

¹²³ *Le Défenseur des colonies*, no. 1 (December 1819) : 18.

¹²⁴ About Grégoire’s attitude toward Christophe’s kingdom, see Sepinwall, *The Abbé Grégoire and the French Revolution*, 181-96.

¹²⁵ *Le Journal de SMC*, t.2 (1823): 142–55.

republican, it was not lost on them that their own regime in France was far from being a paragon of European/white virtues in comparison to the black king's extravagance.

French liberals looked instead to the republic of Pétion and Boyer as the legitimate successor to the colonial revolution and emancipation.¹²⁶ They warmly received the news of Haiti's unification under Boyer in 1822. The birth of the new republic under a lighter-skinned, Francophile, and "civilized" president spared French liberals an embarrassment. Discourses in favor of the free-colored ruling elite of Haiti were proliferated in France both by the free-colored themselves and by metropolitan spokesmen. One mulatto pamphleteer from Martinique glorified the genesis of Haiti as a unique achievement of free-colored people who were acculturated and educated by French civilization, of which blacks benumbed by slavery were incapable. He writes, "it is not difficult to see that it is the civilization of France that influenced that of Haiti, and that, without us, our previous slaves would certainly not have been who they are."¹²⁷ To him, only a class civilized by French influences in advance—free-colored people—could accomplish such a feat. When France was caught between the vice of slavery and the danger of general abolition, the author asserted that the equal rights of the free-colored people would be a safe way toward gradual abolition.¹²⁸

¹²⁶ Geggus delineates different responses of Britain and France to the two governments of Haiti. See Geggus, "Haiti and the Abolitionists." Also see Jean-François Brière, "Abbé Grégoire and Haitian Independence," *Research in African Literatures* 35, no 2 (Summer, 2004): 34-43.

¹²⁷ Anonymous, *Lettre d'un habitant de la Martinique, sur l'émancipation de Saint-Domingue, et sur le moyen de prévenir l'insurrection des esclaves dans les autres colonies* (Paris: libraires du Palais-Royal, 1825), 15.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 19.

La Revue encyclopédique glorified Boyer's unification of Haiti in terms of the superiority of its government system. It predicted, "its beneficial and restorative influences will from now on spread over the indolent population of the Spanish part of the island, and even over the unhappy subjects of Christophe, who had been for a long time distracted by him from the occupations of agriculture and industry necessary to their well-being."¹²⁹ The liberal journal thus endorsed the colonization of "backward" (Spanish) Santo Domingo by superior (French) Haiti.

The *Affaire Blanchet* in 1827 testified to the French liberals' support of the mulatto ruling elite of Haiti.¹³⁰ As seen in the first chapter, the case between Blanchet, the son of a refugee *colon*, and Boyer soon took the form of a confrontation between the anti-Haitian colonial party and the pro-Haitian liberals. Isambert eloquently supported the rights of the newly-independent nation, which were still being questioned and mocked in France. As the president of another country, Isambert argued, Boyer had a privilege of exemption and was thus not accountable to the laws of France. Isambert urged the audience to imagine such a case in reverse: a French king accused by a Haitian or a foreigner in a Haitian tribunal and condemned. Blanchet had essentially insulted the chief of an independent nation.¹³¹ Isambert's defense of Boyer made him a close friend of Haitian mulatto elites. When the rulers of Haiti commended Isambert as a supporter of Haiti and "Africans," the young lawyer presented himself as a counselor to and patron of the new republic.

¹²⁹ *La Revue encyclopédique*, t.24 (October-December 1824): 813–14.

¹³⁰ About the case, see the first chapter.

¹³¹ Isambert et als., *Consultation pour Boyer*, 33-64.

This was the very vision that Abbé Grégoire had conceived for the first black republic and that the ruling elite of Haiti embraced. Regarded as the godfather of Haiti on both sides of the Atlantic, Grégoire had hoped Haiti would be regenerated by assimilating the best elements of western civilization, which to him were the French Revolution and Catholicism.¹³² According to Jean-François Brière, the Haitian mulatto elites heartily accepted this vision: “It is easy to understand why the mulattoes in Pétion and Boyer’s entourage exhibited a strong devotion for Grégoire: his vision of the world implicitly attributed a major historic role to them, and that role could be used to legitimize the power of educated ‘mixed bloods’ over uneducated and un-Christianized blacks.”¹³³ Although moderate and anticlerical French liberals kept their distance from Grégoire’s republicanism and Catholicism, they assented to his idea of Haiti as an adopted child or a younger brother of French civilization, destined to play a great historical role in enlightening Africa someday.

What do such statements about African regeneration and their selective approach to different groups in the colonies say about the ways in which French antislavery liberals articulated ideas about race? As Drescher claims, the relationship between abolitionism and racism is much more complicated than the one between proslavery ideologies and racism.¹³⁴ French liberals persistently opposed proslavery assertions of the black inferiority. They inverted the cause-effect arguments common to proslavery discourses and claimed that the putative vices

¹³² See Sepinwall, “Exporting the Revolution” in *The Abbé Grégoire and the French Revolution*, 181-98.

¹³³ Brière, “Abbé Grégoire and Haitian Independence,” 38–39.

¹³⁴ Seymour Drescher, “The Ending of the Slave Trade and the Evolution of European Scientific Racism” in *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, ed. Joseph E. Inikori and Stanley L. Engerman (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992), 361-96.

of black slaves, especially indolence or aversion to labor, were effects, rather than causes, of colonial slavery. If the black were indeed lazy, insensitive, and irresponsible, it was not because they were African, but because they had been made slaves. *La Revue encyclopédique* confronted innumerable criticisms of the present state of Haiti and retorted that those defects were the lingering effects of slavery—it argued that virtues such as marriage, property rights, and diligence could not possibly flourish so quickly in a land that had been afflicted by slavery for long.¹³⁵ Once slavery, the cause of all these miseries, was discontinued, its noxious effects would fade away in time. The article concludes with much optimism: “in the state of Haiti, almost the entirety of the ills is the result of the influence of the past; things are better in the present; the best lies ahead in the happily possible and near future.”¹³⁶

As troublesome as the older forms of color prejudice were, the first half of the nineteenth century saw the rise of pseudoscientific racism based on physiology.¹³⁷ *Le Globe* censured the famous naturalist Georges Cuvier’s new book, *Discours sur les revolutions de la surface du globe* (1825), for its underlying racism. The liberal journal opposed the popular tendency to associate the physical traits of human groups with their moral and intellectual capacity, and posited Haiti as evidence that the faculties possessed by blacks were equivalent to those of

¹³⁵ *Revue encyclopédique*, t.27 (July-September, 1825): 662–63.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 675.

¹³⁷ About the rise of scientific racism in nineteenth-century France, see Bénot, *La démence coloniale sous Napoléon*; Cohen, *The French Encounters with Africans*; Hoffman, *Le nègre romantique*; Martin Staum, *Labeling People: French Scholars on Society, Race and Empire, 1815-1848* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003); Martin Staum, “Paris Ethnology and the Perfectibility of ‘Races’”, *Canadian Journal of History* 35 (December 2000): 453–472. The founding work of French racism written by Gobineau was published in 1853–55 as Arthur de Gobineau, *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines*, 4 volumes (Paris: Firmin-Dido, 1853–55).

whites.¹³⁸ It declared that while the French Revolution had brought on the Haitian Revolution, the latter was distinctive for also being an anti-racist revolution.¹³⁹ Pro-Haitian pamphleteers contended that Haiti would be a harbinger of a colorless or color-blind world.¹⁴⁰

However, metropolitan liberals were also preoccupied with their own racist notions. As the inheritors of Enlightenment universalism, they embraced people of color as equal human beings only in terms of their possibility of becoming civilized men. The blacks at that time were equal only in their potential for achieving civilization; they had not yet reached that point of distinction. Coquerel upheld the “perfectibility” of the blacks and claimed that they were just like newborn babies who had yet to fully develop.¹⁴¹ French liberals regarded Haiti as a *tabula rasa* in which a new breed of men would be born, as the French Jacobins had once dreamed. As the liberals opposed physiology-oriented racism, they believed that the differences between human groups originated from cultural and political factors, not from ethnic or racial ones. They focused on removing politico-cultural obstacles to civilization, such as slavery and despotism, with the help of those who had already reached an advanced stage of civilization. Accordingly, blacks were seen as essentially human, but at the same time not yet fully human because they still had to learn how to be free and civilized.¹⁴² This was the credo of republican abolitionists and assimilationists during the French Revolution, an attitude that Laurent Dubois describes as

¹³⁸ *Le Globe*, t.2, no.150 (1825): 779–80.

¹³⁹ *Le Globe*, t.3, no.19 (1826): 100–101.

¹⁴⁰ L. M. de Genève, *Encore un mot sur la République d’Hayti* (Paris: A. Bailleul, 1820), 6–7.

¹⁴¹ *Le Journal de SMC*, t.2 (1823): 142–55.

¹⁴² Brière, *Haïti et la France*, 40.

“republican racism.”¹⁴³ Haiti was liberated from the yoke of slavery, but the Haitians had to advance much further as a country in order to prove that they deserved freedom and independence.

The writings of the young French liberal Victor Jacquemont encapsulate the ambiguity that had snuck into the French liberals’ embrace of the “newborn” nation. His works disclose how the black republic both excited *and* disturbed the metropolitan liberals who were expectantly observing Haiti as a laboratory of postemancipation society.¹⁴⁴ At that time, with the exception of governmental officials and merchants, very few Frenchmen actually saw Haiti with their own eyes. However, Jacquemont was a naturalist and during his voyage to the Americas in 1826, he visited his brother who had settled in Haiti. During his stay on the island, Jacquemont produced some compositions on Haiti, including a short essay entitled “Idea on the Social and Political State of the Republic of Haiti.”¹⁴⁵ His sojourn was very timely because it was just after the French recognition of Haiti’s independence.

In principle, Jacquemont glorified the birth of Haiti as one of the greatest episodes in the history of the quest for liberty; it was “a new experience in the history of the human species.”¹⁴⁶ When observing Haiti in person, however, Jacquemont became less enthusiastic about the

¹⁴³ Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens*; Dubois, “‘The Price of Liberty’: Victor Hugues and the Administration of Freedom in Guadeloupe, 1794-1802,” *The William and Mary Quarterly Quarterly*, LVI, no.2 (April, 1999): 363-92.

¹⁴⁴ About Victor Jacquemont in details, see Roger Heim, ed, *Jacquemont* (Paris: Muséum National d’Histoire Naturelle, 1959).

¹⁴⁵ Victor Jacquemont, *Correspondance inédite de Victor Jacquemont avec sa famille et ses amis, 1824-1832* (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1867), 213-15.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 213.

present state of Haiti than his liberal fellows who had not actually experienced it. He was skeptical of the mulatto leaders' qualifications, and observed that the declaration of independence did not automatically lead to the installation of liberty. The existence of liberal institutions did not imply the existence of liberty, in much the same way that liberty was largely illusory in the nominally constitutional regime of Restoration France.¹⁴⁷ Yet he was strongly against any attempt to degrade the African race by disclosing such criticisms of Haiti, without considering the onerous legacies of the past: "...as if it was finally possible for populations long-degraded by the colonial system and made stupid by slavery to be free in becoming independent!"¹⁴⁸

Haiti had been acknowledged as a "civilized nation" by the 1825 ordinance, but Haitians still needed to learn how to live wisely with their freedom. It was in this context that Jacquemont suggested the apparently contradictory measure of "imposed liberty." In a letter to a Haitian friend, Prosper Fouchard, he wrote, "It is evident that those who were made to submit to the evils of servitude will not rebel against the benefits of liberty: we will be able to impose civilization on them."¹⁴⁹ He continues however, "The contradiction that exists between these expressions, imposed liberty, as they said imposed slavery, will show you, Monsieur, the delicate knot of this question." Jacquemont believed that it was possible for Haitians to build a European-style civilization on their island, if given enough time, which was what the current Haitian rulers were attempting to do. However, he also borrowed from Montesquieu and Helvetius and doubted if such a development would fit with the dispositions of the Haitian people. Jacquemont firmly

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 118, 213–14.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 214.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 120.

believed in the perfectibility of all humans, but he also believed that the procedures and direction toward civilization were different for each group because they each had their own habits and dispositions. A regime style appropriated from Europe might therefore be nothing but a burden for the majority of the Haitian people, who could be preserved only by despotism and tyranny.¹⁵⁰ The young naturalist thus not only indicated the aspirations of the metropolitan liberals toward the new nation, but also revealed the underlying problems in the state-building of Haiti.

The antislavery liberals in France ultimately endorsed the independence of Haiti, but only on certain “postcolonial” conditions—as a living testimony against slavery and color prejudices, the Haitian regime needed to be constitutional, liberal, and free of racial conflicts. The republic owed its Western supporters a duty to preserve the civilization it acquired from France and eventually forward its benefits to Africa. Moreover, as the first country of ex-slaves, Haiti was obligated to prove that its economic production and prosperity would be enhanced by liberty and perform even better than when it was under slavery. The strict labor order was regarded as the foremost sign of civilization.

It is therefore not surprising that the trope used most often by antislavery liberals in imagining Haiti was that of a theater or spectacle. In a review of Haitian literature, Antoine Métral, a fierce antislavery supporter, concluded his article with a rosy picture of Haiti’s future. While proslavery propaganda envisioned Haiti as a spectacle of revolutionary horrors and crimes, he predicted a different vision of humanity in Haiti:

Thus, the world will offer for the first time the spectacle of black men, at one time savage or moron, detached from natal lands, trained in servitude beyond the ocean, breaking their chains, forming a new people, calling fine arts to the middle of them, and

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

cultivating them with a success at which the posterity will be surprised.¹⁵¹

In the words of Gilbert Chinard, “the republic of Haiti offered a fascinating spectacle, a unique occasion to observe *in vivo* how a people without political tradition, without social organization, without firmly established philosophy, and without theoretical education, arrived in twenty-five years to constitute itself as an independent nation.”¹⁵² French antislavery liberals fashioned Haiti as “a spectacle of black men” unprecedented in history, in which liberty and emancipation would triumph over tyranny, slavery, and color prejudice.

Some, like Jacquemont, were aware that colonial society was far from a *tabula rasa*; in fact, it was extremely disadvantaged by the burdensome legacies of slavery, wars, and international isolation. In the wake of the French Revolution, however, metropolitan antislavery supporters were inclined to project onto the island the aspirations they had for France, which had been mostly subdued by the reactionary Restoration. The French Revolution had ended up in the Congress of Vienna in Europe, but seemed to be given a new lease on life in the lands of the Revolution’s colored disciples. Extolling the birth of Haiti, Rémusat exclaimed, “America is really the new world; the counterrevolution does not traverse the ocean.”¹⁵³

Rethinking Colonialism:

The Independence of Haiti and the Reorganization of the French Empire

¹⁵¹ *La Revue encyclopédique*, t.3 (July-September 1819): 148.

¹⁵² Gilbert Chinard, “L’Expérience Haïtienne de Victor Jacquemont: réalité et mirage,” *Conjonction*, no. 48 (December 1953): 111.

¹⁵³ *Le Globe*, t.3, no.40 (1826); 215.

There was another site to which French liberals connected the “emancipation” of Haiti. While counterrevolutionary regimes had returned in Europe, the Revolution had emerged victorious in South America where the colonies of the Spanish Empire declared independence. It was natural that French observers, both conservative and liberal, would associate the birth of Haiti with this phenomenon. Proslavery conservatives considered it an extension of the revolutionary conspiracy, another symptom of sociopolitical disruption incurred by the age of the French Revolution. The conservative journal *la Quotidienne* insisted that the existence of Haiti and the independence of South America would signal a wider scope of social dislocation.¹⁵⁴

In contrast, the secession of Haiti from France and other Spanish colonies from Spain raised awareness among liberals and republicans that a fundamental change in the Americas had occurred, one that would make the colonial system obsolete. It induced French liberals to connect the birth of Haiti to a new world order after the collapse of the colonial empires. In surveying the journals of the Restoration, Yves Bénot suggests that the independence of Haiti inspired anticolonial opinions in the next generation.¹⁵⁵ *Le Journal du commerce* exalted the birth of Haiti as a symptom of the liberation of America, and welcomed the 1825 ordinance as a great leap for liberty and French commerce.¹⁵⁶ Criticizing *la Quotidienne* for its biased opinion, another pamphleteer pointed out that Haiti was no longer a problem of just France, but also of

¹⁵⁴ See Anonymous, *Antidote contre les doctrines de la Quotidienne sur Saint-Domingue* (Paris: Ponthieu et Delaunay, 1825).

¹⁵⁵ Yves Bénot, *Les lumières, l'esclavage, la colonisation* (Paris: La Découverte, 2005), 264-94.

¹⁵⁶ See *le Journal du Commerce*, January 2, April 21, June 13, August 12, and September 24, 1826.

the group of newly-established American nations.¹⁵⁷ In a similar way, Salvandy saw in the recognition of Haiti the accomplishment of the New World Revolution that the discovery of America had launched, but at this time without any of the bloodshed created by the era of the *conquistadors*.¹⁵⁸

The recurring debates in parliament over the colonial budget show how those changes in the Americas provoked conflicts over the future of the French colonies.¹⁵⁹ Conservatives insisted on reviving the old colonial system, refortifying naval forces, and colonizing new lands. To them, the lesson of Saint-Domingue was that France should reinforce its colonial defenses in order to prevent further revolts. The procolonial party harped upon the threat to national security caused by foreign commodities and the fundamental contribution of colonies to the domestic manufacturing and commerce.

The liberal party responded to the conservatives by citing Saint-Domingue as proof that the old colonial system was fatally misguided, and warned against the deceptive nostalgia for the prerevolutionary prosperity of the island. They argued that the old system could be buttressed by strong protectionism of the colonial sugar and a constant influx of black slaves into the sugar islands, which Haitian independence and the British abolition of the slave trade had made difficult by that time. General Horace Sébastiani, a member of the SMC, questioned the viability of the old sugar colonies and announced that the birth of free Haiti and independence of the Spanish colonies meant the end of colonial empires and a new era of free trade. He declared:

¹⁵⁷ Anonymous, *Antidote contre les doctrines de la Quotidienne sur Saint-Domingue*.

¹⁵⁸ Salvandy, *De l'émancipation de Saint-Domingue*, 77.

¹⁵⁹ Among many, see AP, t. 36 (sessions of April, 1822); t. 37 (sessions on customs on colonial sugar, during June-July, 1822).

“The emancipation of the American continent, the independence of Saint-Domingue, and the provident liberty of commerce that was going to be introduced in the English colonies, leave our feeble and languishing possessions in an unfortunate position, from which the sacrifices proposed to us will no longer be able to save.”¹⁶⁰

However, in spite of their professed dream of new colonial order without oppression and tyranny, it is difficult to draw a definite line between colonial and anticolonial discourses in their designs for the postrevolutionary Franco-Haitian relationship. The anticolonial discourse of metropolitan liberals often contained elements of what B  no  t Joachim called “neo-colonialism on trial.”¹⁶¹ Joachim defines the Franco-Haitian relationship after 1804 in terms of a cultivation of dependency on the former mother country. This was the intent of Baron de Mackau, who was in charge of the Franco-Haitian negotiation in 1825 for the recognition of independence—converting Haiti into “a province of France bringing more but costing nothing.”¹⁶² When French liberals plotted out the locations of France and Haiti within a new colonial order, their discourse was often cast in terms of postcolonial or neocolonial dependency.

An interesting case was that of Civique de Gastine, a pro-Haitian republican pamphleteer and passionate anticolonial critic who later settled and died in Haiti. He regarded the birth of Haiti as the very beginning of the New America, a point of view he trumpeted with great enthusiasm in a series of pamphlets and books. He claimed that the old colonial system was “a

¹⁶⁰ AP, CD on June 25, 1822, t.37, 26.

¹⁶¹ Joachim, “Le N  o-colonialisme    l’essai.”

¹⁶² Ibid., 45.

masterwork of injustice and iniquity.”¹⁶³ What would it have been like, he asked, if the money wasted on the expedition to Saint-Domingue had been invested in improving Bretagne or Bordeaux?¹⁶⁴ According to Gastine, the new engine of future prosperity was production, not conquest—the era of conquest was over, for that type of domination would lead to the destructive relationship of master and slave. The mutually productive relationship to be established between French industry and Haitian natural resources should be formed as a model for a new world order. Haiti would be an *entrepôt* of France. France needed a maritime base in the Americas, while Haiti required French help to sustain their civilized state.¹⁶⁵ After Haitian independence, Gastine predicted that American colonies “will be for us new kinds of colonies, more conforming to human rights and to the enlightenment of the century.”¹⁶⁶ It is notable that Mackau, a royal official, and Gastine, a republican pamphleteer, converged on a neocolonial scheme. This possible Franco-Haitian relationship was more clearly expressed in the work of G. T. Mollien, the first French consul sent to Haiti, who conceived the idea of incorporating Haiti into a kind of French Commonwealth in the Americas.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶³ Civique de Gastine, *Histoire de la République d’Haïti ou Saint-Domingue, l’esclavage et les colons* (Paris: Plancher, 1819), 7.

¹⁶⁴ Civique de Gastine, *Histoire de la République d’Haïti*, 10–11.

¹⁶⁵ Civique de Gastine, *Pétition à MM. les Députés des départements, sur la nécessité où se trouve la France de faire un traité de commerce avec la république d’Haïti et sur les avantages qu’en retireraient les deux nations* (Paris: Chez les Marchands de Nouveautés, 1822), 9–11.

¹⁶⁶ Civique de Gastine, *Histoire de la République d’Haïti*, 26.

¹⁶⁷ Brière, *Haïti et la France*, 171–73; Jean-François Brière, “Du Sénégal aux Antilles: Gaspard-Théodore Mollien en Haïti, 1825-1831,” *French Colonial History* 8 (2007): 71-79. See the works of Mollien edited by Francis Arzalier, Gaspard Mollien, *Haïti ou Saint-Domingue* (Paris: l’Harmattan, 2006) and *Mœurs d’Haïti* (Paris: l’Harmattan, 2006).

This new prospect was in accordance with the hopes of the merchant-bankers who were in league with the liberals. They were seeking new markets in independent Latin America in order to avoid the burdensome protectionism sought by the lobby of Caribbean sugar colonies.¹⁶⁸ The French merchants had been clamoring for the reestablishment of trade with Haiti as a solution to the decline in French foreign trade, while the clandestine trade in coffee and indigo increased between French and Haitian ports.¹⁶⁹ At the time of the 1825 royal ordinance, the merchants of Le Havre, who were already importing Haitian coffee, resolved to cast a medal for celebrating this “glorious” event.¹⁷⁰ Salvandy agreed with the French merchants and proposed that reopening trade with Haiti could reinvigorate the stagnating French commerce. He reminded his readers that Saint-Domingue had been lost to France for a long time, but the island had never ceased to be fertile.¹⁷¹ *Le Globe* shared Salvandy’s view: in the face of the present economic crisis, the emancipation of Saint-Domingue could provide a new market whose prospects would be just as bountiful as the richness of the island.¹⁷²

Ironically, the promising commercial aspects of Haiti that were being advertised by the liberals were identical to the nostalgic vision of their opponents, the ultraroyalists and refugee

¹⁶⁸ For the overview of the Restoration policies on colonial economy, see Francis Démier, “Slavery during the First Industrialization,” in *The Abolitions of Slavery*, 237-47; Paul Butel, “Succès et déclin du commerce colonial français, de la révolution à la restauration,” *Revue économique* 40, no.6 (November, 1989): 1079-96.

¹⁶⁹ Joachim, “Commerce et décolonisation,” 1501-2; also see Ponsin, *Pétition présentée à la Chambre des Députés, le 31 mars 1819, question relative à la nature des relations commerciales des ports de France avec la colonie de Saint-Domingue*, Bibliothèque Nationale de France VP-27496 (collection of petitions on commerce).

¹⁷⁰ Coustelin, *Contre la reconnaissance*, 31-32.

¹⁷¹ Salvandy, *De l’émancipation de Saint-Domingue* (1825), 27–29.

¹⁷² *Le Globe*, t.2, no.151 (1825): 781–83.

planters. Although liberal critics criticized the cruelty of slavery as the driving force behind the prosperous pre-1789 colonial economy, they also clung to the idea of the innate productivity and fertility of Saint-Domingue. Liberals and conservatives agreed that if only the Haitian people were willing to work hard enough, the island would recover its prosperity—to the benefit of both Haiti and France.

Liberal circles believed that commerce with France had a role in civilizing Haiti that went beyond economic interests. The French liberals appointed France to a privileged position in Haitian commerce, claiming that commerce would not only replace colonialism, but would also deliver French civilization to the now-seceded island, thereby anchoring it within the cultural sphere of France. The future Franco-Haitian relationship was to be built on this harmony between idealism and interests. The metropolitan liberals' great fear was that Haiti might retreat from civilization into a land of self-sufficient peasants with nothing to exchange with the European countries.

The liberal economist Jean-Baptiste Say championed this association between commerce, civilization, and colonialism. Ann Plassart defines Say as “a liberal imperialist” in the sense that “there is from Say’s point of view no contradiction between his support for economic and political freedom, on the one hand, and his conviction, on the other, that it is Europe’s duty to help other countries reach higher stages of economic development.”¹⁷³ Say even came forward to support the French merchants in Haiti as a civilizing force. In 1822, he published a pamphlet in Haiti that warned against the Haitian government’s attempt to monopolize foreign trade into

¹⁷³ Ann Plassart, “Un Impérialiste Libéral”? Jean-Baptiste Say on Colonies and the Extra-European World” *French Historical Studies* 32, no. 2 (Spring 2009): 249.

Haiti. He called upon the Haitian government to protect and promote European merchants in Haiti in order to enhance Haitian agriculture, commerce, and civilization.¹⁷⁴

In another direction, the independence of Haiti was closely associated with France's colonial expansion in Africa. As mentioned earlier, antislavery liberals tended to view Haiti as the start of the liberation of African people. Could the birth of Haiti be connected with the French expansion in Africa?¹⁷⁵ Although the Restoration liberals represented by Benjamin Constant often doubted the benefits of further colonial expansion,¹⁷⁶ they were also sympathetic to the Anglo-American abolitionists who founded free colonies in Africa like Sierra Leone.¹⁷⁷

A faction of Frenchmen considered the loss of Saint-Domingue a signal that French colonial expansion was about to spread to Africa, away from the Americas that were still stuck in the quagmire of slavery. In Alexandre Corréard and Henri Savigny's best-selling memoir of the *Affaire Méduse* the birth of Haiti was paired with anti-slave-trade sympathy so as to produce a salubrious vision of African colonization. They pointed out that the independence of Haiti had reformed the colonial order: the era of Caribbean colonies had passed.¹⁷⁸ Most decisively, the

¹⁷⁴ Say, *Lettre de Jean-Baptiste Say à M. Martelly sur le commerce d'Haïti* (1822). A review of the pamphlet was published in *la Revue encyclopédique*, t.15 (July-September 1822): 122–23.

¹⁷⁵ This subject was more well-excavated in the field of British abolitionism. See Philip D. Curtin, *The Image of Africa; British Ideas and Action, 1780-1850* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964), 526; Ralph Austen and Woodruff Smith, "Images of Africa and British Slave-trade Abolition: the transition to an imperialist ideology, 1787-1807," *African Historical Studies*, II, 1, 1969.

¹⁷⁶ See Jennifer Pitts, *A Turn to Empire: the Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 173-85.

¹⁷⁷ See Charles Nodier, *Le Journal des débats*, October 1, 1816 : 4.

¹⁷⁸ J. B. Henry Savigny and Alexander Corréard, *Narrative of a Voyage to Senegal in 1816* (London: Printed for Henry Colburn, 1818), 310; originally *Naufrage de la frégate la Méduse, faisant partie de l'expédition du Sénégal en 1816* (Paris: Hocquet, 1817), 151.

abolition of slave trade changed the whole agenda of colonial expansion.¹⁷⁹ To cope with such a global change, Corréard and Savigny urged France to develop African colonies, such as Saint Louis, Gorée, and Cape Verde, whose mission was to deliver civilization and liberty to Africa.¹⁸⁰

In *The French Atlantic Triangle*, Christopher Miller discovers a similar strategy of “coming to terms with the Haitian Revolution” by his reading of Baron Jacque-François Roger’s novel, *Kelédor* (1828), as redirecting French colonial expansion toward Africa after the loss of Saint-Domingue (“forget Haiti; turn to Africa”).¹⁸¹ Roger, the governor of Senegal and an opponent of the slave trade and slavery, promoted African colonization as an alternative site of more “enlightened” colonialism without slavery. The fictional journey of the protagonist from the horror of the Middle Passage, through the Haitian Revolution, to Senegal’s free labor farmland reveals the revised vision of “the Atlantic triangle,”¹⁸² redeeming the sinful triangle of the slave trade. To a France still preoccupied with the nostalgia of Saint-Domingue, Roger offered counsel to “move on” to a new Africa where freedom and prosperity could coexist.

The “emancipation” of Haiti in 1825 produced more positive prospects about Haiti’s role in “civilizing” Africa. In 1825, Charles X’s “liberating act” of recognizing the independence of Haiti was praised in a poem by Victor Chauvet,¹⁸³ who won an *Académie française* contest in

¹⁷⁹ Savigny and Corréard, *Narrative of a Voyage to Senegal in 1816*, 311.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 277-318.

¹⁸¹ See Christopher L. Miller, “Forget Haiti: Baron Roger and the New Africa,” *Yale French Studies*, The Haiti Issue, 2005; published as the same title in Miller, *The French Atlantic Triangle* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 246-73.

¹⁸² Miller, *The French Atlantic Triangle*, 271.

¹⁸³ Victor Chauvet, *Haïti, chant lyrique* (Paris: Delaforest, 1825), 8.

1823 for an anti-slave-trade poem.¹⁸⁴ The poet exalted the act for uniting three continents in a harmonious march toward civilization. In particular, “the emancipation of Saint-Domingue” formed the first social link between the white and black races and “allowed the black race to take its place among the civilized nations.”¹⁸⁵ Thus, the royal ordinance marked the beginning of Africa’s regeneration. This sentiment was depicted in an allegorical drawing published in expectation of the 1825 ordinance—Haiti is portrayed as being blessed by a great family of continents such as Europe, Asia, and America, while Africa was shown as still suffering under slavery and waiting for salvation to come.¹⁸⁶

As a result, Haiti became a metaphorical platform or a cultural halfway point for France to envision new routes in its colonial ventures between the Americas and Africa. The black republic mediated between two contrasting worlds—the newly-liberated Americas and the yet-to-be-liberated Africa.

Conclusion

During the Restoration, the French liberals were fighting against the stigma of revolutionary legacies for saving the cause of abolitionism and colonial reforms from the hostile regime and vengeful *colons*. This struggle was also part of their larger political battle: sparring with counterrevolutionaries over conflicting narratives of revolutionary past. The heated debates

¹⁸⁴ Victor Chauvet, *Néali ou la traite des nègres* (1823).

¹⁸⁵ Chauvet, *Haïti, chant lyrique*, 3.

¹⁸⁶ Barincou fils, *La république d'Haïti renaissant de ses cendres, sujet allégorique d'un tableau national* (Paris: V. Menaudière, 1821).

during the Restoration about the meanings of the Haitian Revolution demonstrate that the “silence” emphasized by Trouillot and other historians was neither immediate nor total. Instead, there emerged a variety of competing representations of the Haitian Revolution and Haiti during the Restoration. In responding to proslavery propaganda that drew heavily upon the negative images of the Haitian Revolution, French antislavery liberals constructed defenses and justifications for the colonial revolution as an integral part of their project to legitimize the legacies of the French Revolution.

As a result of the metropolitan antislavery elites’ defense of the two revolutions, they were inevitably bound to another task—defending the cause of the newborn nation of Haiti, which was presumed to be the last bastion of the French Revolution, and the first nation born from emancipation. Haiti was given two main roles in French antislavery discourse: a testing ground for emancipation, and a spectacle for proving black humanity. French antislavery liberals were torn between the conflicting aspects of the labor regime of Haiti—while they praised the freedom enjoyed by the Haitians, they were also dismayed by the fall of plantation economy. They also expected Haitians to refute prevalent color prejudice by rebuilding the civilization that they had learned from France. In this crusade for proving “African perfectibility,” French liberals favored the Francophile mulatto elite of Haiti because this intermediary class was seemingly more “civilized” than the black masses.

However, in spite of their severe critiques of old empires built on tyranny, slavery, and color prejudice, French antislavery discourse on future Franco-Haitian relations shared the terms of neocolonial dependency, while often borrowing from the rhetoric of their proslavery enemies. Under the counterrevolutionary regime in which ultraroyalists and the proslavery party joined

forces, French liberals were inclined to bestow a special vocation of liberation on the newborn black republic. Yet their antislavery designs for civilizing Haiti were informed by their particular ideas of historical progress in which France occupied a privileged place by virtue of its superior civilization and Revolution. They did not imagine that the Haitians could be genuinely independent and away from the sphere of universal civilization whose quintessence had been achieved in France. The birth of Haiti also induced French liberals to grope for alternative visions of the French empire, often leading them to advocate free trade colonialism or new colonial ventures in Africa. The changing Franco-Haitian relationship demonstrates what Frederick Cooper defines as the porosity of boundaries between colonial and anticolonial discourses: “Within empires, Enlightenment thought, liberalism, and republicanism were neither intrinsically colonial nor anticolonial, neither racist nor antiracist, but they provided languages of claim-making and counter claim-making, whose effects were shaped less by grand abstractions than by complex struggles in specific contexts, played out over time.”¹⁸⁷

For their part, the optimism of French antislavery liberals toward Haiti reflected their own political yearnings and aspirations under the Restoration, a time when hard-won liberty appeared to have been run aground. They considered the disturbing realities in Haiti to be the legacies of a horrible past that would disappear with time. The metropolitan abolitionists would later suffer from the gap between representation and reality, which led them to disappointment, disillusionment, and ultimately the erasing of Haiti from the French narrative of liberty and emancipation. Therefore, antislavery liberals championed the newborn nation during the Restoration, but they also prepared for the process of “silencing” Haiti by framing the conditions

¹⁸⁷ Cooper, *Colonialism in Question*, 24.

by which the black republic were to be judged and confining its meanings into the metropolitan terms of emancipation. Abbé Grégoire, as always, was ahead of other French abolitionists, even in his disillusionment with Haiti. By 1827, Grégoire was bitterly disappointed with Boyer's acceptance of the indemnity and Haiti's stagnating progress in religion and morality, so he bade farewell to the black republic that he had once called "the beacon" of civilization.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁸ Henri Grégoire, *Épître aux Haïtiens* (Port-au-Prince: Imprimerie du Gouvernement, 1827). See Sepinwall, *The Abbé Grégoire and the French Revolution*, 193-94; Brière, *Haïti et la France*, 182-84.

CHAPTER IV. “Freedom Is French”: Recasting the Revolutionary Abolition during the July Monarchy

Introduction

Two great changes in the early 1830s profoundly transformed the French antislavery position: the advent of the July Monarchy in 1830 and the British Slavery Abolition Act in 1833. They provided French abolitionism, hitherto suppressed by the reactionary regime and stigmatized by the revolutionary past, with favorable circumstances in which to revive an organized attack against colonial slavery. This chapter investigates how those changes affected the French antislavery discourse and led to the rearrangement of revolutionary legacies. If the Restoration antislavery liberals’ apology for revolutionary abolitionism was consisted of excuses for the revolutionary excesses, then the July Monarchy abolitionists recast the revolutionary past in a new light. This chapter focuses on the antislavery political elites’ narrative strategies to retell the story of the Revolution and contends that narrating the entangled history of the French and Haitian Revolutions was crucial in removing the enduring stigma on abolitionism, legitimizing the idea of emancipation, and indexing the appropriate mode of abolition for the future of French colonies.

In the process, this chapter inquires into how July Monarchy abolitionism made a critical contribution to the process of “silencing the Haitian Revolution.” Myriam Cottias points to the pivotal role of Saint-Domingue/Haiti in French abolitionism of the first half of the nineteenth century.¹ She contends that it was only after the second abolition in 1848 that memories of the

¹ Cottias, *D'une abolition à l'autre*, 8.

first abolition retreated from the public discourse on colonies. In her description of the absence of the references to Saint-Domingue/Haiti in the historical works of the second half of the nineteenth-century, she suggests that concealing Saint-Domingue/Haiti was essential to the formation of the French national narrative.² Taking a cue from Cottias, this chapter intends to revise and complement her thesis. Cottias pays a significant amount of attention to the second abolition of 1848 and the events after it when explaining the concealment or erasure of Saint-Domingue/Haiti from the French national narrative: how the memory of Saint-Domingue/Haiti was institutionally silenced by the republican policy of forgetfulness and concordance. In grappling with the history prior to the 1848 abolition, this chapter argues that the act of concealing or “silencing” the Haitian Revolution had been already underway since the July Monarchy.

For this purpose, this chapter emphasizes the process through which the once-entangled narratives, those of the French Revolution and the Haitian Revolution, were separated by selection and re-employment. Further, it delves into how such separation served the cause of the metropolitan antislavery elites. On one hand, the French abolitionists rehabilitated the decrees for color equality and emancipation in the revolutionary assemblies, hitherto condemned and repressed as part of the Terror and Robespierre, as a new basis of legitimacy for emancipation. On the other hand, such a process required the reinterpretation of the Haitian Revolution. In refuting the proslavery argument that the Haitian Revolution meant the impossibility of abolition without violence, French abolitionists showed a twofold strategy. They narrated the colonial

² Myriam Cottias, “Le silence de la nation: les “vieilles colonies” comme lieu de définition des dogmes républicaines (1848-1905)” *Outre-Mers* 90, no.338-39 (2003): 21-45; and Cottias, “Et si l’esclavage colonial faisait histoire nationale?” *Revue d’histoire moderne et contemporaine* 52-54 bis, supplément (2005): 59-63.

revolution as a subnarrative of the French Revolution, or as amplified evidence of the universality of the French Revolution. At the same time, in their endeavor to separate the violence of the colonial revolution from the glorious narrative of revolutionary abolition, they particularized the Haitian Revolution as an event derived from certain local conditions, such as racial conflicts. This chapter therefore shows how universalizing the French Revolution as the origin of liberty led to the exclusion of the Haitian Revolution from the lineage of emancipation.

What perplexed the metropolitan abolitionists was the deteriorating condition of Haiti from the middle of the nineteenth century. While the proslavery party condemned Haiti as a retreat into African barbarity and insolence, abolitionists hopefully and anxiously observed the current situation in Haiti, in expectation that the newborn nation would vouch for the success of emancipation and the capability of blacks. Haiti's political instability in the 1840s was a fatal blow to their weakening belief in Haiti's abolitionist vocation. This chapter charts how the French abolitionists' position on Haiti changed from apology, expectation, and patronage to disillusionment and estrangement, and inquires into how such a transition affected the meanings of the Haitian Revolution.

This chapter introduces the historical context of the early 1830s when the advent of the July Monarchy and the British abolition of slavery revived French abolitionism in the form of *la Société française pour l'abolition de l'esclavage*. The opening controversy in 1835 on the British Emancipation Act reveals the problems and tasks of the barely-revived French abolitionism. Next, it inquires into how French abolitionists rehabilitated the revolutionary antislavery initiatives as the origin of universal liberty, how such a process led to the redefinition of the Haitian Revolution, and how French abolitionists posited the contemporary situation of Haiti in

abolitionist discourse, and to what effects. By the end of the July Monarchy, metropolitan abolitionist discourse had confined the meanings of the Haitian Revolution and Haiti into the realm of colonial violence, to the effect of “silencing” other aspects of the Haitian Revolution.

The Advent of the July Monarchy and the Formation of the SFAE

The establishment of the July Monarchy in 1830 profoundly transformed the position of French antislavery movement, producing favorable conditions for its revival.³ The July Monarchy sent many antislavery liberals, mostly Parisian liberal opposition leaders, into established power, including the well-known members of the SMC, such as Duc de Broglie, Passy, Rémusat, and Guizot. In particular, the formation of the de Broglie Cabinet in 1835 raised hope for a real breakthrough in the struggle against the slave trade and slavery because the Duc, the son-in-law of Madame de Staël, had championed the antislavery cause in France.⁴

Meanwhile, the metropolitan revolution raised both expectation and apprehension in the colonies. Every party reflected upon how the French Revolution in 1789 had shook the colonies to the core. Like their predecessors who claimed equal rights in the National Assembly, the free-colored elites of French colonies quickly appropriated the revolutionary momentum and

³ About the general history of the July Monarchy, see Pierre Rosanvallon, *Le moment Guizot* (Paris: Gallimard, 1985); Gordon Wright, *France in Modern Times*, 5th édition (New York: W. W. Norton, 1995); H. A. C. Collingham, *The July Monarchy: A Political History of France, 1830-1848* (London & New York: Longman, 1988).

⁴ The strong representation of SMC members in the inner circle of the July Monarchy gave the opponents the impression that the origin of the regime was the same with the club, fortifying the colonial party's sense of persecution by metropolitan reformers. See Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression*, 148.

demanded equal rights for the free people of color.⁵ A greater source of anxiety for the colonial authority and planters was the reaction of black slaves to the news of the metropolitan revolution. In February 1831, a slave riot broke out in Martinique, and although it was rapidly put down without many repercussions, the news greatly alarmed both white planters and the metropole, who dreaded a second Saint-Domingue Revolution.⁶

The July Monarchy was being pressed by both the news of rising tension in the colonies and the reformist liberals. In August 1830, General Sébastiani, a member of the SMC, took office as the Minister of Marine and Colonies. When the new government formed “a commission on colonial legislation” in September 1830, Isambert and his pro-reformist colleagues in the SMC were elected into the commission.⁷ A series of colonial reforms were implemented as a result, albeit in a very moderate manner. The French colonies were given colonial constitutional laws and colonial councils (*conseils coloniaux*), with their own delegates in Paris. The *gens de couleur libres* were granted equal civil and political rights, but most of them were disenfranchised of their voting rights by the high *cens* (electoral qualification). Concerning slavery, all that was done was to make manumission easier and prevent mutilation and branding on the slaves’ bodies. From 1831 to 1833, significant achievements were made in abolishing the

⁵ AP, CD, September 4, 1830, tome. 63, 362-66.

⁶ Dale Tomich, “‘Liberte ou mort’: Republicanism and Slave Revolt in Martinique, February 1831,” *History Workshop* 29 (1990): 85-91; Rebecca Hartkopf Schloss, “The February 1831 Slave Uprising in Martinique and the Policing of White Identity,” *French Historical Studies Spring* 30, no. 2(2007): 203-36.

⁷ Jennings, *French Anti-slavery*, 31.

slave trade—the July Monarchy finally ended the clandestine French slave trade and made slave trade repression treaties with Britain.⁸

A critical catalyst arrived with the abolition of slavery in British colonies in 1834; the Emancipation Act came into effect on August 1, 1834. Emancipation had been on the agenda of the British Parliament since 1833 and France had anxiously observed the development of the issue, as it provoked both fear and hope in France and the French colonies. As Britain launched a “Mighty Experiment” on abolition and free labor, France could not escape from its far-flung impact. According to Jennings, it was British emancipation that produced the momentum with which French antislavery could be resurrected; “It would take the implementation of British slave emancipation in the summer of 1834 to stimulate the French abolitionist movement, force it to organize, and furnish it with a mission.”⁹

These developments led to the formation of the *Société française pour l’abolition de l’esclavage* (hereafter SFAE) in 1834, replacing the now inactive SMC.¹⁰ On December 3, 1834 the members of the Committee for the Abolition of the Slave Trade of the former SMC gathered together in its Parisian bureau. With the Duc de Broglie acting as a chair, they proclaimed the establishment of this new French antislavery society that sought to directly challenge colonial

⁸ The first treaty was made in 1831, and the second one in 1833. About French-British negotiations on the slave trade, see Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression*, 138-206.

⁹ Jennings, *French Anti-slavery*, 47.

¹⁰ There are only a very few researches on the SFAE. See Jennings’ *French Anti-slavery*; Schmidt, *Abolitionnistes de l’esclavage*, 84-94; Philipe Vigier, “La recomposition du mouvement abolitionniste français sous la monarchie de juillet,” in *L’Abolitions de l’esclavage*. The book of Patricia Motylewski is actually the only French book fully devoted to the SFAE. See Motylewski, *La Société française pour l’abolition de l’esclavage*.

slavery as well as the slave trade. The society publicly announced its nascence by presenting to the two Chambers a petition for abolishing slavery on December 15.¹¹

If the anti-slave-trade committee of the former SMC remained a circle of individual liberals committed to the cause of fighting the slave trade, then the formation of the SFAE meant an active start to organizing the efforts to abolish slavery. Forming an antislavery association was a radical step in France, where the memories of the *Société des amis des noirs* were still tainted with those of the Terror, war, and slave insurrection. Just a decade ago, the moderate SMC was suspected of sedition, conspiracy, and being a general threat to the colonies. The formation of the SFAE demonstrates how the advent of the Orleanist Monarchy and the British abolition of slavery brought about a change in the sociopolitical context of France.

The twenty-seven founding members and other associated members of the SFAE consisted of leading political elites.¹² The roster included high-ranking liberals in the Orleanist regime: Duc de Broglie as the chair, Passy and Odilon Barrot as vice presidents, and Isambert and Alexandre Laborde as secretaries. Most members were “men of politics such as deputies, peers, ministers, and *conseillers d’Etat*. Those men, consequently, who participated in the march of Orleanist power.”¹³ The membership was tightly restricted by personal ties, a high membership fee, and confined to only males. The culture of the SFAE was shaped by its associations among the Parisian notables, especially to liberal groups such as the SMC and the

¹¹ Schmidt, *Abolitionnistes de l’esclavage*, 85.

¹² See the list and analysis of members of the SFAE in Motylewski, *La Société française pour l’abolition de l’esclavage*, 45-8; Jennings, *French Anti-slavery*, 48-75.

¹³ Motylewski, *La Société française pour l’abolition de l’esclavage*, 48.

Aide-toi, le ciel t'aidera.¹⁴ Despite Bissette's fame as an antislavery activist, he was excluded from the SFAE by his chronic poverty and personal discord with the leaders of the society. Simon Lissant, a Haitian mulatto, became an honorary member by virtue of his prize-winning essay against color prejudice.

Composed of distinguished and established politicians, the SFAE was characterized by its moderate, legalistic, and gradualist approaches to abolishing slavery. According to Jennings's description, the society was "elitist in membership, parliamentary in its approach and gradualist in its programme."¹⁵ These moderate liberals expected slavery to gradually become extinct through indirect procedures, while neither destroying the colonial economy nor impeding the property rights of planters. They had at best a lukewarm interest in popular mobilization. The petition drive among a wider range of people, which had proved quite successful in the British abolitionist movement, was introduced only in 1847.

The Chamber of Deputies was at the center of all the action because many of the SFAE members held seats there. In many senses, the SFAE appeared to be a commission or lobby group within the Parliament, and as evidenced by their tactics and political positions, they were typical of the July Monarchy notables. Despite the growing tension between reformist abolitionists and the royal government that favored the *status quo*, the French abolitionists chose to work within the governing circle. A shift in attitude and policy came after 1845, when the cooperation between abolitionists and the government for emancipation resulted in an

¹⁴ *Aide-toi, le ciel t'aidera* or *Aide-toi* (Help yourself, and heaven will help you) was a liberal association formed in the Restoration to fight censorship and enhance the liberal electoral campaign.

¹⁵ Jennings, "Cyrille Bissette, Radical Black French Abolitionist," 49.

unsatisfactory compromise—the Mackau Law.¹⁶ According to Motylewski, “a republican turn” had already arrived in 1844 and because of their disappointment with the Mackau Law, the initiative of French abolitionism was seized by republican abolitionists, many of whom would participate in the February Revolution.¹⁷

The lobby of the colonial party was no less powerful against the “agitations of philanthropists” than before, especially those from Guadeloupe and Martinique, the two main sugar producing colonies. The Council of Delegates in Paris was at the center of the *colons*’ lobby for the Chambers. Armed with huge funds that colonial delegates usually drew from the colonial budget, the *colon* lobbyists showered the deputies and peers with their pamphlets and petitions. Granier de Cassagnac, Thomas Jollivet, and Charles Dupin were the three spokesmen in the capital who represented the interests of planters and slave owners.

Another area of significant action was in the press and the publishing campaign. The SFAE published a variety of materials: the SFAE bulletin (*l’Abolitionniste française* from 1844), translations of British antislavery works, Chamber discussions, petitions, and the reports on abolitionist projects and situations in colonies. Antislavery opinion was supported and disseminated by liberal and republican newspapers: *le Semeur*, *le Temps*, *le Constitutionnel*, *le Journal du commerce*, *le National*, *la Réforme*, and *le Courrier français*. To counteract the antislavery media, the colonial delegates from Guadeloupe and Martinique founded the proslavery *l’Outre-mer* and *le Globe* and later purchased *le Temps* and *le Journal du*

¹⁶ About the Mackau Law, see Jennings, *French Antislavery*, 193-228.

¹⁷ Marcel Dorigny, “Préface” in Motylewski, *La Société française pour l’abolition de l’esclavage*, 18.

commerce.¹⁸ Conservative press like *la Quotidienne* joined the apology for slavery. The press would be an active battlefield for the war between proslavery and antislavery spokesmen.

At the time of the SFAE's rather belated entrance on the antislavery scene, the international situation was rapidly changing. The British abolition of slavery in 1833-34 not only enabled French antislavery to revive, but also rearranged the ground upon which July Monarchy abolitionists could build their project. By looking into the controversy provoked by the British abolition of slavery, we can elucidate the nature of the task that confronted the French abolitionists.

1835: In the Aftermath of the British Abolition of Slavery

In 1833, the British Parliament was seething over the Slavery Abolition Act. France initially reacted to the impending British emancipation with fear of disorder and revolt, which French abolitionists shared with their proslavery rivals. In December 1833, the uprising of the free people of color at Grand'Anse in Martinique raised great alarm in Paris. As metropolitan newspapers carried the news of the revolt and trial to Paris, a replay of Saint-Domingue was widely feared.¹⁹ Even abolitionists recommended silence on the subject of British abolition so as

¹⁸ Concerning the colons' press campaign, see Lawrence Jennings, "Slavery and the Venality of the July Monarchy Press," *French Historical Studies* 17, no. 4 (1992): 957-78. *Le Journal du commerce* was one of the leading antislavery liberal newspapers, before the colonial party purchased it in 1836 and changed it into *le Commerce* (Jennings, *French Anti-slavery*, 81).

¹⁹ See the article of *la Gazette des tribunaux* in March 12, 1834; Bissette, *Polémique sur les événements de la Grand'Anse* (Paris: J.-S. Cordier, 1834). About the repercussion of Grand'Anse revolt, see the Chapter V.

to not lose colonial control over the slave agitations, as had happened at the time of the French Revolution.²⁰

In the summer of 1834, Britain's Slavery Abolition Act was about to be implemented, and French abolitionists gradually gained their confidence to embrace this project of British emancipation as a worthy mission to emulate. Although there were civil disturbances in the British colonies, they did not escalate into the large-scale riots that French observers had feared. It was from late 1834 that great part of the French opinion towards British abolition changed from mere acknowledgment to confidence,²¹ and by December the SFAE was formed, as "Never were the circumstances more opportune."²²

British abolition provoked a series of passionate controversies in the French Parliament, which became an opening round for the orators of the SFAE. On April 22, 1835, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs asked in the Chamber of Deputies for a credit of 900,000 francs for colonial defense, given the prospect of riots stimulated by British emancipation. The deputies who were in the SFAE appropriated this debate to publicize the cause of the newborn French antislavery society²³—Isambert, Alexandre Delaborde, Alphonse de Lamartine, Hippolyte Passy, Eusèbe Salverte, and Victor Destutt de Tracy all took to the rostrum of the Chamber of Deputies. This

²⁰ See the sessions on British emancipation in 1833-34 in AP, CD, t.85, t. 92 and t.95.

²¹ About the French responses to British news, see Jennings, *French Reaction to British Slave Emancipation*.

²² *Bulletin de la Société française pour l'abolition de l'esclavage* (hereafter *Bulletin de SFAE*), no.1(1835): 6.

²³ It was reproduced in *Bulletin de SFAE*, no.3 (1835): 1-24.

debate reveals the discursive context in which the French abolitionists defined the impact of British abolition in relation to the revolutionary legacies.

In case of the proslavery party, the propaganda based on the terrors of the French/Haitian Revolutions never diminished in the face of British abolition. In calling for the reinforcement of colonial garrisons, every proslavery spokesman recalled the memories of the first abolition and its disastrous effects on the French colonies. They predicted that British abolition would ultimately turn out to be a replay of the revolutionary disaster that is—slave revolt, the fall of cultivation, and the loss of colonies. Drawing on revolutionary precedents, the colonial party had accumulated facts for their own archive against abolition. François Mauguin, delegate from Guadeloupe, evoked “the fatal effects of emancipation in Saint-Domingue, in Guadeloupe, and in Cayenne.”²⁴ He narrated in detail how general liberty plunged the city of Cayenne in French Guiana into confusion and disorder. Charles Dupin, the reporter of the Chamber commission, called to mind the “verity of history,” which was the misfortune of Saint-Domingue, as upholding the security measures.²⁵ The anti-abolitionist claim attached to the name of Saint-Domingue seemed to be still powerful and indomitable in 1835.

French abolitionists could not fail to recognize this obstacle. In the inauguration address, the SFAE asked why such an irrefutable cause as the abolition of slavery had not advanced in France. It pointed to “a discouraging memory,” that of Saint-Domingue, as one central reason for failure.²⁶ They were keenly aware that Saint-Domingue had been the last resort of the proslavery

²⁴ *Bulletin de SFAE*, no.3 (1835): 12.

²⁵ AP, CD on 11 June 1833, t.85, 14.

²⁶ *Bulletin de SFAE*, no.1 (1835): 6.

camp, and the ultimate nullifier for any abolitionist plan. In the words of the SFAE, it was due to the memory of Saint-Domingue that “For a long time, we have determined that it was impossible to touch the base of the colonial edifice without provoking its fall.”²⁷

It was Isambert who most acutely indicated how that unfortunate revolutionary legacy had obstructed every effort in colonial reform and abolition. He was widely recognized as a leader of the SFAE and a preeminent specialist in colonial matters due to his defense of Bissette and other free people of color under the Restoration. In the Chamber of Deputies on April 22, 1835, and as the head of the speakers of the SFAE, Isambert began his speech with a historical summary of the French and Haitian Revolutions.²⁸ According to him, the greatest misconception in the discussions on colonial affairs was that the abolition decree of 1794 led to the destruction of Saint-Domingue: “...whenever there is a question on colonies, one never ceases to proclaim that the decree of the Convention of February 1794 caused the innumerable misfortunes that afflicted this part of our possessions [Saint-Domingue].”²⁹ As a result, Isambert continued, the Saint-Domingue Revolution produced “singular illusions” that “the question of emancipation was in nature about disturbing the colonies and losing them.”³⁰ Correcting this “illusion” was the most urgent task of French abolitionists.³¹

²⁷ *Bulletin de SFAE*, no.7 (1838): 5.

²⁸ AP, CD on April 22, 1835, t.95, 51-60.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 53

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ On April 23, 1835, Eusèbe (de) Salverte, liberal deputy of the SFAE, indicated a similar point in his speech about the rights of free people of color and colonial security. Eusèbe (de) Salverte, AP, CD on April 23, 1835, t.95, 97.

Lamartine, another deputy member of the SFAE, deplored how the revolutionary experiences had imposed silence and inaction on colonial issues for such a long time, although he acknowledged that it had been inevitable and prudent at least until then. “I know, all of us know, that a fatal experience [Haitian Revolution] taught us so much that, in discussions of this nature, we have to weigh all our discourses, and often suppress under prudent language, and under reticence, the fullest, even this passion of humanity, which without any peril among us, could ignite conflagration elsewhere.”³² Lamartine still held fast to caution and prudence, standing apart from the men of the National Convention and the decree of abolition.

However, Lamartine also asserted that they were witnessing the beginning of a new era in which a liberal revolution could engender social progress without bloodshed or the Terror: “We are no longer in the time of which we are reminded, when the orators cried for favoring the zealots of humanity over the love of humanity, which is never separated from reason and prudence: Let the colonies perish rather than a principle!”³³ Moreover, British emancipation made the happy union of principle and colonial interest seem possible: “In saving the principle, we save the colonies.”³⁴ For Lamartine the 1830 Revolution and the British abolition of slavery announced the arrival of a new world in which emancipation could be accomplished without anarchy or violence.

British emancipation thus made the general abolition of slavery, hitherto considered too radical or improbable for its enormous cost, a possible and even promising project. It also

³² Lamartine, AP, CD on April 22, 1835, t.95, 65-68.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., 66.

enabled French abolitionists to insist on emancipation in terms of inevitability and emergency, and to also appropriate the memory of Saint-Domingue to their advantage. According to them, once Britain emancipated its slaves, France could not afford to postpone emancipation any longer. Charles de Montalembert (Comte de Montalembert), a peer and SFAE member, asserted in the Chamber of Peers, “I believe that it [British abolition] has reduced this discussion to a simple question of timing. It is a problem of knowing how long 200,000 French Negroes will be willing to remain slaves in the midst of 900,000 English Negroes being declared free.”³⁵ At the time of the French Revolution, it was well-observed how contagious and exciting liberty was in those Caribbean islands. The abolitionists warned that without any measure of initiative, the well-known story of revolt, massacres, and loss of colonies would be repeated. The intransigent colonial planters should remember the fate of the *colons* of Saint-Domingue; losing control over the colonies was far more dangerous than emancipation.

In a pamphlet published by the SFAE in 1835, François Mongin de Montrol, a liberal journalist, summarized the French abolitionists’ standpoint on the revolutionary legacies and British emancipation. Despite the heavy criticism on the limits of British abolition, Montrol extolled it as a magnificently balanced decision, especially when considering the enormous obstacles and conflicting interests faced by the British abolitionists. He stressed that British abolitionists, just like their French counterparts, had to overcome the seemingly indomitable stigma of Saint-Domingue. “Saint-Domingue, accompanied by its memories so unjustly invoked, with its present situation so badly appreciated, stood upright as an invincible argument, as a

³⁵ *Bulletin de SFAE*, no.4 (1835): 4. AP, CP on May 7, 1835 (discussion about the abolitionist petition from the SMC).

disordered and anarchical menace, as a living testimony to misfortune and waste.”³⁶ The French abolitionists were most encouraged by the fact that the British colonies showed hardly any commotion after abolition—to their relief, Britain seemed to set a precedent in which a carefully and wisely-drawn plan of emancipation could conquer the doubts and fears sustained by the example of Saint-Domingue.

This opening session of abolitionism under the July Monarchy demonstrates how British emancipation was a critical breakthrough in the long-term inaction and reticence on abolition buttressed by the reference to Saint-Domingue. It was evident that the prospects of abolition under metropolitan control and a relatively peaceful transition into free labor blunted the haunting memories of the colonial revolution—British emancipation widened the horizon of emancipation in France beyond the choices of interest and humanity, by offering a new set of examples to vindicate abolitionism as a productive solution to colonial problems.

However, not every French party appreciated British abolition in the same way. The proslavery party collected negative information regarding the progress of abolition in British colonies and made the effects of British abolition another major point of contention in the battle against abolitionists. Proslavery spokesmen criticized the system of apprenticeship in particular,³⁷ which they regarded as a continuation of slavery. To them, apprenticeship proved that abolition was nothing but a British sham to destroy other colonial powers. A combination of anglophobia and patriotism was always ready to be mobilized against Britain-led international

³⁶ François Mongin de Montrol, *Des colonies anglaises depuis l'émancipation des esclaves et de l'influence de cette émancipation sur les colonies françaises* (Paris: Paul Dupont, 1835), 4; the pamphlet was published in *Bulletin de SFAE*, no.2 (1835).

³⁷ The British Emancipation Act placed the former slaves over the age of six under apprenticeship till the final emancipation first in 1838, and next in 1840. See Drescher, *The Mighty Experiment*, 121-157.

abolitionism. Moreover, as British emancipation became better established, the French proslavery spokesmen increased their reliance on the counterexamples of revolutionary abolition in order to preserve their basic arguments. The deteriorating economy of Haiti aided the proslavery position.

The French abolitionists of the July Monarchy were quite confident in their political position, much more so than the antislavery liberals of the Restoration who had been evasive or at best apologetic concerning revolutionary antislavery. They now proceeded to disarm the diehard proslavery argument by redefining what the revolutionary experiences meant for the future of French colonies. In the course of extricating revolutionary legacies from the grip of proslavery propaganda, the French abolitionists fashioned new legitimacy for emancipation in the form of a new historical narrative of revolutionary abolitionism.

From 1835 on, the French mainstream antislavery movement, represented by the members of the SFAE and their elite colleagues, based their calls for emancipation on the two great references: the legacies of the French and Haitian Revolutions and emancipation in the British colonies. Both references were problematic for French abolitionists because they were saddled with unwanted baggage: one labeled the French abolitionists as Jacobin revolutionaries, and the other as unpatriotic Anglophiles. In what follows, I will investigate how the French abolitionists were caught between two burdensome frameworks and were forced to find ways to formulate and legitimize emancipation in liberal-moderate (not revolutionary-radical), and French (not Anglophile or imported) terms, and in the process how the Haitian Revolution and Haiti were relocated and rearticulated in abolitionist discourse.

The Return of 1794: Revolutionary Abolitionism Revisited

As analyzed in the second chapter, antislavery liberals under the Restoration endeavored to invent justifiable excuses for the violent phases of the French and Haitian Revolutions. Yet when fighting the slave trade and color prejudice, they rarely depended on the examples from the French Revolution—such as the revolutionary decrees for color equality, the proclamation of abolition by civil commissioners in Saint-Domingue, the 1794 decree of general abolition, and the constitution of 1795 integrating metropole and colonies—because they were too closely associated with the Terror and the loss of Saint-Domingue.

The revival of revolutionary idioms was the sign of a shift in antislavery discourse. As early as September 1830, Alexandre de Laborde sensationalized the Chamber of Deputies in his attack against plantocracy by referring to the “aristocracy of skin color,” a favorite phrase of the Brissotians and Montagnards during the French Revolution.³⁸ From 1835 on, the discourse of antislavery spokesmen was populated with revolutionary references: *Amis des noirs*, Necker, Brissot, Condorcet, and Abbé Grégoire. To the shock of the colonial party, Lamartine even mentioned Abbé Raynal’s infamous phrase of “Black Spartacus,” which at that time referred to Toussaint Louverture or Dessalines together with the revengeful massacres of the white population in Saint-Domingue.³⁹

It was the July Revolution that radically changed the political context and brought about such a discursive shift. The overthrow of the reactionary Bourbon regime and subsequent

³⁸ AP, CD, on September 3, 1830, tome. 63, 363.

³⁹ AP, CD on May 25, 1836, t.104, 257.

enthronement of Louis-Philippe with all the liberal gestures meant that the liberal struggle to justify the French Revolution had ultimately triumphed. The July Revolution and the advent of the new constitutional monarchy supplied a new climax, or a satisfactory close, to the story of the French Revolution. Under the tutelage of the liberal king and François Guizot, the history of the French Revolution in the July Monarchy turned to a different direction—affirming established power, sanctioning order and property, and proclaiming the end of the Revolution.⁴⁰ As the July Revolution and the authorized historical narrative of the new monarchy safely anchored the French Revolution in a teleological narrative toward constitutional liberty, the abolitionists could redefine emancipation as a mission to finish what the French Revolution had started, contending that the July Monarchy was obligated to fulfill the unfulfilled promises of 1789.

At the opening debate on British emancipation in 1835, Isambert redefined French abolitionism through the terms of a revised narrative of revolutionary abolition. His speech revealed how July Monarchy abolitionists would not only appropriate the liberal narrative of the French Revolution but also advance it a step higher by building on it a new genealogy of French abolitionism. With the aim of criticizing the royal government's dishonorable response to the British emancipation, Isambert began his speech by recalling the glorious memory of Jacques Necker who spoke at the opening of the General Estates for the abolition of slave trade, the shame of colonial slavery, and the productive cooperation between metropole and colonies. Isambert asserted that these ideas “should be reclaimed” and “should be those of the Revolution

⁴⁰ Alice Gérard, *La révolution française, mythes et interprétations* (1789-1970) (Paris: Flammarion, 1970); Ceri Crossley, *French Historians and Romanticism: Thierry, Guizot, the Saint-Simonians, Quinet, Michelet* (London & New York: Routledge, 1993).

of 1830,”⁴¹ which was why he placed the issue of abolition within the bailiwick of the Chamber of Deputies, as opposed to the royal government that was inclined to resolve colonial problems behind the closed doors of the ministries. To Isambert, the abolition of slavery was not a tangential colonial issue, but a crucial task attached to the mission of the new regime and “a social question of great importance.”⁴²

Isambert defined the longtime controversy over slavery and abolition as a clash of values between the metropole and the colonies: that is, the conflict “between metropolitan interests and the interests of planters from the colonies, between the one who demands religion, justice, and humanity, and the other who claims the political privilege and the monopoly of colonial staples.”⁴³ The French Revolution, with its decrees for color equality and liberation, was the epitome of such efforts by an enlightened metropole to intervene in the corrupted colonial affairs. It was the resistance of white planters against the colonial reforms that ignited the colonial revolution: “Who does not remember painfully the incalculable evils that the hostilities of grand planters of Saint-Domingue against the reforms of the Constitutional Assembly, and against the legitimate rights of *hommes de couleur* brought on their heads and on all their families?”⁴⁴

As seen in Isambert’s speech, many French abolitionists of the 1830s thought that the crux of the French Revolution lay in the early phase of 1789-91. In June 1840, Isambert was a

⁴¹ AP, CD, April 22, 1835, tome.95, 51.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ AP, CD, April 22, 1835, tome.95, 51. *Bulletin de SFAE*, no.3 (1835): 5.

⁴⁴ AP, CD, April 22, 1835, tome.95, 60.

speaker at the World's Anti-Slavery Convention in London, where once again he emphasized that the origin of liberty was when Necker and Lafayette spoke for the antislavery cause in 1789.⁴⁵ According to Isambert, the agenda of emancipation was manifest from the very first moment of the French Revolution, but was only abandoned by the greedy Emperor and the reactionary monarchy. In a similar vein, when the abolitionists and the colonial party were disputing the formation of the de Broglie Commission to deliberate gradual abolition in 1840, the SFAE published Condorcet's 1789 speech against the slave trade in a session of the *Société des amis des noirs*.⁴⁶ Addressed to the electors for the nomination of the General Estates, this speech was ideal for underscoring how the French Revolution had supported universal liberty from the start.

This early phase of the Revolution could occasionally be construed as a rather radical argument for immediate abolition without indemnity. In particular, the abolition of slavery was often compared to the abolition of the feudal system on August 4, 1789, whose holistic mode was considered inspiring and exemplary for the abolition of slavery.⁴⁷ In 1835, Eusèbe Salverte criticized the planters' claim of indemnity for persons of slaves by evoking a glorious precedent of the French Revolution: "The Constitutional Assembly.... made in a very just manner this important distinction [between estates and persons] and gave you an example from which you

⁴⁵ François Isambert, *Discours à l'Anti-Slavery Convention, Londres, 16 juin 1840*, reproduced in Schmidt, *Abolitionnistes de l'esclavage*, 506-14.

⁴⁶ *Bulletin de SFAE*, no.18 (1840): 43-46.

⁴⁷ For a longer version of discourse associating emancipation with August 4, see that of Guillaume Félice (1846) in Schmidt, ed. *Abolitionnistes de l'esclavage*, 96.

can happily profit.”⁴⁸ The night of August 4 was celebrated as a symbolic moment that embodied the liberating nature of the French Revolution. All of this indicates how abolitionist discourse continued to appropriate the liberal narrative strategy to justify the French Revolution by separation.⁴⁹ A mission of the liberal historiography was to separate the early history of the French Revolution from the Terror and justify the former as a crux of the Revolution. The abolitionists of the SFAE expanded the liberal version of the French Revolution by glorifying the initial moment of the Revolution as the root of emancipation.

July Monarchy abolitionists gradually reached back to the hitherto-evaded revolutionary events in their pursuit of justifying the French Revolution, going further than the liberal apologists of the Restoration. This was in accordance with a new trend in narrating the history of the French Revolution. The July Revolution was not satisfied with merely sanctifying the liberal version of the French Revolution; they also developed a new brand of French history. According to Ann Rigney, the dominant liberal history of the Revolution in Adolphe Thier’s magisterial works was challenged during the July Monarchy by a new generation of historians with republican, democratic, and socialist inclinations. They tolerated, reinstated, and even embraced the more “demagogic” phase of 1793-94, valorizing the National Convention, the Republic, and the populace.⁵⁰ The new trend had already manifested itself by 1828, when a group of historical works cast Robespierre and the National Convention in a positive light.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Salverte, AP, CD, on April 23, 1835, t.95, 99.

⁴⁹ Mellon, *The Political Uses of History*, 5-30; Linda Orr, *Headless History: Nineteenth-century French Historiography of the Revolution* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990); Aurelian Craiutu, *Liberalism under Siege* (New York: Lexington Books, 2003), 57-62; Rosanvallon, *Le moment Guizot*, 204-12.

⁵⁰ Ann Rigney, *The Rhetoric of Historical Representation: Three Narrative Histories of the French*

Rehabilitating more radical phases of the Revolution amounted to proposing a new agenda of social reforms, thus widening the schema of the French Revolution beyond the political revolution and sharing the “Social Question” as a priority of the time with more radical parties: “the revised image of the French Revolution which they [republican historians] offered to the public reflected, and also contributed to the growing perception that social change was needed or imminent; that the legacy of the first Revolution had not yet been brought to fruition.”⁵² Such a change enabled revolutionary abolition, once condemned and repressed, to return as a new basis of legitimacy for social reforms. As slavery was at once a social institution and a metaphor for all kinds of sociopolitical oppressions, issues of slavery could potentially evoke a far-reaching range of social problems. In the light of the rise of the “Social Question” under the July Monarchy, revolutionary antislavery appeared to be prophetic.⁵³

The reinstatement of Abbé Grégoire, which was led by the SFAE, was the best barometer of the discursive turn in French abolitionism. In 1831, when Grégoire passed away without any remorse for his revolutionary career, his funeral became a demonstration for republicans, anticlericals, and university students. A crowd of more than 20,000 followed the

Revolution (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 8.

⁵¹ Gégard, *La révolution française, mythes et interprétations*, 37.

⁵² Rigney, *The Rhetoric of Historical Representation*, 8-9.

⁵³ About the connection between abolitionism and social reform in France, see Le Garrec, “Abolitionnisme et réforme sociale: les figures de l’esclave et du pauvre laborieux en France, 1814-1840” in *Abolir l’esclavage*. Motylewski also suggests the possible association between abolitionism and the issues of working class in *La Société française pour l’abolition de l’esclavage*, 29, 35, 72. About the experiment of labor in colonies, see Jennings, “French Slave Liberation and Socialism: Projects for ‘Association’ in Guadeloupe, 1845-1848”; Léo Élizabeth, “Fouriérisme et émancipation,” in *Construire l’histoire antillaise: mélanges offerts à Jacques Adélaïde-Merlande*, ed. Lucien Abenon et als. (Paris: CTHS, 2003).

cortege to the cemetery, joined by prominent liberals.⁵⁴ The left party accused liberals of having neglected the revolutionary hero during the Restoration. Grégoire's obituary in *le Globe*, a Saint-Simonian newspaper, began with a reproach on the liberals' inaction on the political persecution of this "patriarch" of French liberty.⁵⁵ A. C. Thibeaudeau, a fellow *Conventionnel*, made a funeral oration and celebrated the final return of the legacy of the National Convention, long banned and prosecuted, into the shrine of French liberty.⁵⁶

On their part, liberals now in ascendancy found themselves no longer disapproving of the revolutionary career of the priest, especially his struggle for free people of color and black slaves. In 1837, the SFAE openly restored continuity with its revolutionary precedent by sponsoring a monograph-writing contest established by Grégoire in his will.⁵⁷ The subject of the first contest was "What measures would uproot the unjust and barbarian prejudice of the whites against the color of Africans, and of mulattoes?"⁵⁸ The commission in charge of the contest repeatedly adjourned the decision because the memoirs submitted did not distinguish the problem of slavery from that of color prejudice, which was the intention of the contest. When it was determined that all of the memoirs expected color prejudice to extinguish naturally once the institution of slavery ceased to exist, the speaker of the prize commission, Louis Dufau, reversed

⁵⁴ About the scene of the funeral of Grégoire, see Sepinwall, *The Abbe Grégoire and the French Revolution*, 220-21; and Necheles, *The Abbe Gregoire*, 273-77.

⁵⁵ *Le Globe* (saint-simonian), June 2, 1831.

⁵⁶ *Le Journal du commerce*, May 31, 1831.

⁵⁷ About the concours, see Anne Girollet, "L'abbé Grégoire, son legs: six concours pour la liberté et l'égalité," in *Grégoire et la cause des Noirs*, 163-75.

⁵⁸ *Bulletin de SFAE* no. 5 (1837): 24.

the order of question: if color prejudice was extinguished, could slavery stand any longer? He observed that the blind prejudice of the *colons* was the real obstacle against emancipation.⁵⁹

Quite symbolically, the prize went to Simon Lissant, a mulatto man from Haiti, whose work was published in 1841 by the SFAE.⁶⁰ Dufau celebrated the “happy circumstance of this contest,” which in itself refuted the color prejudice and proved the intellectual faculty of the blacks.⁶¹ The commission stressed that the “true motive” of Abbé Grégoire was not so much actual abolition as the gradual process of social reforms and education. It was part of their effort to portray Grégoire and his colleagues in the *Amis des noirs* as respectable reformists and moderate philanthropists, and not as the radical idealists as depicted in proslavery propaganda.

Moreover, the SFAE helped publish the *mémoire* of Grégoire in 1837. Hippolyte Carnot, a republican SFAE member, attached a historical overview as a forward of the *mémoire*.⁶² Carnot regarded the book as not just a *mémoire* of one person, but as “a historical *mémoire* on his time.”⁶³ He made use of the story of Grégoire for glorifying the revolutionary crusade for liberty and philanthropy. In comparing the French Revolution to other political revolutions, Carnot singled out the former as the only one universal revolution;

Few men indeed have thrown in the world so many projects for improving social relationships, and these projects are almost all distinguished by their spirit of

⁵⁹ *Bulletin de SFAE* no. 8 (1838): 41-43 and no.13 (1839): 4-9.

⁶⁰ S. Lissant (d’Haiti), *Essai sur les moyens d’extirper les préjugés des blancs contre la couleur des Africaines et des sang-mêlés* (Paris: Pagnerre, 1841). Other free-coloreds from French colonies such as L.-T. Houat and Saint-Remy also got special comments from the commission.

⁶¹ *Bulletin de SFAE*, no.19 (1842): 81.

⁶² Hippolyte Carnot, *Notice historique sur Henri Grégoire* (Paris: P. Baudouin, 1837).

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 11

generality: they are not limited to the French soil, they embraced all the nations in their thought. It is here that Grégoire can be presented as one of the types characteristic of our revolution... These sentiments of universal philanthropy, which found expression in all the manifestoes of the epoch, and which are moreover far from excluding patriotism, imprint on our revolution a character that distinguishes it from all the others.⁶⁴

In this picture, the revolutionary challenge against color prejudice and colonial slavery, embodied by Grégoire's efforts, was enlisted as testament to the universality of the French Revolution. Abbé Grégoire—champion of the rights of the Jews, free people of color, and black slaves—became a secular patron saint of universal liberty. In 1840, Adolph Crémieux, a celebrated Jewish lawyer and SFAE member, eloquently expressed before the audience of the World's Anti-Slavery Convention this alliance between the emancipation of Jews and that of black slaves in the person of Grégoire, which demonstrated the universality of revolutionary gospel against all kinds of oppression.⁶⁵

Given that the French Revolution was universal in nature, the narrative of Carnot presented the abolition of slavery in 1794 as a natural result of the prior efforts of the revolutionary assemblies to fight slavery, the slave trade, and color prejudice. "Finally, Grégoire obtained from the Convention the reward of his generous efforts, already crowned with a half-success by the Constitutional Assembly. Colonial slavery was completely abolished on 4 February 1794. Restoring it needed the reestablishment of the monarchy in the person of Napoleon..."⁶⁶ For the republican Carnot, emancipation was synonymous with the republic and

⁶⁴ Ibid., 18.

⁶⁵ Adolph Crémieux in the Anti-slavery Convention in 1840, London, printed as an appendix in Max J. Kohler, "Jews and the American Anti-Slavery Movement II," *American Jewish Historical Society* 9 (1901): 55.

⁶⁶ Carnot, *Notice historique sur Henri Grégoire*, 83.

slavery with the despot and the monarchy. Carnot also utilized the decree of abolition for salvaging the reputation of the National Convention, which had been identified with the destruction of the Terror. He insisted that France today owed most of her beautiful institutions to “this great body politic.”⁶⁷

In 1845, Arthur Auguste de Beugnot (Comte de Beugnot) noted the hypocrisy of the American Revolution when compared with the glory of the French Revolution, crying, “Do not we, the children of the 1789 Revolution, deserve the barbarism of the United States, which had proclaimed the preservation of slavery in the middle of their so-called republic?”⁶⁸ In his book, Guillaume Félice, a republican abolitionist pastor, announced:

France opened in 1789 a new era to the nations. She established, maintained, propagated, and rebuilt by the price of her blood religious liberty, civil liberty, equality of rights, and these principles will make a round of the globe. However, a lesson is absent from her glorious education, and so far as there remains in our colonies a single slave, the work of 1789 will be not finished.⁶⁹

Discovering emancipation’s origin in the French Revolution contributed to an affirmation of the Frenchness of the idea of abolitionism. The perennial problem of French abolitionism was its affinity with Britain, which explains much about abolitionism’s unpopularity in France. Although French abolitionism depended on the help of and initiative from Britain, it was by no means helpful to the cause to be seen as being so close to Britain. The

⁶⁷ Ibid., 82.

⁶⁸ Comte de Beugnot, CD April 4, 1845 ; *L'Abolitionniste français*, no, 3-5 (1845): 75.

⁶⁹ G. de Félice, *Emancipation immédiate et complète des esclaves* (Paris: Chez Delay, 1846), 114.

solution to this unpleasant label of “Anglophile” was to assert that abolition was not an imported idea, but one that originated from the “immortal 1789.”

Isambert was a speaker at the World’s Anti-Slavery Convention held in London in 1840, and in his speech he glorified the French Revolution as equal to Britain’s pride in its international leadership of abolitionism. He emphasized, “France is the first nation that proclaimed the abolition of slavery,” and proudly presented Grégoire and his colleagues in the *Amis des noirs* as pioneers of liberty, comparable to the British “Saints.” Concerning the reestablishment of slavery, he insisted that only Napoleon turning against the Great Revolution should be at fault: “We should not confound France with the government of this second epoch [Empire].”⁷⁰

More than anyone, it was Alexis de Tocqueville who most eloquently elevated abolitionism to an essential part of French national history and pride. On May 31, 1845, during a fierce debate on an abolitionist project, he glorified emancipation as the work of a great age. Although people usually attribute abolitionism to Christianity and Britain, Tocqueville claimed, “...emancipation, such a thing as seen even in the British islands, is the product of a French idea.”⁷¹ According to Tocqueville, it was because the French people destroyed all the castes throughout the world and reconstructed the notion of universal human equality before the law. Christianity destroyed human servitude eighteen centuries ago, but has been dormant since then.

⁷⁰ Isambert, *Discours à l’Anti-Slavery Convention* in Schmidt, *Abolitionnistes de l’esclavage*, in Schmidt, *Abolitionnistes de l’esclavage*, 506-14.

⁷¹ Tocqueville, CD on May 31, 1845; reproduced in *L’Abolitionniste français*, no.7 (1845): 363.

It was the French, fifty years ago, who resurrected the idea whose effect was seen in the British colonies. Therefore, the French are “veritable authors of the abolition of slavery.”⁷²

Moreover, Tocqueville proclaimed that this great idea of emancipation was implanted into the modern French national spirit, alternately “reviving or extinguishing in its heart the grand principles of the revolution.” According to his historical chart, emancipation ebbed and flowed in accordance with the rhythm of the metropolitan revolution. “Thereby, in 1789 for example, at the same time that liberty established itself in France, we demanded liberty for the slaves of the colonies. In 1802, on the contrary, when liberty expired in France, we sent the slaves back into the chains in colonies.” When the Bourbon Restoration was allied with the slave owners, the liberal opinion that would propel the July Revolution took on the cause of the blacks. And as the July Revolution arrived, the slave trade ended and the free people of color were liberated. Tocqueville thus defined colonial liberty as emanating from the metropolitan liberty: “as liberal ideas gain ground in France, the ideas that bring liberty to the slaves of colonies develop.” Therefore, he concluded, abolitionism was not only French property as part of the French Revolution, but it should also live as an instinct in the French hearts around the world that were fostered by the great revolution.⁷³

In glorifying the French Revolution as the origin of emancipation, the French abolitionists extended its genealogy into a longer time span. Just as the liberal historians of the Restoration excavated the earlier French history in order to assert that the French people’s constant struggle for liberty crescendoed into the French Revolution, abolitionists searched for

⁷² Ibid., 363-64.

⁷³ Ibid., 364-65.

the prehistory of revolutionary emancipation. They argued that such a noble idea of emancipation did not materialize out of nowhere in 1789, but resulted from the natural progress of the French national character. At the Anti-Slavery Convention, Isambert narrated to the multinational audience a history of French liberty from the Middle Age to the French Revolution, accentuating the efforts of the *Estate Generaux* to preserve liberty.⁷⁴

When excavating the French lineage of abolition, the men of the SFAE brought up the eighteenth-century as a matrix of emancipation.⁷⁵ They highlighted the antislavery texts of the Enlightenment *philosophes*, especially Abbé Raynal's *Histoire des deux indes*, which was consistently republished in the first half of the nineteenth-century. The idea that Toussaint Louverture was indoctrinated by Raynal's cry for "Black Spartacus" became a stock phrase in the abolitionist discourses.

More ancient than the Enlightenment was the maxim called the Freedom Principle—that any slave who sets foot on French soil is free. Abolitionists evoked the lawsuits of the last century in which the *Parlement de Paris* supported the freedom of some slaves who were accompanied to the metropole by their masters.⁷⁶ Henrion de Pansey, a Parisian lawyer who defended a black slave in 1770, was presented as a precursor of French abolitionism. This eighteenth-century lawyer was an ideal example for the SFAE's cause because he represented

⁷⁴ Isambert, *Discours à l'Anti-Slavery Convention* in Schmidt, *Abolitionnistes de l'esclavage*, 509-10.

⁷⁵ See Motylewski, *La Société française pour l'abolition de l'esclavage*, 29.

⁷⁶ See Sue Peabody, *There Are No Slaves in France: the Political Culture of Race and Slavery in the Ancien Regime* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

the *Parlement de Paris*'s spirit of freedom fighting against despotism, prefiguring the advent of the French Revolution.⁷⁷

The SFAE advertised this time-honored French tradition of liberty by supporting the lawsuits of slaves in similar situations.⁷⁸ One of the most well-known cases was the *Affaire Furcy* (1817-43). A male slave named Furcy from Ile Bourbon claimed his freedom on the basis that he was Indian by birth, and that his slave mother was supposedly free at the time of his birth according to the Freedom Principle.⁷⁹ The defense counsel, Alphonse Paillet, insisted that this was not merely a problem of personal liberty, but of crucial principles whose disturbance would be disastrous to the French colonies, once again evoking the Haitian Revolution.⁸⁰ In contrast, the antislavery press and legal media made it a *cause célèbre* for abolitionism. The SFAE welcomed the final ruling of the Royal Court of Paris on December 23, 1843 that bestowed freedom on Furcy on the grounds of the Freedom Principle. It took twenty seven years for Furcy to attain freedom after his first petition in 1817. The antislavery society celebrated the trial as solidifying the time-honored legal tradition of French freedom, and confirming the July Monarchy's ordinance of April 29, 1836 to prevent any slave from entering the metropole without being freed.

⁷⁷ *L'Abolitionniste français*, no.6 (1846): 545-46.

⁷⁸ Most of those cases passed through the Court of Cassation: "Cour de Cassation (Chambre civile)...esclave-application de la maxime: nul n'est esclave en France" in *Bulletin de SFAE*, no.17 (1840): 82-84.

⁷⁹ See "Affaire Furcy—Les esclaves qui touchent le sol de la France sont libres," *L'Abolitionniste français*, no.2 (1844) : 57-59; *Annales maritimes et coloniales*, t.87, v.3 (1844) : 34-66; and *la Gazette des tribunaux*, December 21-24, 1843. Also see Sue Peabody, "La question racial et « le sol libre de France » : l'affaire Furcy" *Annales HSS*, no. 6 (November-December 2009): 1305-34.

⁸⁰ *Annales maritimes et coloniales*, t.87, v.3 (1844) : 47.

The colonial *causes célèbres* provided French abolitionists with excellent public campaign material to promote the cause of abolitionism and colonial reforms in terms of the French legal tradition for liberty. Since the *Affaire Bissette*, appealing to the Parisian court had turned into a favorite tactic for both colonial subjects and metropolitan abolitionists. The trials for the free people of color in the Restoration were replaced by the so-called *procès de liberté* or *causes de liberté* for black slaves in the July Monarchy. This was made possible by the new legislation in 1833 that guaranteed the rights of slaves to appeal to the Court of Cassation. Three barristers in the Court of Cassation—Isambert, Crémieux, and Adolphe Gatine—became renowned for their defense of black slaves who were met by legal or administrative obstacles in purchasing their own freedom or those of their children.⁸¹ The organ of the SFAE and other newspapers with antislavery sentiment widely publicized those trials, thus dramatizing the suffering of slaves and their families who were subject to the arbitrary power of planters.

Those trials embodied the SFAE's vision of the appropriate emancipation mode. They provided a sentimental narrative of emancipation, in which afflicted slaves, suffering mothers and children, and wronged mulattoes found redemption through the metropolitan sponsorship of liberty and through public justice. It envisioned emancipation as a legal, peaceful, metropole-controlled process, oriented towards family and religion, dignifying for the capability of blacks, and thus perpetuating the French tradition of freedom. The trials on slavery and the accusatory model solidified the tripartite system of victims, perpetrators, and defendants—black slaves,

⁸¹ Among many, see Adolphe Gatine, *Causes de liberté: nombreuses libérations au cours de l'année judiciaire 1844-1845* (Paris: Ph. Cordier, 1845). See other works of Gatine in Bibliography. The most celebrated case was the *Affaire Virginie*, which the SFAE widely publicized and marked as a great victory for the cause of emancipation.

colonial slave owners, and metropolitan white philanthropists.⁸² White, French male elites thereby posed as patrons of liberty for the helpless black slaves, affirming emancipation to be something endowed by the metropole, not something sought after by slaves themselves.

As a result, by 1845 the SFAE could proudly declare that France should not attribute the glory of abolition to Britain—emancipation came from Evangelicals, *philosophes*, and the free soil of France.⁸³ According to the SFAE, France was far from behind in the march toward emancipation and had always taken initiatives in fighting slavery, as demonstrated by Montesquieu, by the decision of the *Parlement de Paris* in 1770 to support the Freedom Principle, by Henrion de Pansey, and by Necker’s invitation to the free-coloreds in 1789 to sit in the National Assembly. Finally, the decree of abolition by the National Convention in 1794 was “a genesis of liberty” in the colonies.⁸⁴

A crucial effect of this glorious narrative of French Freedom was that it subsumed the 1794 abolition decree under its universal and historical cover, thereby exonerating the decree from the persistent charges of destroying the colonies or being part of the Terror. In the narratives, the abolition decree was no longer a radical leap or impatient Jacobin convulsion. Abolitionists recast the history of the colonies around the first emancipation. The long history of colonial conquest, corruption, slavery, and the planters’ defiance against metropolitan authority was pitted against the steadfast efforts of colonial reform on the side of the metropole. The 1794 decree was thereby disentangled from the context of the colonial revolution and the Terror and

⁸² For comparison, see Jeannine Marie DeLombard, *Slavery on Trial: Law, Abolitionism, and Print Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

⁸³ *L’Abolitionniste français*, no.3 (1845) : 4-5.

⁸⁴ *L’Abolitionniste français*, no.6 (1846) : 545-56.

relocated as the corollary of the Enlightenment and the French quest for freedom. It was envisioned as both a result of those accumulative endeavors toward liberty and as a genesis of liberty to propagate in the world.

Thus by the 1840s, the 1794 decree was not merely excused, but exalted. The antislavery and pro-African-expansion journal *Annales de l'Institut d'Afrique* proclaimed the French Revolution as the cornerstone of the French liberating mission, and the 1794 decree as the acme of universal liberty.⁸⁵ The journal greatly emphasized the unanimous vote on the abolition of slavery in the National Convention, as it testified to the revolutionaries' sincere devotion to liberty. "One of the most honorable acts was decreed without discussion, which was abolition of slavery. We expect this most moral decree, which has suffered too much, will have its due solution in the Chamber."⁸⁶ Later, the journal recalled the abolition decree as simply being the natural result of the august principle of the French Revolution:

The most prominent notables of the last century justly understood that liberty had to extend her protective shadow not only over France, but also over all the French citizens of overseas territories, no matter what race and color they were. The emancipation of slaves of French colonies proclaimed by the National Assembly, 4 February 1794, was only a consequence of the principles professed by this assembly of celebrated men.⁸⁷

And finally, in the last issue before the February Revolution, the journal proudly re-printed the decree of abolition, urging its readers to follow this glorious example.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ *Annales de l'institut d'Afrique*, no.5 (May 1841) : 44.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ *Annales de l'institut d'Afrique*, no.3-4 (March and April 1847,): 17.

⁸⁸ *Annales de l'institut d'Afrique*, no. 11-12 (November and December 1847): 82-83.

Moreover, embracing the decree of general liberty led to adopting the principle of natural rights when attacking slavery. In the 1840s, the claim of natural rights was used more frequently in abolitionist discourse to counter the proslavery apologies and the *colons*' claim of indemnity. In 1847, the republican Alexandre-Auguste Ledru-Rollin presented antislavery petitions for immediate abolition and insisted on abolition as a matter of natural rights, sanctioned by the French Revolution and crystallized by the decree of abolition in 1794. He concluded that it therefore left no room for any precondition for emancipation.⁸⁹ Against the *colons*' claims of indemnity, he cried, "in natural rights there is nothing to pay; a crime cannot give birth to a right."⁹⁰ Although there might have existed a contracted right that the first planters had obtained from the monarchy some centuries ago, the French Revolution annulled all the privileges and feudalities on which the slave trade and slavery had based. Ledru-Rollin declared: "A decree of the Convention, this immortal assembly that defended on the one hand the territory and on the other hand reconquered the titles of mankind, a decree of the Year II declared all the slaves to be free, made them citizens, and placed them under the same aegis of the constitution."⁹¹ Having been condemned to be radical and impatient, the first abolition was reinstalled as a pioneer of natural rights and a magnificent example to follow.

Therefore, French abolitionists in the July Monarchy appropriated liberal strategies to justify the French Revolution and made a new genealogy of French emancipation. As the French Revolution was glorified in the new regime, the abolitionists were equipped with a framework to

⁸⁹ AP, CD, April 24, 1847; *L'Abolitionniste français*, no.2-4 (1847): 140-64.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 157.

⁹¹ Ibid.

transform slavery's dubious past and the first abolition into a grand narrative of French liberty. They argued that the July Monarchy was obligated to fulfill the promise of the Great Revolution, becoming the endpoint of this emancipatory narrative. The abolitionist narrative of the French Revolution was also part of the new trend in revolutionary historiography, which acknowledged more radical phases of the French Revolution as not an inversion but the essence of the Revolution. In the process, the most radical decree of the Terror, that of *Pluviôse* 16, was elevated into a celebrated precedent.

However, the SFAE was composed of moderate liberals and republicans who preferred to stay on familiar ground when approaching emancipation and colonial reforms. Rather than finding class conflicts in the entangled colonial situations, they attributed the problems of slavery to color prejudice and the tyranny of the planter class. In their discourse, the natural rights sanctified by the French Revolution were merged with the rights of free Frenchmen, and the radical message of natural rights was diluted by the long-time national tradition of French Freedom. Here, abolitionist discourse was closely interwoven with the central agenda of the July Monarchy liberal historians-cum-politicians to universalize the history of the French nation and the French Revolution. In articulating Frenchness, the abolitionists framed their claim for abolition as recuperating a concept of French liberty that was embedded in French history and thus as recovering the French national character. An additional advantage was that the French could now once again claim to be a superior civilization, a label previously claimed by the British.

Consequently, by amplifying and universalizing the revolutionary gospel, abolitionist discourse contributed to the making of revolutionary messianism, which would be championed

by Jules Michelet and republican historians. A result of this grand vision was the sense of universal mission. By the mid-1840s, the antislavery spokesmen could boast that the first abolition was a genesis of liberty that would spread throughout the world. In the words of one abolitionist, the French people had a moral obligation as a vanguard of civilization because France was the first to abolish slavery in 1794.⁹² This sense of the liberating mission was best shown in the increase of references to slaves in North Africa in the abolitionist journals during the 1840s, when the Algerian conquest was advancing.⁹³

Reinterpreting the Haitian Revolution

Reviving revolutionary abolition required untangling it from the story of the Haitian Revolution. The 1794 decree was at the heart of the proslavery argument that blamed the metropolitan radicals and philanthropists for the colonial upheavals. For French abolitionists, an urgent task was to dissociate this infamous coupling of revolutionary antislavery and the Saint-Domingue Revolution. As the decree of *Pluviôse* 16 was settled in the grand narrative of the French Revolution as an epitome of universal liberty, the decree had to be kept apart from the perplexing history of colonial war, violence, and the end of French Saint-Domingue. How did French abolitionists represent the key events and actors of the Haitian Revolution in relation to the central plot of the metropolitan revolution?

⁹² Félice, *Emancipation immediate et complete des esclaves*, 85-86.

⁹³ See the volumes of *L'Abolitionniste français* during the 1840s; interpellation of Isambert about the refugee slaves in Algeria in CD, on July 16 (or 17), 1839; and the petition led by Schoelcher about the slaves in the North Africa, Ch. D'Assailly, Dufaut, Dutrône, A. Hain, Lutteroth, Scheolcher and A. Thayer, in *L'Abolitionniste français*, no.3 (1846): 72. Also see Rosanballon, *Le moment Guizot*, 204-12.

In 1835, Isambert defended the abolitionist cause in the Chamber of Deputies and took great pains to detach the abolition decree in 1794 from the slave insurrection in 1791.⁹⁴ He underlined that the slaves of Saint-Domingue had revolted long before the abolition decree was proclaimed in Paris. Citing the cases of French Guiana and Guadeloupe, he asserted that the abolition decree was executed without much disturbance in other colonies. Although the Saint-Domingue Revolution served to create “singular illusions” that identified emancipation with the loss of colonies, it was Napoleon’s betrayal of the Revolution—not the revolutionary principle—that incurred the colonial war and the loss of Saint-Domingue.⁹⁵

In a similar line, Salverte tried to turn the repeated proslavery argument on its head: “I thank the orators who reminded us of Saint-Domingue, Messieurs, it is a history full of lessons, which will be much better off being reminded of by you.”⁹⁶ According to Salverte, the civil war began when the planters in favor of the secession of Saint-Domingue from France conflicted with the *petits blancs*. It was complicated by the intervention of the free people of color. Black slaves agitated only after the Spanish invasion persuaded some of them take up arms. Therefore, “Here are the facts, which, as you see, establish that if great misfortunes came to swoop down on Saint-Domingue, it is not the men who claimed the political rights for the *hommes de couleur* that we should accuse of it, but rather those who obstinately refused them.”⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Here, Isambert based his narrative on that of Pamphile de Lacroix, the French general who participated in the expedition of Leclerc. See Pamphile de Lacroix, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de la Révolution de Saint-Domingue* (Paris: Pillet aîné, 1819).

⁹⁵ AP, CD, on April 22, 1835, t.95, 53.

⁹⁶ Salverte, AP, CD on April 23, 1835, t.95, 97.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 98.

Carnot was also eager to dissociate the colonial upheaval from the 1794 decree of abolition. Like others, he heaped blame on the white *colons*: “We know today that the first troubles of Saint-Domingue were not provoked by the proclamation of the principles of liberty, especially not by the abolition of slavery resolved three years after, but by the *colons*’ resistance to the decree that accorded the civil privileges to the people of *sang-mêlé*, that is, to their own children.” Carnot acquitted Sonthonax and Polverel of the charge of destroying the colony by insisting that their action was caused by the treachery of the white *colons*: “We equally know that the obstinacy of this armed resistance obliged the commissioners of the Convention to outrun the projects of the Assembly, in permitting liberty to the slaves who would come to line up under the flag of the Republic.”⁹⁸ It was Napoleon’s fateful decision to reestablish slavery that finally transformed Saint-Domingue, “flourishing under the wise regulation of Toussaint Louverture,” into “a dreadful theater of carnage.”⁹⁹

In 1840, when the Chamber of Deputies was disputing the Franco-Haitian relationship, Isambert gave a long lecture on the history of the Haitian Revolution and Haiti, which was a developed version of his Chamber speech in 1835. He argued that hard facts alone could refute the inexhaustibly repeated charges that had made Haitian issues “an argument against the abolition of slavery.”¹⁰⁰ The colonial disaster was the fault of the white colonists who had sabotaged the metropole’s every endeavor for colonial reform. He understated the declaration of emancipation by the civil commissioners in 1793 as a tactical choice for winning patriotic slaves

⁹⁸ Carnot, *Notice historique sur Henri Grégoire*, 42.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 122.

¹⁰⁰ *Bulletin de SFAE*, no.17 (1840): 62.

over to the French side. The colonial experiment on liberty was forcibly converted into a war of extermination through the reestablishment of slavery by Napoleon. Condoning the violence of black slaves in the War of Independence, Isambert indignantly cried that the massacres of white *colons* were of course barbaric, but the reestablishment of slavery was even more so.¹⁰¹

The recurrent narratives of the French abolitionists show how they arranged the revolutionary events and for what desired effects. First, they focused on detaching the 1794 decree of abolition from the course of the colonial revolution by attributing the colonial revolution's origin to the civil war between whites and free-coloreds, not to slavery and emancipation. Second, they unanimously minimized the role of the civil commissioners in order to absolve the metropole from the charge of instigating the colonial revolution, and also to represent the abolition decree as being derived from the metropolitan revolution, not as an *ex-post facto* approval of what had happened in Saint-Domingue. Third, contrary to the proslavery propaganda, these abolitionist narratives argued that the war leading up to the independence of Haiti was caused not by abolition, but by the reestablishment of slavery. Combined together, these narrative strategies worked to invert the hitherto presumed causal relation between emancipation and colonial security: it was not that emancipation overthrew the colonial order, but that the refusal to abolish slavery invited the colonial disasters.

How did these narratives characterize the main historical actors? Since the historical initiative was given to Paris, the agency of non-white people was diminished. First, how did they approach the black slaves? As with the revolutionary mob in France, the French political elites of the SFAE had difficulty coping with the black masses in revolt. Lamartine solved this problem in

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

the same manner as before—he molded the French Revolution and its actors with revolutionary messianism and historical determinism. In his exceedingly popular history of the French Revolution, *Histoire des Girondins*, Lamartine inserted the scenes of the Haitian Revolution as another march of an abstract historical force. Describing black slaves in revolt, Lamartine said that “Negroes no longer had heart. They were no longer men, they were no longer a people, they were a destructive element that passes over the earth eliminating everything.....That was the revenge of slavery. All tyranny has its horrible reverse.”¹⁰² If the Romantic historians of the first half of the nineteenth-century praised “the Revolution living its own life apart from the struggles of men,”¹⁰³ then the Haitian Revolution was given the same treatment, only as a minor part of the Great Revolution.

What drove the black slaves to a state of such destructive force? Lamartine brushed away the accusations that the metropole was responsible for the slave insurrection and announced that the only cause of the revolt was the slaves’ natural pursuit for liberty:

One accused the Britons, another Spaniards, others at last the *Amis des Noirs*, of this complicity with the insurrection. However, the Spaniards were at peace with France. The revolt of the blacks did not threaten them less than us. The Britons themselves possessed three times as many slaves as France did. The principle of insurrection, exalted by the triumph and propagated among them, would have ruined their establishments and compromised the very life of their *colons*. These suspicions were absurd. There was no other culprit than liberty itself, which one does not oppress with impunity in a part of the mankind.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Lamartine, *Œuvres complètes de Lamartine*, vol.9 (Paris: L’auteur, 1861), 461.

¹⁰³ Peter Geyl, “French Historians for and against the Revolution,” in *Encounters in History* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1977), 104.

¹⁰⁴ Lamartine, *Œuvres complètes de Lamartine*, vol.9, 462.

The black slaves were thus considered to be instrumental in fulfilling the mission of the French Revolution. The most celebrated historian-cum-abolitionist thereby came close to the proslavery spokesman from the opposite side when he reduced the black masses to an instrument of something larger—this time, the march of liberty.

It was Schoelcher who provided a different viewpoint for the black masses. In his monograph published in 1840, he lamented that even abolitionists often remembered the Saint-Domingue Revolution only in terms of violence and massacres. Instead, Schoelcher depicted the black slaves as French patriots who acquired liberty through their own brave service in the war against multiple enemies of the French Republic. He regarded the revolt of the slaves as a legitimate and natural right of a population that had been oppressed for such a long time.¹⁰⁵ In an earlier publication, Schoelcher even acknowledged the insurrection and war as proof of blacks' humanity, not that of black barbarity as proslavery spokesmen had argued:

Against those who have this view [biological racism], we will oppose the colossal revolution of Saint-Domingue. Never will the system of [Franz Joseph] Gall's phrenology be able to negate how the blacks had illuminated there all the values, all the resources of spirit, and all the genius of the best-placed brains of the whitest, the bravest, and the most civilized. I will also oppose to it the war of Haiti that cost the French Republic 30,000 soldiers.¹⁰⁶

When Schoelcher praised the black slaves in his political binary of oppressors and the oppressed, he downplayed another actor of the Haitian Revolution, the free people of color. In his much acclaimed book, *Colonies étrangères et Haïti*, published in 1843, he offered a long

¹⁰⁵ Victor Schoelcher, *Abolition de l'esclavage: examen critique du préjugé contre la couleur des Africains et des sang-mêlés* (Paris: Pagnerre, 1840), 107-11.

¹⁰⁶ Victor Schoelcher, *L'esclavage des noirs et de la législation coloniale* (Paris: Paulin, 1833), re-published in *Esclavage et Colonisation, Colonies et empires II*, ed. Émile Tersen (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1948), 97-98.

history of the Haitian Revolution¹⁰⁷ in which the *gens de couleur libres* were regarded as one of the factions that plunged the island into the civil war. For Schoelcher, the *sang-mêlés*' claim for equal rights was not so much a quest for liberty as a pursuit of self-interest, although their struggle was justified by the planters' tyranny. More important to him was the way in which the civil war between whites and mulattoes paved the way for the black slaves' entry into the colonial revolution. Schoelcher believed that like in the French Revolution, the privileged group here also opened the revolution and thus unintentionally started the uncontrollable struggle for liberty: "Excited at independence by '89, they [the white planters] became the instruments of mulatto emancipation, as the latter became in turn the instruments of the deliverance of slaves. It is the echoes of liberty that are repeated regardless of the intention of those who throw out its sublime cry."¹⁰⁸ Schoelcher, a fierce republican, deemed the black slaves to be equivalent to the revolutionary mass in the French Revolution and thus the true protagonists of the Haitian Revolution. After the insurrection of black slaves, Schoelcher's narrative ceases to justify the free-colored's resistance against plantocracy and treats the mulattoes and their armed struggle as a nuisance in Toussaint Louverture's heroic efforts to secure emancipation and pacify the island.¹⁰⁹

As seen here, the role of the free-colored people was trivialized or at best ambivalent in the July Monarchy narrative of emancipation—while they appeared as protagonists in the dominant revolutionary script of nineteenth-century Haiti, the French narratives rarely endorsed

¹⁰⁷ Victor Schoelcher, *Colonies étrangères et Haïti, résultats de l'émancipation anglaise* (Paris: Pagnerre, 1843), tome.2, 89-141.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 91.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 124.

them as the main historical actors. The metropolitan narratives usually regarded the free colored men's armed interventions as instigations or disturbances. Lamartine conveys rigidity in his opinions of the *gens de couleur libres*, which was not so different from planter ideology:

The people of color, an intermediary race born from the intercourse of the white *colons* with the black slaves, were not slaves, but they were not citizens. They were a kind of freedmen having the defects and virtues of the two races: the arrogance of the whites, the degeneration of the blacks; a floating race that, in falling in turn to the side of slaves or that of masters, had to produce these terrible oscillations that inevitably lead to the overthrow of a society.”¹¹⁰

To the French abolitionists, emphasizing the revolutionary struggle for equal rights for free people of color hardly amounted to recognizing them as a political subject of either the Revolution or abolition. The next chapter would show how this narrative conflicted with the claims of Bissette and his free-colored colleagues.

Instead, it was Toussaint Louverture who occupied a central place in most French narratives. When speaking against the proslavery charge in 1835, Hippolyte Passy elaborated on how Louverture's arrival to power was a critical turning point in the escalating disorder of Saint-Domingue. As this “great man” rose in power, the prior wars and disorders yielded to order and liberty: “With his powerful voice, there reappeared order, prosperity, and peace.”¹¹¹ On the eve of Leclerc's fatal expedition, “Toussaint was thus the restorer of order, and Saint-Domingue, out of its ruins, was once again rich and powerful.”¹¹² Schoelcher also bestowed the role of savior and liberator on Louverture, as it was his rallying to the French Republic that rescued the island from chaos and truly introduced liberty. By the time Napoleon decided to reestablish slavery, the

¹¹⁰ Lamartine, *Œuvres complètes de Lamartine*, vol.9, 455.

¹¹¹ Passy, AP, CD on April 22, 1835, tome 95: 74.

¹¹² Ibid.

black general was on his way to regenerating Saint-Domingue toward prosperity and racial concord, which was to be a befitting end to the great revolution.¹¹³

In the *Institut d'Afrique*'s scheme to convert the antislavery credo into justification for French colonial expansion in Africa, it invested Toussaint Louverture with a special status. At its foundation, the *Annales de l'Institut d'Afrique* announced that the institution had invited Isaac Louverture, son of the black general, to be an honorary president.¹¹⁴ To them, Toussaint Louverture represented the foremost example of Africans regenerated by the French Revolution and the French civilization, upholding their idea of a French civilizing mission. They wistfully spoke about the black general's plan for liberating Africa before his capture by General Leclerc: "He [Toussaint Louverture] wanted to resign from the chief commandment of Saint-Domingue and plunge himself into leading a handful of soldiers into the African continent, in order to abolish the slave trade and slavery there."¹¹⁵

In February 1842, the *Annales de l'Institut d'Afrique* produced a long extract of the mémoires that Louverture had dictated during his imprisonment in France, emphasizing his fidelity and services to the French Republic. A month later, the journal published a long biographical article on Louverture, written by J-Hippolyte-Daniel de Saint-Anthoine,¹¹⁶ a member of the SFAE. Here, Saint-Anthoine followed the traditional French style of eulogy and commended Louverture as an archetypal, refined Frenchman who stood far above both the black

¹¹³ Schoelcher, *Colonies étrangères et Haïti*, tome.2, 125-28.

¹¹⁴ *Annales de l'Institut d'Afrique*, no.2 (February 1841): 22.

¹¹⁵ *Annales de l'Institut d'Afrique*, no.3 (March 1842): 22.

¹¹⁶ Published as J.-Hippolyte-Daniel de Saint-Anthoine, *Notice sur Toussaint Louverture* (Paris: A. Lacour, 1842).

masses and *sang-mêlées*. In particular, he took great pains to separate the black general from the insurrection of slaves in 1791-93: “He never took any part in the first insurrections, and one cannot accuse him of having soaked his hands in the blood of the whites massacred in 1791.”¹¹⁷ In the narrative of Saint-Anthoine, Louverture came forward only to save Saint-Domingue from the already widespread disorder accelerated by the civil wars and foreign invasions.

Therefore, to most French commentators, Toussaint Louverture was a legitimate heir to the French Revolution and its colonial incarnation. The black general stood at the nodal point at which the values cherished by metropolitan abolitionists met. He was a French patriot at heart, while his skin color testified to the equal quality of Africans. His short regime was described as a true postemancipation society, which was a lost chance for France due to the misguided Napoleonic expedition. This black genius could single-handedly deliver the causes of the colonial revolution and African perfectibility from their opponents.

How was the rearranged narrative of the Haitian Revolution situated in the new genealogy of French emancipation devised by July Monarchy abolitionists, and for what effects? On one hand, the French abolitionists tried to vindicate or normalize the colonial revolution against the “calumnies” of the proslavery party. Their main strategy was to reproduce the master narrative of the French Revolution in narrating the colonial revolution. White planters were compared to metropolitan aristocrats, and the abolition of slavery was equated with the abolition of feudality. Black slaves and the free people of color of Saint-Domingue were depicted as sincere followers of the French Revolution and the grateful recipients of metropolitan decrees. The Haitian Revolution was thereby redefined as a valuable appendix or reflection of the French

¹¹⁷ *Annales de l’Institut d’Afrique*, no. 3 (March 1842): 17.

Revolution. The colonial revolution was amplified evidence of the universality of the French Revolution.

On the other hand, French abolitionists endeavored to separate the violence of the colonial revolution from revolutionary abolition. They argued that the terrible excesses of the Haitian Revolution did not stem from the revolutionary proclamation of liberty, but from the peculiar local conditions of the colony, mainly from the civil war that originated from the racial conflict between whites and mulattoes. The narrative of the Haitian revolution therefore went through a process that was opposite of the French Revolution—the narrative of the French Revolution was unified and universalized until it was elevated to mythical status, while the Haitian Revolution was split up and particularized. A critical effect was that the Haitian Revolution was detached from the emancipation process, whose zenith was supposed to be the decision of the metropolitan assembly to abolish slavery in 1794.

By 1845, the French abolitionists could more competently dismiss the anti-abolitionist claim on the grounds of the Haitian Revolution. During the heated controversy over the Mackay Law in 1845, Ledru-Rollin professed that it had become anachronistic to make an anti-abolitionist argument out of Saint-Domingue after all the corrections of historical facts by abolitionists. Even if the first abolition ran aground in Saint-Domingue, he argued that it meant only the debacle of the corrupt colonial society with distorted race relationships, not the failure of the revolutionary ideal.¹¹⁸ In a similar manner, Schoelcher applauded the historical insight of a brochure written in 1847 by Hector Fleury, an abolitionist from Lyon: “A glance at the events in

¹¹⁸ AP, CD on June 2, 1845; *L'Abolitionniste français*, no.7 (1845): 414-15.

Saint-Domingue allows him to prove that all the disorders, all the violence attributed in this island to the emancipation of blacks, are in reality only due to the civil war of the whites.”¹¹⁹

As the Haitian Revolution separated from the narrative of emancipation, Saint-Domingue was to be remembered largely as a slave rebellion and as a symbol of colonial violence. French antislavery had persistently refuted the conservatives’ demonic representation of the colonial revolution, but they also intensified the haunting images of colonial violence for their counterattack against the proslavery party. After the British emancipation, colonial security became the principal framework in which the issue of French emancipation was discussed. French abolitionists strategically evoked the horrific images of Saint-Domingue as a threat to press the reluctant royal government and to overcome the procrastination tactics of the proslavery party. While they stressed the peaceful implementation of abolition in British colonies, they also called to mind the overwhelming violence of the Saint-Domingue Revolution. The lingering vision of the slaves’ general insurrection was to become reality when the French government failed to catch up with the rising expectations of the colonial people.

In 1844, the Commission of Petitions received a petition from the Parisian artisans for the abolition of slavery. Replying to the petition, the commission recommended the improvement of the *Code Noir* as a way toward gradual abolition, to which the left wing cried “Anachronism!” It is clear that here the haunting memories of slave insurrection and the British emancipation were combined to produce a fearful vision of the French colonies being invaded by liberty. Evoking the revolutionary years and the British emancipation, Agénor de Gasprin, the republican

¹¹⁹ Victor Schoelcher, *Histoire de l’esclavage pendant les deux dernières années* (Paris: Pagnerre, 1847), 462 ; Hector Fleury, *De l’esclavage colonial et de son abolition immédiate dans les colonies françaises* (Lyon: Imp. De Boursy Fils, 1847).

deputy and a SFAE member, cried: “There is no way for self-illusion today. Liberty surrounds our colonies on all sides.....Do you believe that there can be no contagion of liberty between these nearby territories?”¹²⁰ Ledru-Rollin pressed home the volatile situation in the colonies, urging immediate abolition:

We talked about prudence; however, it is in the name of prudence itself and in the interest of colonies that I address this. Remember Saint-Domingue! How many millions of francs wouldn’t France spend to buy back the Queen of the Antilles, lost to her forever for having wanted to maintain servitude there when the hour of deliverance had sounded? Remember, at last, Messieurs, that, in 1840, when the credulous spirits believed in the collision with Britain, Britain did not speak about anything less than stirring our colonies by calling the slaves into liberty. This menace, which weighed upon us at that time, will be rediscovered tomorrow on our heads. For averting this, there is only one way, only one—liberate our slaves and thereby prevent the bloody catastrophes.¹²¹

It was Schoelcher who took the boldest lead in this kind of counterattack. Instead of hiding or evading colonial violence, he openly displayed the recent colonial history shot through with slave revolts in which the memories of Saint-Domingue reverberated. He looked upon the revolt and terror as a natural condition of any colonial society under slavery: “Slavery is a volcano ready to erupt over its society, like those subterranean fires that still make their earth tremble. Yes, you know that, you live in the uneasiness all the while not wanting to recognize your fears, the word liberty makes you shudder, the terror is on the agenda about emancipation.”¹²² Only liberty could “deliver the nineteenth-century from these cruelties, these

¹²⁰ Agénor de Gasparin, AP, CD on May 4, 1844; Agénor de Gasparin, *Discours politiques, 1843-1846* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1881), 173-82.

¹²¹ Ledru-Rollin, AP, CD on May 4, 1844 ; *L’Abolitionniste français*, no.5-6 (1844), 142.

¹²² Victor Schoelcher, *Des colonies françaises: abolition immédiate de l’esclavage* (Paris: Pagnerre, 1842), 375.

poisonings, and these juridical massacres which dishonor it.”¹²³ Choosing between liberating slaves and perishing in the impending doom of slave revolts became a leitmotiv in the discourse of Schoelcher in the 1840s. By the end of the regime, this redefinition of the Saint-Domingue Revolution penetrated the colonial party. In 1847, Henri Pain, a *colon* of French Guyana, tried to persuade his fellow *colons* to not repeat the fatal error of the planters of Saint-Domingue and to recognize the inevitability of abolition in order to avoid another Saint-Domingue.¹²⁴

Thus, this time it was the abolitionists’ turn to take advantage of those horrible memories of Saint-Domingue, urging the proslavery party to “Remember Saint-Domingue.”¹²⁵ In the process, the British and Haitian examples of abolition were assigned different roles in the abolitionist discourse. While the Haitian Revolution was reduced to the most haunting memory of the slave insurrection, British emancipation replaced the Haitian Revolution as a pioneering example of abolition. The ongoing situation in Haiti during the 1840s accelerated and facilitated this process of making pointless and negligible the Haitian Revolution as the first emancipation. The French abolitionists’ vindication of the Haitian Revolution could not survive the disappointment of postindependence Haiti.

On the Present Situation of Haiti: L’Affaire d’Haïti,

Political Disorder, and Disillusionment

¹²³ Ibid., 377.

¹²⁴ Henri Pain, *Quelques Propositions concernant les intérêts coloniaux, et spécialement de l’émancipation immédiate, avec association et indemnité* (Nantes: Imprimerie Charles Gailmard, 1847); Cottias, *D’une abolition à l’autre*, 24-26; Schmidt, *Abolitionnistes de l’esclavage*, 307.

¹²⁵ As mentioned in the Introduction, a similar dynamics is observed in British abolitionism. See Matthews, *Caribbean Slave Revolt and the British Abolitionist Movement*.

When the July Monarchy was launched, relations between France and Haiti had become aggravated. After the July Revolution, Haiti demanded that France revise the terms of the 1825 treaty because of the regime change in France. As Haiti continued to insist on reducing the amount of indemnity, the indemnity issue produced continual diplomatic tension between the two countries. There were repeated threats of a military expedition from the French side, often inspired by the 1830 invasion of Algiers.¹²⁶ As France sent a series of envoys to press the debt issue, rumors of French invasion plagued Haiti. The factions against Boyer, the army, and the Haitian populace hated the idea of succumbing to their ex-colonizer's overburdening demand, which continued to be a source of political instability in Haiti. After a series of Chamber debates, commissions, and negotiations, the problem was settled for the time being in 1838. The Franco-Haitian treaty of 1838 reduced the amount of indemnity to sixty million francs to be paid over a period of thirty years, while unconditionally confirming the independence of Haiti.¹²⁷

In France, the repeated dispute over indemnity was called the "*Affaire d'Haiti*." After 1825, there were two parties involved in the payment of indemnity: the former *colons* of Saint-Domingue and the holders of Haitian bonds.¹²⁸ As Haiti had continuously prolonged the payment

¹²⁶ Brière, *Haiti et la France*, 223-26.

¹²⁷ There were a series of re-arrangement of Franco-Haitian treaty including the treaties of April 2, 1831, treaty of 1838, and convention of May 15, 1847. See Brière, *Haiti et la France*, 219-302; Gusti Klara Gaillard-Pourchet, "Aspects politiques et commerciaux de l'indemnisation Haïtienne," in *Rétablissement de l'esclavage dans les colonies françaises*, 231-37.

¹²⁸ As mentioned in the first chapter, Haiti had to borrow the first payment from French banks with a high rate of fee and interest, and French banks sold the Haitian bonds for this loan in France. It created another debt that the Haitian government had to pay, called "loan of Haiti (emprunt d'Haiti)." See J.-P Vaur, *Emprunt d'Haiti* (Paris: Guiraudet et Jouaust, 1855).

for the “double debt” (the indemnity and loan of 1825), the *Affaire d’Haïti* became a financial nightmare for every party involved. The former *colons* of Saint-Domingue and their debtors clamored for the French government’s intervention for enforcing payment.¹²⁹ In France, it evolved into a heated dispute over the insolvency of Haiti. Was the Haitian government capable of paying, but simply not willing to do so due to its “bad faith”? Or was it actually unable to pay due to its poverty? And most critically, did Haiti’s insolvency prove the failure of the labor regime there, and the inherent indolence of the blacks? Proslavery journal *l’Outre-Mer* insisted that Haiti’s inability to pay was further evidence of the general laziness of blacks.¹³⁰ Against this position, Isambert contended that the amount of indemnity was unrealistic and unjust from the start. How could a nation bear to pay an amount of money comparable to its annual revenue to confirm an independence that had already been obtained by its own blood?¹³¹ The *Affaire d’Haïti* was thus incorporated into antislavery debate on the viability of Haiti, as the example of emancipation.

¹²⁹ There are many sources published for the *Affaire Haiti* by the ex-*colons* of Saint-Domingue and their allies. Among many, see *Mémoire pour les anciens colons de Saint-Domingue au roi, aux chambres, à la France* (Paris: A. Moreau, 1830); Joseph Remy, *Consultation de M. Remy, jurisconsulte, pour des porteurs d’annuités de l’emprunt d’Haïti* (Paris: Renard, 1831); Charles Esmangart, *La vérité sur les affaires d’Haïti* (Paris: Carpentier-Méricourt, 1833); Esmangart, *Nouvel avis aux colons de Saint-Domingue sur le paiement de l’indemnité* (Paris: Dentu, 1836); G. Paul, *Affaire d’Haïti* (Paris: Chez Renard, 1836); B. Vendryes, *De l’indemnité de Saint-Domingue considérée sous le rapport du droit des gens, du droit public des français et de la dignité nationale* (Paris: Chez l’Auteur, 1839); P. Duverger, *Pétition à la Chambre des Députés à l’effet d’obtenir le rejet du projet de loi relatif au traité fait le 12 février 1838 avec le gouvernement d’Haïti* (1840); Filleau, *La vérité sur l’affaire d’Haïti-Saint-Domingue* (Paris: Lange Lévy, 1840). Among the journals, *le Moniteur industriel*, founded by J.-A. Filleau, was commissioned by the ex-*colons* and most consistently espoused the cause of the indemnity for the ex-*colons*, from 1836 to 1845.

¹³⁰ *L’Outre-Mer*, May 1-3, 1840; reproduced in *Bulletin de SFAE*, no.17 (1840): 75.

¹³¹ *Bulletin de SFAE*, no.17 (1840): 72-77.

With a backdrop of the *Affaire d'Haïti*, the ongoing situation in Haiti was still a matter of great significance in the controversy over abolition for the July Monarchy. As seen in the third chapter, the opposing parties approached the state of affairs in Haiti from different directions. The dispute over the “bivalent” meaning of Haitian freedom between civilization and economy was replayed in the July Monarchy. The colonial party was united in degrading Haiti in terms of the blacks’ indolence and the retreat into a self-subsistence economy. The most burning issue was the labor regime in Haiti, which the proslavery party considered to be quasi-slavery.¹³² In the opening debate on slavery in 1831, Félix Patron, a proslavery spokesman from Guadeloupe, cried “Go to Saint-Domingue, see the situation of freed Negroes.”¹³³ According to him, the strict regulations imposed on Haitians to make them work were a thousand times crueler than those inflicted on the black slaves in French colonies.¹³⁴ He asserted that abolition would only result in degrading the otherwise happy and contented “Negroes” in the French colonies into the state of their fellow blacks in Saint-Domingue.¹³⁵

When the delegates from the French colonies gathered a variety of evidence against abolition, the example of Haiti always played a pivotal role. Among many instances, when the de Broglie commission charged with investigating the abolition of slavery asked the colonial councils to deliberate the options for emancipation, the colonial councils’ responses abounded

¹³² The Code Rural was still infamous as a In 1835, the *Annales maritimes et coloniales*, the organ of the Ministry of the Marine and Colonies, republished the Code Rural of Haiti, as a warning against the British Emancipation. *Annales maritimes et coloniales*, t.57, v.1 (1835): 118-55.

¹³³ Félix Patron, *Des noirs, de leur situation dans les colonies françaises. L’esclavage n’est-il pas un bienfait pour eux et un fardeau pour leurs maîtres ?* (Paris: Charles Mary, 1831), 4-5.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 15-16.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 24.

with negative references to Haiti. They argued in unison that Saint-Domingue was still the most remarkable proof of the impossibility of emancipation by law: in spite of the strictest labor laws, the only result of the forty years of liberty in Haiti was its abandonment of culture and degeneration into a primitive state.¹³⁶

It was a triumvirate of proslavery spokesmen in Parisian politics that most consistently exploited the Haitian sources: Thomas Jollivet, Granier de Cassagnac, and Charles Dupin. Contending with the leading abolitionists, Jollivet repeatedly claimed that “the veritable situation of Saint-Domingue” nullified every philanthropist project.¹³⁷ Another proslavery spokesman, Granier de Cassagnac, attested after his 1841 trip to the Antilles that what he first saw in Haiti was beggary.¹³⁸ As he described in a farcical and derisive mode the Haitian people with whom

¹³⁶ Thomas Jollivet, *Analyse des délibérations de avis des conseils coloniaux et des conseils spéciaux sur l'abolition de l'esclavage dans les colonies françaises* (Paris: Imprimerie de Cosse et G.-Laguionie, 1842), 63. For a similar argument, see *Observations sur le rapport de M. de Tocqueville relatif à l'abolition de l'esclavage dans les colonies et quelques mots sur la loi des sucres* (Paris : Imprimerie de Cosse et G.-Laguinie, 1840), 17.

¹³⁷ About Jollivet's wrestling with abolitionists and his remarks on Haiti, see Thomas Jollivet, *Avis de M. Jollivet, délégué de la Martinique, à Monsieur le ministre de la Marine et des Colonies, sur le projet d'ordonnance relatif à l'emprisonnement disciplinaire des esclaves* (Paris: Ad. Blondeau, 1841); *Parallèle entre les Colonies françaises et les Colonies anglaises* (Paris: Moquet et Hauquelin, 1842) ; *Lettres de M. A. Jollivet...au rédacteur des Débats, du Siècle et du Constitutionnel* (Paris: E.-B. Delanchy, 1842) ; *La Commission présidée par le duc de Broglie et les gouverneurs de nos colonies, théorie et pratique* (Paris: Boulé et Ce, 1843); *Des pétitions de quelques ouvriers et ouvrières de Paris pour l'abolition immédiate de l'esclavage, véritable situation des noirs dans les colonies* (Paris: Bruneaux, 1844).

¹³⁸ Granier de Cassagnac, *Voyages aux Antilles françaises, anglaises, danoises, espagnoles, à Saint-Domingue et aux Etats-Unis d'Amérique*, vol.2 (Paris: Dauvin et Fontaine, 1842-44), 205. Granier de Cassagnac, who was well known in Haiti as a proslavery spokesman, had to hastily leave the island after threats on the street, charivari and a demand of duel.

he had come into contact, he suggested that only European influences could save the country from its present misery, disorder, and indolence.¹³⁹

In contrast, French abolitionists endeavored to “correct” the widely-recognized “calumnies” of the proslavery party against Haiti, mainly by introducing another kind of eyewitness accounts and facts. Each edition of the SFAE’s bulletin remarked on the news from both British colonies after emancipation and Haiti as supporting examples for emancipation. The most beneficial sources came from Britain. Most importantly, in 1835 the SFAE helped to publish the French translation of a book on Haiti written by Zachary Macaulay, the leader of British abolitionism.¹⁴⁰ In Macaulay’s letter to Duc de Broglie published at the beginning of the book, the abolitionists of both countries lamented that the most successful argument in the proslavery campaign was the false statement on the disastrous effects of emancipation on Haiti. They decided that once the British emancipation had wiped out the baseless fear of abolition, it was time for the abolitionists to correct this false image through exact reports based on facts.

In the face of the undoubtedly declining sugar production and foreign trades in Haiti, however, French abolitionists groped for ways to keep Haiti in the sphere of civilization mediated by the force of commerce. In 1835, *le Journal du commerce* attributed Haiti’s poverty and debt to international isolation: “Today, Haiti has not recovered her former splendor; but we should attribute it less to the inhabitants’ indolence than to the absence of the outlets for the products which they could produce. Let Europe open her ports to their productions, so that they

¹³⁹ Granier de Cassagnac, *Voyages aux Antilles*, vol. 2, 255-56.

¹⁴⁰ Zachary Macaulay, *Haïti ou renseignements authentiques sur l'abolition de l'esclavage et ses résultats à Saint-Domingue et à la Guadeloupe* (Paris: Hachette, 1835). See *Bulletin de SFAE*, no.8 (1838): 46.

could made relations with the enlightened peoples, and Saint-Domingue will be reborn and develop anew by the influence of commerce and civilization.”¹⁴¹

Some argued that without sugar production, Haitians had managed to find real success in the smallholding cultivation of coffee, which could be the future of other islands after emancipation.¹⁴² Whereas sugar production was associated with large plantations and white plantocracy, coffee production (*caféterie*) was run with a modest level of capital and labor, and thus could be a new venue for the reconciliation between smallholding proprietorship and the production of export crops.¹⁴³

For metropolitan abolitionists, however, Haiti was above all a base of civilization built by Africans in the Americas, thereby testifying to the perfectibility of Africans. The adoption of Simon Lissant, a mulatto citizen of Haiti, into the SFAE circle reveals the consensus between Haitian elites and French abolitionists on Haiti’s historical vocation to prove the successful assimilation of Africans into civilization. As mentioned earlier, the SFAE-sponsored monograph writing contests held in memory of Grégoire lauded Lissant. Dedicated to Isambert, who is “one of the most constant and generous defenders of the cause of the blacks,” Lissant’s monograph supported the SFAE’s position in differentiating between color prejudice and the abolition of slavery. Both the society and Lissant argued that abolishing slavery could not automatically

¹⁴¹ *Le Journal du commerce*, April 24, 1835.

¹⁴² *Bulletin de SFAE*, no.4 (1835): 19-20. A Haitian published an article about the merit of smallholding farming in *Le Journal du commerce*, February 23, 1831.

¹⁴³ The social meaning of coffee was different in colonial Saint-Domingue where freed men and women depended on *caféterie* for making their own fortunes. Michel-Rolph Trouillot says, “In late eighteenth-century Saint-Domingue, where there were freedmen, there was coffee.” Trouillot, “Motion in the System: Coffee, Color, and Slavery in Eighteenth-Century Saint-Domingue,” *Review* 5(1982): 354.

eliminate color prejudice. Rather, they argued that fighting color prejudice could contribute to abolishing slavery more effectively.

Linstant contended that his home country, Haiti, suffered the most from color prejudice, as it was made into an object of derision by Europeans. Linstant's historical perspective had its own merit in placing the development of civilization in a longer time span. Criticizing the Frenchmen who regarded any society without wide boulevards or an opera house as savage or barbarian, Linstant urged giving Haiti more time to mature. Linstant's vision of the Haitian future and its duty to prove itself to the European eyes was the very scheme French abolitionists had conceived for Haiti:

I am far from believing that the respite Haiti enjoys after her long sufferings shall last indefinitely: we should remind ourselves that conquering liberty is not enough and that it takes longer to preserve it. Now, we will conserve it only through education and work because misery and ignorance deaden one's mind and make him a slave of whoever is richer and more educated than him. We should, through our activity and our accord, help our seniors carry out their labor. This sentiment is that of the nation, and already the new generation studies, learns to work, and rich with their predecessors' experience and science drawn from the European home, is prepared to deserve to be the heirs to the heroic founders of the Republic of Haiti.¹⁴⁴

It was the *Annales de l'Institut d'Afrique* that placed a higher expectation than any other on the prospect of Haiti. As living testimony to the regeneration of Africans, Haiti, the first "African" nation liberated from slavery, was to be a stepping stone toward a wider project of regenerating the African continent. Besides the Algerian conquest, which the journal glorified as "a conquest of civilization upon barbarism,"¹⁴⁵ Haiti occupied a central place in the journal's scheme for civilizing Africa by the force of abolitionism and commerce. On the advice of Isaac

¹⁴⁴ S. Linstant (d'Haiti), *Essai sur les moyens d'extirper les préjugés des blancs contre la couleur des Africaines et des sang-mêlés* (Paris: Pagnerre, 1841), xii-xiii.

¹⁴⁵ *Annales de l'institut d'Afrique*, no.1 (January 1841): 2.

Louverture, the institute even formed a “Section d’Haïti” within it in 1843.¹⁴⁶ The institute also installed an auxiliary division in Le Cap of Haiti.¹⁴⁷ They diligently carried news and letters from Haiti to France, ostentatiously displaying the institute’s friendship with the men of power in Haiti.

In spite of their desire to see order and prosperity in Haiti, however, pro-Haitian parties were increasingly perplexed and embarrassed by the political situation in Haiti. From 1840, the news from Haiti grew more alarming and disturbing. As the price of coffee—Haiti’s central cash crop—continued to fall in Europe, Haiti’s economy suffered greatly, and the Haitian government was put in a fiscal crunch. The opposition group against President Boyer grew strong. France played a part in the fall of Boyer’s regime by pressing the indemnity issue, which was very unpopular in Haiti. As Boyer sent partial payment arranged by the 1838 treaty to France, it strained the already precarious governmental finances and made Boyer’s popularity plummet.¹⁴⁸ It led to a coup in 1843 by Charles Hérard and the liberal opposition, who overthrew Boyer’s regime and established another government ruled by mulatto elites. Boyer and his family took refuge in France with the favor of the royal government. The Hérard government was soon toppled by the outbreaks of revolts. With a series of black generals coming into power, Haiti fell into civil wars and political chaos, until the black general Faustin Soulouque came into power in 1847 and crowned himself emperor in 1849.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶ *Annales de l’institut d’Afrique*, no.12 (December 1843): 91-92.

¹⁴⁷ *Annales de l’institut d’Afrique*, no.2 (February 1846): 12-13.

¹⁴⁸ Brière, *Haïti et la France*, 253-86.

¹⁴⁹ About the Haitian history in this period, see Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier*, 67-108.

Proslavery French journals like *le Journal du Havre* enthusiastically delivered the news of disorder from Haiti. Confused and puzzled, the *Annales de l'Institut d'Afrique* continually published the appeals of the changing Haitian presidents to the people to restore social order, only to see the crisis renew. As a result, the *Annales de l'Institut d'Afrique*'s interest in Haiti markedly diminished, and the articles on Haiti disappeared in the last issues before the February Revolution. It was the same with other antislavery journals. If there appeared any analysis of Haitian situations, they were at best apologetic, as seen in *le Siècle*.¹⁵⁰

As seen here, the political instability that afflicted Haiti in the 1840s disillusioned and estranged the French abolitionists. Quite symbolically, the two leaders of French abolitionism, Schoelcher and Isambert, with one representing the established abolitionist movement and the other leading a more radical branch of abolitionism, withdrew their support of Haiti, or at least their support of the current regime of Haiti.

The friendship between Isambert and Boyer went back to the Restoration, and during the Affaire Bissette, Isambert had earned a letter of support from Boyer, who regarded his defense of free-coloreds as upholding the cause of Haiti and colored people in the still spiteful ex-metropole.¹⁵¹ When the Haitian deputies came to Paris to negotiate of the Franco-Haitian treaty of 1825, it was Isambert counseled them. It led him to work as a legal counselor to Boyer in the *Affaire Blanchet*. His defense of Boyer made Isambert a close friend of the Haitian ruling elites

¹⁵⁰ *Le Siècle*, February 8, 1845.

¹⁵¹ "Lettres du secrétaire général du gouvernement d'Haïti, au défenseur des déportés" (January 5, 1825), Pièces justificatives no.xxxviii, published in Isambert, *Affaire des déportés de la Martinique*, 136-37.

and a defender of the Haitian cause in France. Among French abolitionists, Isambert maintained an exceptionally long communication with Haiti.

As the Haitian government conspicuously turned toward authoritarian rule, the regime of Boyer, hitherto favored in the circle of metropolitan abolitionists, began to lose ground with French liberals and republicans. When in 1841, *le Constitutionnel* issued a protest against further expansion of the army in Haiti,¹⁵² Isambert published an article on Haiti the very next day and in the same journal that evoked a series of passionate controversies. In this article he expressed his strong resentment of Haiti's present regime, which he defined as "a complete system of military despotism" to stifle civil and political liberty, and to put the black masses under the tyranny of elite mulattoes.¹⁵³ Isambert also blamed the oppressive regime of President Boyer for damaging the cause of abolitionism in Europe.

An article of refutation in defense of the Haitian regime soon followed in *le Constitutionnel*.¹⁵⁴ In response to it, Isambert insisted on confronting the truth about this country, no matter how disconcerting and sad: although Haiti had an era of progress from 1818-25, the nation had been deteriorating since 1825, when Boyer had promised an amount of indemnity beyond its budget. Since then, Boyer had tried in vain to repress complaints by fortifying the army, which led to the deficiency of farmers. Now "Haiti groans under an intolerable military regime. The constitution was suspended in fact for several years, and the national representation is a lie." Isambert complained that the president had only worsened the situations by closing the

¹⁵² *Le Constitutionnel*, July 4, 1841.

¹⁵³ Isambert, *le Constitutionnel*, July 5, 1841.

¹⁵⁴ J.-P. Vaur, *le Constitutionnel*, July 7, 1841.

country to European influences: “Moreover, why does the government repress foreign capitals and the influence of the European civilization in excluding the whites from all landownership? Today, when one abolishes slavery here and there, this exclusion is without motive; it is impolitic, it is unjust.” He concluded his article with a warning against imminent civil war in Haiti, which was virtually his farewell to the once-cherished black republic: “We believe that we fulfill our sacred duty, urgent and imperious, in addressing ourselves to the press, because we do not want to be responsible for the events.”¹⁵⁵

Against this reproach, Beaubrun Ardouin, a senator of Haiti, historian, and leader of mulatto political elites, published a long and passionate refutation.¹⁵⁶ Ardouin reprimanded his long-time abolitionist friend for having joined the proslavery spokesmen in slandering the free republic and the African race. The Haitian senator revealed a discontent with the authority that the French abolitionist had assumed for himself as a superior counselor and judge. While Isambert could not disengage the cause of abolitionism from Haiti’s duty as a testing ground of emancipation, Ardouin insisted that European abolitionists should not intrude upon the internal affairs of the already-free republic. Following this, Isambert was no longer a friend of Haiti.

The SFAE followed Isambert in 1842, as they were disturbed by Boyer’s dissolution of the newly-elected Chamber. It pointed out how the imprudent Franco-Haitian treaty in 1825 thwarted progress in Haiti, and Boyer’s military despotism only worsened the situation. As a result, the SFAE lamented, “There is no longer any genre of political liberty in this country.” The

¹⁵⁵ All quotes from Isambert, *le Constitutionnel*, July 8, 1841.

¹⁵⁶ Beaubrun Ardouin, *Réponse du sénateur B. Ardouin à lettre de M. Isambert, conseiller à la Cour de cassation de France, membre de la Chambre des Députés* (Port-au-Prince: Pinard, 1842). See Brière, *Haïti et la France*, 274-76.

SFAE sounded a warning against the impending political crisis and advised the French not to blame the Haitians for this approaching political disaster, but Boyer and those in power.¹⁵⁷ As the coup d'état and civil wars ensued from 1843, the predictions of the French abolitionists seemed to prove right.

Another important French abolitionist who turned his back upon Haiti was Schoelcher. When L'Instant won the prize of the SFAE, Schoelcher obtained a special comment from the SFAE, which signaled the beginning of his career as an abolitionist. In Schoelcher's monograph published in 1840, he included a section entitled "The Negroes in the Civilized Regime of Haiti" as evidence of the equal capability of the Africans.¹⁵⁸ Going against the colonial party that stated that the present state of Haiti proved "Negroes are uncivilizable," he cautiously pleaded that the cause of Haiti was not lost for good: "However what country, what race, has thus made in thirty years the progress which one demands?"¹⁵⁹ Schoelcher depicted Haiti as a nation crippled and handicapped by the onerous legacies of slavery and the enormous amount of indemnity that the French government had so unjustly demanded.

This excusatory tone was dropped after his trip to Haiti in 1841.¹⁶⁰ Schoelcher was the first French abolitionist who visited Haiti in person, and his pan-American tour in 1840-41 provided both plentiful sources and authenticating eyewitness testimonies for his subsequent

¹⁵⁷ *Bulletin de SFAE*, "Situation d'Haïti (mai 1842)," no.19 (1842): 112-14.

¹⁵⁸ Schoelcher, *Abolition de l'esclavage*, 112-15.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 112.

¹⁶⁰ About this trip, see Nelly Schmidt, "Un témoignage original sur Haïti au XIXe siècle: celui de l'abolitionniste Victor Schoelcher" in *Jahrbuch für Geschichte von Staat, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft Latein amerikas* 28 (Cologne: University of Cologne, 1991).

works on colonial slavery. The opinion of Isambert and other abolitionists on the state of Haiti owed much to Schoelcher.¹⁶¹ After his trip, Schoelcher published in 1843 two volumes of *Colonies étrangères et Haïti* in which he gave a detailed account of the state of the country. Describing his arrival at the shore of Haiti, he acknowledged both his excitement and anxiety, stimulated by an abolitionist's desire to see the living testimony of abolitionism:

I desired, I hoped, I feared. As the ship penetrated into the great port of Le Cap, I was occupied by a sort of inquietude ever increasing; I am going to see the first civilized Negro people. This was the African race taking their seat in the milieu of the civilization that was about to appear in front of me. Will I find what I have been repeatedly told in all forms: disorder and barbarism? Will Haitians give reason to those who say they are uncivilizable? Could their condition shake my belief in the perfectibility of all human races? This island, where emancipation had its most terrible and its most beautiful triumph, what will she tell me? How will she inspire me?¹⁶²

However "The first footprint that we made in Haiti has something frightening, especially for an abolitionist," because he could find only shambles and ruins in the once brilliant city of Le Cap.¹⁶³ Continuing his trip around Haiti, Schoelcher could not hide his disappointment at the situation: the despotic government, the lack of public service and education, miserable conditions of life, decline in public morals, and international isolation. Lest the proslavery party abused his testimonies for confirming their color prejudice, Schoelcher endeavored throughout the book to separate the deteriorating conditions of Haiti from the innate character of the blacks. Schoelcher put the blame on President Boyer and the mulatto governing elites. He charged Boyer's despotic

¹⁶¹ Isambert, *le Constitutionnel*, July 8, 1841.

¹⁶² Schoelcher, *Colonies étrangères et Haïti*, tome.2, 171.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

regime with intentionally suppressing the black masses in ignorance and insolence in order to preserve the mulattoes' oligarchy over the black majority. He cried:

No, no, it is not the Haitian people, but really its rulers that we should accuse of this intellectual misery. After having conquered its independence, the glorious free nation entrusted the executive power with the task to make it march towards civilization, and it was basely betrayed. The people did everything a people could do. Shame on those in power and not on the people.¹⁶⁴

Thus Schoelcher distinguished the black masses from the mulatto power group whom he deemed as having turned into another set of tyrants after the expulsion of the whites. He labeled the latter as “*la faction jaune* (the yellow faction)” who exploited “*le peuple noir* (the black people).”¹⁶⁵

More problematic for Schoelcher was that the present regime of Haiti was not only tormenting the Haitian populace, but also doing a great disservice to the historical vocation of Haiti as the first nation of freed blacks, which French liberals and republicans had fashioned since the Restoration and the Haitian ruling elite had eagerly endorsed.

What have you [ruling elite of Haiti] done for the young nation that you had been charged with leading? No more schools: those that Toussaint and Christophe had opened, you voluntarily closed them; no more roads, no more commerce, no more industry, no more agriculture, no more relations with Europe, no more organization, no more association, no more nothing, there remains nothing. St-Domingue disappeared, but Haiti has not yet come into being. The republic is stuck in the middle of the rubble left behind by the War of Independence. Isn't it you, only you, its actual rulers, that had deprived her of the progress with which she should have delighted humanity, and of the crown of the civilization whose black face is sadly lost.

What role does Haiti play in the Antilles, where she could, and have to acquire such a great influence? Nothing.....It seems that they try to make Haiti forgotten by the rest of the world. Don't you have an obligation to the world to talk about her? Isn't it a shame that you did not take any part in the effort of Europe for emancipation, that you did not even send any expression of support or sympathy to the friends of liberation,

¹⁶⁴ Schoelcher, *Colonies étrangères et Haïti*, tome. 2, 207.

¹⁶⁵ Schoelcher, *Colonies étrangères et Haïti*, tome. 2, 219.

and that, in this republic of emancipated slaves, there is not even a society for abolition?.....

And, think about it, the crime of Haitian barbarism is fatal not only to your republic, but one could call it a universal crime. Haiti, the first African people in direct relation with Europe, ready to take arms against the adversaries of the Negro race.....

And would it be necessary to remind you of it, Haitians? There are still a lot of black slaves and a lot of yellow slaves; one looks at what freed Saint-Domingue does, in order to know if it would be not dangerous to emancipate them, and your participation in progress should be the signal of their deliverance. Don't you know it then?: it is always your example that the partisans of slavery with bad faith oppose against us. The Americans of the southern states, and the French and Spanish planters, when they want to justify not consenting to abolition, point to your great island, saying: "You see that emancipating our four million slaves would create four million idlers." This beautiful center where all the hopes of liberation of the Antilles should come to converge, but they designate it as a cursed place where liberty became indolence!¹⁶⁶

Schoelcher thus raged that the mulatto elites of Haiti committed "a universal crime" by betraying their abolitionist duty toward the progress of civilization, European abolitionists, and other slaves still bound in servitude.

The proslavery party was overjoyed by the firsthand testimony against Haiti from the lips of a prominent abolitionist, although Schoelcher took great pains to prevent that kind of argument. The sources from Schoelcher's book were turned upside down in the proslavery discourse, making the example of Haiti an embarrassment for French abolitionists. In the Mackau controversy in 1845, the opposing parties conflicted with each other once again over the real situation of Haiti. The proslavery spokesmen came up with the degeneration of Saint-Domingue as a still unbeatable proof against abolition. Although abolitionists still attempted to refute those proslavery/anti-Haitian arguments by pointing to the population growth in Haiti, they were past the time when abolitionists presented Haiti as a land of hope and promise.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁶ Schoelcher, *Colonies étrangères et Haïti*, tome.2, 242-43.

¹⁶⁷ For example, see Tocqueville in CD on May 31, 1845, reproduced in Schmidt, *Abolitionnistes de l'esclavage*, 543; Passy in CP on April 3, 1845, reproduced in *L'Abolitionniste français*, no.3-5 (1845):

Comte de Beugnot tried to protest by arguing that the real situation in Haiti was not so important in comparison to its symbolic value: “Do you believe that the inhabitants of Saint-Domingue are willing to retake the chains that they broke, in spite of their so-called misfortunes? Saint-Domingue will be always for the slaves of these colonies an object of excitement and envy!”¹⁶⁸ Jollivet countered such an attempt with scorn and said that the “the veritable situation of Saint-Domingue” was illuminated by none other than Schoelcher who was praised as a “pure abolitionist.”¹⁶⁹

This kind of confrontation was reiterated later in *la Réforme* (May 4, 1847). Schoelcher had to wrestle with the colonial delegates, who never ceased to charge Haiti with the lack of labor and cultivation. Grimly acknowledging the failure of Haiti as an example of emancipation, Schoelcher argued that it should not be considered to be the failure of abolitionism, but a particular case resulting from local situations:

We do not want to defend Haiti, we know everything that one can think about her actual condition, but we also know that one would be able to rightly retract what they dared to say against the blacks to our proud planters themselves.....Thus do not insult the black race any more in the name of Haiti; the misfortunes of this republic resulted from particular causes, from the social vices that were inherited from slavery, and not at all from her inhabitants’ own characters.¹⁷⁰

Other abolitionist commentators were so dissatisfied with the repeated political debacles in Haiti that they questioned Haiti’s capability to make her own way toward civilization. Wasn’t

149-50.

¹⁶⁸ Comte de Beugnot, CP April 3, 1845, quoted from Thomas Jollivet, *Les colonies françaises devant la Chambre des Pairs* (Paris: Imprimerie de Guiraudet et Jouaust, 1845), 18.

¹⁶⁹ Jollivet, *Les colonies françaises devant la Chambre des Pairs*, 19-21.

¹⁷⁰ *La Réforme*, May 4, 1847.

it time that France reembraced and helped the former colony out of its miseries? The proslavery party had already insisted on French intervention in Haiti by way of reconquest or the occupation of a Haitian port, on the grounds of Haiti's insolvency and the lack of labor and cultivation.¹⁷¹

Romuald Le Pelletier de Saint-Rémy, a French commentator on colonial affairs born in Martinique and a *Le Revue des deux mondes* contributor,¹⁷² published a long monograph that offered a permanent solution to the chronic conflict between France and Haiti over "double debt."¹⁷³ According to him, there was no doubt about the definitive failure of Haitian regime after the coup d'état of 1843. Only the intervention of the white—French—race could put an end to the constant anarchy derived from the nature of the blacks.¹⁷⁴ For this purpose he suggested a neocolonial project to occupy the Haitian port of Samana as a French *entrepôt*, as a payment of Haitian debts and to guide Haiti toward civilization.¹⁷⁵

On their part, abolitionists suggested a kind of 'humanitarian intervention' on the grounds of Haiti's failure to maintain a civilized regime. In 1844, observing the political situation of Haiti, Lamartine expressed regret at a missed opportunity: if France had emancipated

¹⁷¹ See B. Vendryes, *De l'indemnité de Saint-Domingue* (1839); *Saint-Domingue* (Rouen: A. Péron, 1846).

¹⁷² Philippe Zacaïr conducted a close analysis of the references to Haiti in *Revue des deux mondes* and *L'Illustration* from 1830 to the late nineteenth-century. See Philippe Zacaïr, "Représentations d'Haïti dans la presse française du dix-neuvième siècle," *French Colonial History* 6 (2005): 103-18.

¹⁷³ Romuald Le Pelletier de Saint-Rémy, *Saint-Domingue: étude et solution nouvelle de la question haïtienne* (Paris: Arthus Bertrand, 1846), livre I, ix-x. He also published a short version as "Le république d'Haïti: ses dernières révolutions et sa situation actuelle," *le Revue des deux mondes*, tome 12 (1845): 662-85.

¹⁷⁴ Le Pelletier de Saint-Rémy, *Saint-Domingue*, livre II, 261-87.

¹⁷⁵ Le Pelletier de Saint-Rémy, *Saint-Domingue*, livre IV, 242-68.

the slaves in French colonies, then the Haitians would have willingly returned to France.¹⁷⁶ Later in 1847, upon seeing the delegates of the new Haitian government arrive in Paris, *le Siècle* expressed their skepticism on the prospect of another new regime. According to the journal, the misfortune of the Haitian people lay in the fact that they were left to their own devices before they were ready: “they took liberty before being capable of using it, and they were led by the conflict into proscribing the race [whites] that should have served as a guide for them towards civilization.” *Le Siècle* suggested the intervention of Europeans as a remedy to the Haitian predicament: “The law of God wishes that the races that compose the human species educate one another, and if Haiti does not conform to this law, either by placing herself under the protection of her former metropole, or by according to the whites the right of property and naturalization, it is much feared that her situation will be slow to improve.”¹⁷⁷ The proslavery and antislavery parties were thus joined by their conviction that only France could return Haiti to the rank of civilized nations.

Haiti, therefore, once a promising testing ground for emancipation and African perfectibility, became a “failed state” for the formerly eager French observers. To salvage the antislavery cause from the wreckage of Haiti, French abolitionists contended that Haiti had failed for “particular” reasons or some localized conditions, not due to any fundamental defect of abolitionism or the character of the “black race.” French abolitionists no longer needed to refer to Haiti as a pioneer of emancipation. In a petition to the two chambers issued on August 30, 1847, the SFAE deplored how France, the cradle of liberty, had fallen behind in the march toward

¹⁷⁶ Brière, *Haïti et la France*, 297.

¹⁷⁷ *Le Siècle*, August 11, 1847.

civilization. The platform of emancipation was no longer monopolized by Haiti, but now crowded by Britain, Sweden, Denmark, and, most strikingly, Tunisia under Muslim rule.¹⁷⁸

As a consequence, Haiti was dropped from the annals of emancipation. The French abolitionists now concentrated on preventing Haiti's bad reputation from obstructing the cause of emancipation in France. As seen in Isambert and Schoelcher, their solution to this embarrassing example was to differentiate the Haitian black populace from the mulatto power elites whom they blamed for the failure of the Haitian state. Since then, French abolitionists could still defend the potential capability of the Haitians, but hardly ever stood to defend the actual state of Haiti. The only positive aspect left by this miscarried black saga was Toussaint Louverture, a lone leader whose genius and virtue had almost succeeded in liberating the island from its past of slavery.¹⁷⁹

Conclusion

The French antislavery discourse was transformed after the July Revolution and British emancipation. The revolutionary precedents in colonial affairs, once regarded as dangerous and destructive, were reinstated in French antislavery discourse. Taking advantage of favorable conditions after 1830, the French abolitionists rearranged revolutionary memories and installed the French Revolution and the decree of abolition of 1794 as the genesis of universal liberty.

¹⁷⁸ *Pétition pour l'abolition complète et immédiate de l'esclavage, adressée à MM. Les membres de la Chambre des pairs et de la Chambre des députés, par les soins de la Société française pour l'abolition de l'esclavage* (August 30, 1847), 194-95; *L'Abolitionniste français*, no.6 (1847): 462-78.

¹⁷⁹ In his last years Schoelcher wrote a biography of the black general. Victor Schoelcher, *Vie de Toussaint Louverture* (Paris: Paul Ollendorf, 1889).

Their narrative of revolutionary antislavery legitimized the abolition of slavery as the antidote to slave revolt and colonial degeneration, justified metropolitan authority in colonial matters against the old system of colonial particularism, and embedded emancipation in the narrative of the French nation and French liberty.

In the process, the Haitian Revolution was detached from the grand narrative of emancipation and the history of the first abolition. It became a one-time event derived from local conditions, which could not be repeated in other colonies. Instead, as French abolitionists highlighted the Saint-Domingue slave revolts to threaten the still-hesitant government and intransigent *colons*, the Haitian Revolution was to be remembered in France mainly as an embodiment of colonial violence, occupying a pivotal place in the long history of slave rebellions in the New World.

At the same time, Haiti's political instability in the 1840s critically contributed to estranging French abolitionists from Haiti and wrecked their hope for its universal historical vocation. As the utopian projection made by French abolitionists made around Haiti eventually disintegrated, it was excluded from the French antislavery idea of liberty and civilization. Colonial spokesmen and French abolitionists came close to each other in their solution to Haiti's unending predicament, which was to relocate the country under the neocolonial tutelage of France. As a result, by the late 1840s, the Haitian Revolution and Haiti were eliminated from the glorious history of emancipation, making a decisive step for "silencing the Haitian Revolution" in the ex-metropole.

Although the political situation significantly improved for the antislavery campaign, the abolition of slavery did not come until the birth of the Second Republic. After the extraordinarily

successful 1845 campaign ended with a disappointing compromise, the initiative of abolitionism was seized by republican abolitionists in support of immediate abolition and popular mobilization. Rising republican abolitionism took over the grand narrative of the French Revolution as a genesis of universal liberty and liberal discourse of French freedom, but it situated the endpoint of the abolitionist narrative in the future republic, instead of the constitutional monarchy that could not fulfill the mission of the French Revolution. The abolitionists of the July Monarchy thus prepared the script for the upcoming abolition of slavery in the Revolution of 1848. It was a revised version of revolutionary abolitionism and French-given universal liberty that lacked the Terror and the intervention of colonial subjects.

However, metropolitan abolitionists could not “pin down” the meanings of the Haitian Revolution for good. At the time of the second abolition, metropolitan abolitionists not only lacked the ability to control the ways in which colonial slaves appropriated the insurgent memory of the Haitian Revolution anew, but also could not stop themselves from feeling threatened by the terrifying images of the colonial revolution they had so eagerly advertised. In the spring of 1848, when the news of impending abolition brought about disorder in French colonies, the memories of the Haitian Revolution would return to life both for colonial slaves and metropolitan policy makers, pressing the agenda of immediate abolition and general liberty.

CHAPTER V. A Critic of Metropolitan Abolitionism: Cyrille Bissette and the Abolitionism of the *hommes de couleur libres* from French Colonies

Introduction: Historiography and Questions

Born in French Martinique to mulatto parents, Cyrille Bissette (1795-1858) built a metropolitan political career on his status as a victim of colonial injustice. He was a wealthy merchant in the city of Fort-Royal, Martinique in 1823 when the colonial court convicted him and his two mulatto friends, Volny and Fabien, of spreading “seditious words” about the equal rights of free people of color. As punishment, they were branded in Martinique and deported to France, where Bissette brought their case to the Parisian Court of Cassation and made it a *cause célèbre* of the Restoration. Although the Court of Cassation finally annulled the judgment of the Court of Martinique in 1827, the battle was not yet over for Bissette and his two friends. The Court of Cassation remanded the case to the Court of Guadeloupe, which was no less hostile to the colonial deportees. The sentence of the two friends was suspended, but Bissette, who was cast as the ringleader, was still expelled from Martinique. Bissette and his friends returned to Paris for another appeal to the Court of Cassation, which was rejected this time. Bissette settled in Paris and launched his political career in the metropole.

During the July Monarchy, Bissette was one of the most active and militant abolitionists in France. He bombarded the two Chambers and the royal government with petitions and protests, and incessantly engaged in disputes with procolonial spokesmen. Publishing his own journal, *Revue des colonies*, and a great number of pamphlets, he was one of the most assiduous writers in French abolitionism. Famous as a fighter for liberty, he returned to his native

Martinique after the abolition of slavery in 1848 and won in the first election under the Second Republic against none other than Schoelcher.¹

After his death in 1858, however, Bissette left few traces in either the official chronicle of emancipation or the collective memory of Martinique, yielding his place to Schoelcher “the Liberator.” The reason for this amnesia concerning Bissette is not very difficult to understand. He was isolated from the metropolitan abolitionist circle in Paris. In spite of his fame as an antislavery fighter, he never enrolled in the SFAE, as he was barred by the tight social network of French political elites and could not afford the high membership fee.² He fell out with the leading French abolitionists, including Isambert, who had been his friend, and Schoelcher.

Bissette’s intense rivalry with Schoelcher contributed in particular to his demotion to the role of “villain” in the “*mythe schoelcherien*” that would dominate the narrative of emancipation in both the metropole and the colonies. During his political career, Bissette clashed with Schoelcher twice, something that disturbed the circle of French abolitionists. The first time, during 1842-46, Bissette passionately refuted Schoelcher’s books on his trip to the Antilles and Haiti that were published in the early 1840s. The second conflict happened during 1848-52 over

¹ About Bissette’s abolitionist career, see Jennings, *French Anti-slavery*; Jennings, “Cyrille Bissette, Radical Black French Abolitionist”; Schmidt, *Abolitionnistes de l’esclavage*, 247-263; Stella Pâme, *Cyrille Bissette; le martyr de la liberté* (Fort-de-France, Martinique: Désormeaux, 1999); Mercer Cook, *Five French Negro Authors* (Washington, DC: Associated Publishers, 1943), 38-71; Chris Bongie, ““C’est du papier ou de l’Histoire en marche?”: The Revolutionary Compromises of a Martiniquan *homme de couleur* Cyrille-Charles-Auguste Bissette,” *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* 23, no.4 (2002): 439-73; Chris Bongie, “Chapter 6. 1835, or ‘Le troisième siècle’” in *Islands and Exiles: the Creole Identities of Post/colonial Literature* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998).

² To be enrolled in the SFAE, one had to be introduced by two other members and be also nominated by the central committee. Asked why Bissette was not a member of the SFAE, it was said that Gustave de Beaumont, a celebrated liberal, replied, “Why! He is a man of color.” See Seymour Drescher, *Dilemmas of Democracy: Tocqueville and Modernization* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1968), 163.

the electoral campaigns in French colonies, in which Bissette was matched against Schoelcher and republicans. More than anything, this last political campaign greatly discredited Bissette in the eyes of both the metropolitan republicans and the colonial people. When Bissette teamed up with the conservative party and his former enemy—*békés*³—in the Second Republic, he estranged himself from the colored populace of Martinique for whom he had spoken. In the words of Mercer Cook, the man “held all the best cards but played the last one badly,”⁴ which cost him the title of liberator. His posthumous reputation suffered severely from this last move, as seen in a comment by Aimé Césaire in 1951 that Bissette was a traitor to his own people and a sycophant of the white planters.⁵

As a result, Bissette has been an obscure figure for a long time in the historiography of French abolitionism. The only full-scale biography of him was written by Stella Pâme, a Martinican historian; her doctoral thesis at the Sorbonne was published in Martinique in 1999, awaking some interest.⁶ Being a detailed archival research, her work concentrates on reconstructing the little-known abolitionist career of Bissette. Her book focused on recovering lost information and adopted a largely neutral tone in relation to Bissette’s tumultuous political career.

³ A Creole term to describe the descendants of French settlers, more conventionally referred to as the elite planter group.

⁴ Cook, *Five French Negro Authors*, 38.

⁵ Bongie, “A Street Named Bissette,” 226.

⁶ Pâme, *Cyrille Bissette*.

It was Lawrence Jennings who more actively tried to assess Bissette's role in the French antislavery movement.⁷ He rightly argues that Bissette "should be recognized as the first important advocate of complete and immediate emancipation in July Monarchy France."⁸ As Jennings emphasizes, whereas the SFAE did not embrace immediatism until the late 1840s, Bissette had been an outspoken supporter of immediate abolition without any period of apprenticeship since the mid 1830s. This position is supported by Nelly Schmidt's book on French abolitionism, in which she compares Bissette to Schoelcher, "Bissette and Schoelcher utilized for the same purpose the same arguments, against slavery, in favor of the transformation of social relationships in the colonies. But Bissette expressed them earlier than Schoelcher and with the effective support of a regularly published review."⁹

Relocating Bissette at the heart of metropolitan French abolitionism, Jennings identifies Bissette's notorious feud with Schoelcher and other abolitionists as the characteristics of the French antislavery movement, which was operated through individual ties within a narrow circle of Parisian political elites. Bissette's repeated quarrels testified to the factional and disunited nature of French abolitionism and its narrowly-defined social background. Bissette's financial difficulties and his outspoken language and manners disturbed the decorum of the circle of French abolitionists composed of "respectable" men. Thus in Jennings' estimate, "Bissette stood out among French abolitionists for the radicalism of his approach to emancipation, but he also

⁷ Jennings, *French Antislavery*; and Jennings, "Cyrille Bissette, Radical Black French Abolitionist."

⁸ Jennings, "Cyrille Bissette," 50.

⁹ Schmidt, *Abolitionnistes de l'esclavage*, 257.

exemplified one of the great weaknesses of the French anti-slavery movement, its peculiarism and factionalism.”¹⁰

Through brilliant scholarship, Jennings’s work recovers the otherwise forgotten role of Bissette in French abolitionism and restores him to his rightful place as the vanguard of French abolitionism or, more precisely, of immediatism. At the same time, however, his reevaluation of Bissette confines the multifarious aspects of Bissette’s political career to the organizational and discursive track of the mainstream French antislavery movement, thereby assimilating him into metropolitan abolitionism. I suggest that there existed other dimensions of Bissette that do not conform so easily to the framework of metropolitan abolitionism. In particular, this chapter intends to interpret Bissette’s conflict with Schoelcher and other French abolitionists in a different way—as betraying a level of difference between Bissette and metropolitan abolitionists that runs deeper than his personal resentment. In spite of all his tenacious efforts to be acknowledged in the metropolitan political scene, Bissette, standing between France and his native Martinique, had another constituency and another identity. Like the intermediary status of the free people of color in the colonial system of color, Bissette’s abolitionism was built upon the in-between position of the *hommes de couleur libres*.

Some literary critics interested in Caribbean literature or francophone black diaspora have recently begun to pay attention to Bissette.¹¹ Leading this rediscovery is Chris Bongie, who

¹⁰ Jennings, “Cyrille Bissette,” 50.

¹¹ See Bongie, “C’est du papier ou de l’Histoire en marche?” ; Bongie, “Chapter 6. 1835, or ‘Le troisième siècle’” in *Islands and Exiles*; Bongie, “A Street Named Bissette” reprinted in *Friends and Enemies: The Scribal Politics of Post-colonial Literature* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), 185-220; Kelly Duke Bryant, “Black But Not African: Francophone Black Diaspora and the *Revue des Colonies*, 1834-1842,” *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 40, no. 2 (2007): 251-82; Anna Brickhouse, “A Francophone View of Comparative American Literature: *Revue des Colonies* and the

singles Bissette out as a harbinger of postcolonial—or “post/colonial” in his own term—subjectivity.¹² According to Bongie, Bissette’s works were “modern” and ahead of his time in two senses: first, his discourse anticipates postcolonial revisionism by incessantly intervening in the standard historical narrative of the colonizing power, and restoring the otherwise forgotten history of the colonized people; and second, Bissette’s infamous discord with Schoelcher provoked “a debate about the propriety of ethnic/racial representation (“Who can speak for/as the Other?”).¹³ Bissette’s writings and politics displayed points that have been accentuated by other postcolonial critics: identity politics, hybridity, subjectivity, and representation. Yet in the process, Bissette also reproduced the main assumptions of both proslavery ideologies and mainstream metropolitan abolitionism. As Bongie insists, it is very misleading to “translate this problematic *homme de couleur* into a heroic precursor of a fully enlightened and truly postcolonial poetics and politics.”¹⁴ Highlighting the complexity of Bissette’s position, Bongie urges us to “assess undogmatically the difficult mixture of resistance and complicity that made these achievements possible.”¹⁵

This chapter intends to build on Bongie’s analysis that stresses the discursive and political complexity embedded in Bissette’s abolitionism. However, rather than treating Bissette

Translations of Abolition,” in *Transamerican Literary Relations and the Nineteenth-century Public Sphere* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

¹² For Bongie, it is not possible to draw a clear line between colonial and postcolonial time and space. This neologism accentuates the opaque relationship or “epistemic complicity” between the two. See *Islands and Exiles*, 12-13.

¹³ Bongie, “C’est du papier”, 441-42.

¹⁴ Ibid., 442.

¹⁵ Ibid., 444.

as a prognosticator of postcolonialism, this chapter approaches his controversial career with a focus on his position in the French antislavery debate and his entangled relationships with proslavery and antislavery camps. Eagerly intervening in the ongoing controversies on colonial reforms and slavery, Bissette strove to make for himself and “his people” a place in the French political body. In the process, he both utilized and defied the dominant languages of the proslavery and antislavery camps, passionately confronting the spokesmen of both. It makes it difficult to define Bissette’s politics in any single fixed term. This chapter inquires into how Bissette and his colleagues carved out the third space between the proslavery party and the metropolitan abolitionists, between metropole and colonies, and between whiteness and blackness. In the process they forged another brand of abolitionism in which the free people of color could play a greater role. Eventually, understanding his politics during the July Monarchy will help us make sense of his postemancipation career in Martinique, which seemed to his former supporters the act of either a turncoat or an opportunistic power monger.

In what follows, the chapter first investigates the political context of the early July Monarchy, when Bissette presented himself as a representative of the free people of color and campaigned for colonial reforms. From the mid-1830s, we can observe his evolution from a spokesman for color equality to a radical abolitionist. Antislavery and antisegregation (or antiracism) were not naturally on the same side. The evolution of Bissette displays how and why the mulatto elites’ struggle for equal rights got closer to abolitionism, and also how their abolitionism produced a distinct position for the relationship between race and nation.

In order to investigate his abolitionist career, this chapter concentrates on two sites of documental research, together with other additional sources. On one hand, the hitherto

underestimated journal *Revue des colonies*, founded by Bissette in 1834, constituted a crucial channel by which Bissette and his *gens de couleur libres* colleagues communicated their ideas with one another and also with the metropolitan public opinion, until the journal was discontinued in 1842 due to financial difficulties. On the other hand, his consistent contention with Schoelcher from 1842 on produced a significant amount of materials with which we can inquire into Bissette's complicated relationship with metropolitan abolitionism.

In analyzing these sources, the chapter highlights how Bissette provided different narratives and different meanings for the French and Haitian Revolutions, and how and for what purposes he defended the undeniably deteriorating conditions of Haiti. Here I investigate how Bissette's abolitionism imagined the triangular relationship of three places—France, Africa, and Haiti—weaving them into a transatlantic design of liberation. In the process, this chapter examines how Bissette envisioned “Frenchness” and French citizenship in relation to race, colonies, and “Africanness.” It demonstrates that assimilationism developed not only from the metropole and French colonial officials, but also from the “*sang-mêles* (mixed-blood)” colonial elites. Ultimately, by reconstructing Bissette's forgotten but crucial abolitionist career, this chapter aims to widen the scope of French abolitionism beyond its narrow boundary of metropolitan France and illuminate the diversity of antislavery politics within the French Empire.

***1830-34: The July Monarchy's Colonial Reforms and
Bissette's Confrontations with the White Colonial Delegates***

Considering that Bissette had been severely persecuted by the ultraroyalist regime and plantocracy, it is not surprising that Bissette and his colleagues enthusiastically welcomed the July Revolution with much hope for change. Bissette himself was decorated by virtue of his partaking in the Three Glorious Days.¹⁶ By then, Bissette was also considered a quasi-delegate of the free people of color in the capital. Excited by the 1830 Revolution, Bissette in his pamphlet condemned the planter class' resistance to the inevitable tide of change and said with confidence that the regenerated France of 1830 would listen to the entreaties of the *gens de couleur libres*.¹⁷

The liberal monarchy complied with this heightened expectation and prepared quite early for a reformist plan to ameliorate the colonial system of segregation by colors. Bissette was summoned into the Ministry of the Marine and Colonies to give counsel on colonial reforms.¹⁸ General Sébastiani, the new chief of the Ministry of Marine and Colonies, was a well-known liberal and a supporter of colonial reform and in 1830, he made it clear that "Concerning the status of the free people of colonies, the government recognized that free people of color could no longer exist in different conditions; thus, the legislation that will be presented to you will offer the occasion to consecrate this principle, that all the free men, no matter what class, no matter what color they may be, are equal in front of law."¹⁹ This governmental initiative was very much due to "a consideration of public order," because the metropole was afraid that the dissatisfied

¹⁶ Pâme, *Cyrille Bissette*, 120.

¹⁷ Bissette, *A un colon, sur l'émancipation civile et politique appliquée aux colonies* (Paris: Doyen, 1830).

¹⁸ Jacques Adélaïde-Merlande, ed., *L'Historial antillais*, vol.3 (Fort-de-France: Société Dajani, 1981), 256-57.

¹⁹ AP, CD on September 25, 1830, t.63, 679; *le Courrier français*, August 26, 1830.

gens de couleur libres might unite with the black masses to overthrow the colonial order as they had in Saint-Domingue.²⁰

The modified Charter of 1830 elucidated that the colonies would be governed by “particular laws.” It still separated the colonies from the metropolitan system, but at least placed them under the jurisdiction of Parliament for the first time since the French Revolution. A series of legal arrangements followed: the ordinance of September 7, 1830 stipulated that all the acts of marriage should be inscribed in the same registers regardless of color; the royal ordinance of February 24, 1831 repealed all the colonial rulings that violated the full exercise of civil rights by free people of color.²¹ Although colonial officials were still very cautious about implementing decrees from metropolitan France, the time-old system of color segregation in the French colonies seemed to be being seriously challenged.

Colonial planters quickly organized a counterattack against the governmental initiative for colonial reforms. The delegates from the two major sugar colonies, Martinique and Guadeloupe, vehemently protested against the government’s “destructive” strategy towards the colonies, through a publicity campaign and the Chamber lobby. Among them, Lacharrière and Foignet, the delegates from Guadeloupe, became archenemies of Bissette. Planters attributed the colonies’ social disturbances of the early 1830s to the metropole’s imprudent motion of colonial reforms.²² Characteristic of the *colons*’ discourse, a pamphlet published in Paris blamed the metropolitan government for repeating the mistake that had brought about the Saint-Domingue

²⁰ Jean-François Niort, “Les libres de couleur dans la société coloniale ou la ségrégation à l’œuvre (XVIIe-XIVe siècles) in *Bulletin de la société d’histoire de la Guadeloupe* 131, (2002) : 81.

²¹ Adélaïde-Merlande, ed., *L’Historial antillais*, 257.

²² Lacharrière and Foignet, *le Temps* in June 27, 1831.

Revolution: “[The government] has also turned all of their [free people of color] hopes toward liberty, and liberty for them is inseparable from fire and massacre; Saint-Domingue has thoroughly proven that.”²³

Bissette in his turn argued with his friend Fabien that planters, in their futile effort to attribute the 1830 colonial disturbance to the slaves and free people of color, were damaging colonial justice through arbitrary arrests and cruel punishments.²⁴ In their heated dispute, Bissette and the colonial party avidly exchanged calumnies and threats, which escalated to the level of personal affronts.²⁵ This mirrored the situation in the French colonies, where the tension between white planter elites and the *hommes de couleur libres*, much strained by the disputes over the July Monarchy legal reforms, often erupted into street fights, duels, and lawsuits.²⁶

In spite of the *colons*’ antagonism, the regime change gave Bissette and his colleagues a chance to redefine their status in the French Empire. Bissette emphasized that free people of color had proved their entitlement to equal rights by their actions. Bissette argued against the planters’ assertion that mulattoes and black slaves were all the same, “dangerous” class, and declared that the free people of color had always been true subjects of France at the time of slave

²³ Schloss, “The February 1831 Slave Uprising in Martinique and the Policing of White Identity,” 215.

²⁴ Fabien et Bissette, *Réponse de MM. Bissette et Fabien, de la Martinique, à MM. De la Lacharrière et Foignet, de la Guadeloupe* (Paris: A. Mie, 1831).

²⁵ Bissette, *Calomnies devenues vérités, ou réponse au pamphlet de MM. Lacharrière et Foignet, délégués de colons de la Guadeloupe* (Paris: A. Mie, 1831) ; Foignet, *Lettre de M. Foignet, délégué des colons de la Guadeloupe, au rédacteur du Journal du Havre, en réponse à MM. Bissette et Fabien* (August 4, 1831 from *Journal du Havre*) ; Bissette, *Réponse à la brochure de M. Fleuriau, délégué des colons de la Martinique* (Paris: A. Mie, 1831); Bissette and Fabien, *Réponse de MM. Bissette et Fabien à M. de Lacharrière* (Paris: A. Mie, 1831).

²⁶ Rebecca Hartkopf Schloss, *Sweet Liberty: The Final Days of Slavery in Martinique* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 131-51.

rebellions, for example when the slave riot broke out in Carbet, Martinique in 1822.²⁷ At that time, Bissette himself served in the local militia and participated in suppressing the slave revolt.²⁸

The most significant point in Bissette's project for reforming the colonies was the representation of the free people of color in metropolitan politics. Colonial representation had been a thorny issue since 1789: during the French Revolution, both white planters and mulatto elites struggled to acquire their voice in the metropolitan assembly. As the Bourbon monarchy brought the colonies back to the realm of royal prerogatives, colonial planters lobbied the royal government through personal ties. Being a passionate supporter of constitutionalism, Bissette reproached the colonial party for attempting to take a detour around the true representative of the French nation, namely the Chamber of Deputies, and opting for a direct appeal to the king.²⁹ Any important decision on colonial matters, he argued, should be made in Parliament, not in the monarch's back rooms as was done in the Old Regime.

Having an appropriate voice in the representative body therefore became a vital concern in the era of constitutional monarchy. Bissette bitterly protested against the lack of the *gens de couleur libres* in the existing colonial delegation. In 1831, a total 109,916 people were living on Martinique: 9,362 were registered as whites, 14,055 as *gens de couleur libres*, and 86,499 as slaves. The population of the free people of color had almost doubled by the late July

²⁷ Bissette, *A un colon, sur l'émancipation civile et politique appliquée aux colonies*, 22.

²⁸ Jennings, "Cyrille Bissette," 50.

²⁹ Bissette, *Lettre de M. Bissette à maître L. Cicéron, avocat à Saint-Pierre* (Paris: Herhan, 1833), 1-2.

Monarchy.³⁰ The free-colored population outnumbered the white, and many of them were decent property owners, as Bissette stressed.³¹ However, the colonial delegates and courts were exclusively composed of whites or, more precisely, the representatives of elite planter families. The *Conseils coloniaux* (colonial councils), a representative body of colonial people, united to curb the metropole's drive for colonial reforms. There was no official channel for the voice of free people of color to reach the metropole.

	Total	Slaves	Free People of Color	White
Guadeloupe	129,778	87,087	32,745	9,946
Martinique	122,691	75,339	37,862	9,470
Guyana	19,495	12,525	650	6,370

Table 2-Population statistics for three French colonies around 1846³²

While expecting an amendment to this situation in the pending colonial reforms, Bissette and his friends presented themselves as “mandataries” of free people of color in Martinique.³³ In 1831, Bissette and his friends Fabien and Volny founded *la Société d'hommes de couleur* in Paris.³⁴ Joining forces with Bissette, Mondésir Richard stood as a mandatar of the colored people of Guadeloupe.³⁵ Both Bissette and Richard insisted that the system of color segregation

³⁰ For the population census of Martinique in the nineteenth century, see table I in Schloss, *Sweet Liberty*, i.

³¹ Adélaïde-Merlande, ed., *L'Historial antillais*, vol.3, 305-6.

³² Reproduced from Schmidt, *Abolitionnistes de l'esclavage*, 304.

³³ Bissette, *Mémoire au ministre de la Marine et des colonies et à la Commission de législation coloniale, sur les améliorations législatives et organiques à apporter au régime des colonies françaises* (Paris : A. Mie, 1831), 23-24.

³⁴ Schmidt, *Abolitionnistes de l'esclavage*, 284.

³⁵ Mondésir Richard, *Des hommes de couleur* (Paris: A. Mie, 1831).

and plantocracy should be eliminated by the principle of the 1789 and 1830 Revolutions. Crucial to this was the integration of the colonies into the metropole, which would allow colonies to catch up with the rate of progress in the metropole. Drawing on the metaphor of a family—which would become his favorite rhetorical device—Bissette proclaimed, “Without doubt, the time will come when my country ceases to be treated as a minor in the family!”³⁶

How did he approach the issue of slavery? In a petition to the Chamber of Deputies in 1832 signed by Bissette and Richard, they insisted that colonial reforms had to include an amelioration of the black slaves’ situation.³⁷ Bissette and Fabien joined the abolitionist lawyer Adolphe Gatine in a petition for slaves’ right to appeal to the Court of Cassation, to which Bissette himself had resorted in the *Affaire Bissette*.³⁸ However, Bissette did not embrace abolitionism in this period—his object was to remove the system of discrimination by color and leave the difference between freedom and servitude as the only valid marker of status in French colonies. He expected that after the end of segregation by skin color, slavery would be gradually become extinct. Although he acknowledged that the root of discrimination lay in the institution of slavery, his approach to emancipation at this time was not so different from that of moderate abolitionists, based on self-manumission and education.

³⁶ Bissette, *Mémoire au ministre de la Marine et des colonies et à la Commission de législation coloniale*, 25.

³⁷ Bissette and Richard, *Pétition à la Chambre des Députés relative à l’amélioration du sort des esclaves aux colonies* (Paris: P. Dupont et Laguionie, 1832).

³⁸ Bissette, *Pétition à la Chambre des Députés, relative au droit dénié aux esclaves de se pourvoir en cassation* (Signé: Ad. Gatine, Bissette, Fabien) (Paris: A. Mie, 1831).

After three years of debates and arrangements, the July Monarchy finally proclaimed the *Charte Coloniale* on April 24, 1833, bestowing full civil and political rights on the free people of color in the French colonies. However the long-awaited decree of equal rights was in fact “a dupery,” in the words of Yvan Debbasch,³⁹ because the big planter families still dominated the colonial councils and courts and political rights were barred from most free-colored men by a high standard of *cens*.⁴⁰ After the 1833 reform, there were only twenty-five electors of people of color in Martinique out of a total 750 electors and ten in Guadeloupe out of a total eighty-two.⁴¹ The colonial councils remained a stronghold of planter oligarchy. Until the very end of the regime, privileged whites monopolized the political bodies, public offices, and courts of the colonies.

However, as the metropole erased the legal barrier between whites and free-coloreds, at least technically, the tension between white plantocracy and free people of color grew to a dangerous level. The *colons* were firm in their resolution to not see metropolitan reform come into effect in the colonies, while the discrepancy between the legal and actual status of free people of color angered and frustrated them all the more. This “1833-48 interregnum, in which

³⁹ Debbasch, *Couleur et liberté*, 301.

⁴⁰ In colonies, the *cens* for being elector and the eligibility for election was respectively 300 and 600 francs, in comparison to 200 and 500 in the metropole. Niort, “Les libres de couleur dans la société coloniale,” 76-78.

⁴¹ Pluchon, *Histoire de la colonisation française*, vol.2, 102.

the old order was slowly dying and a new one had yet to be born”⁴² produced both social disturbances and discourses from both sides.⁴³

The tension exploded into the *Affaire de la Grand'Anse* on Martinique in December 1833. According to the official record, as the colonial authorities arrested some *gens de couleur libres* suspected of having ambushed a white planter, and condemned one of them to death, a group of free men of color rose in riot in Grand'Anse and set fire to several buildings and plantations. The colonial garrison suppressed the riot and promptly accused a number of slaves and free men of color. The colonial court condemned forty-six to death and sentenced scores of others to deportation and forced labor. As all of them appealed to the Parisian Court of Cassation, the metropole was implicated in the heated debate over the event. Two of the finest Parisian lawyers, Adolphe Crémieux and Gatine, stood on the side of the accused. Although the appeal itself did not succeed, the process of the appeal reported by the *Gazette des tribunaux* acquired much sympathy among public opinion in the metropole. The end of the affair came with the intervention of the king in December 1834—Louis Philippe reduced the penalties from capital punishment, to the great chagrin of the *colons*.⁴⁴

⁴² Bongie, *Islands and Exiles*, 264.

⁴³ Concerning the “literary ferment” of this era in the colonies, see Régis Antoine, *Les écrivains français et les Antilles: des premiers Pères blancs aux surréalistes noirs* (Paris: G. P. Maisonneuve et Larose, 1978), 189-220.

⁴⁴ For the Grand'Anse affair, see Adolphe Gatine, *Sommaire des moyens de cassation à plaider pour les condamnés de Grand'-Anse, hommes de condition libres demandeurs en cassation de l'arrêt de la Cour d'assises de Saint-Pierre du 30 juin 1834, et pour les esclaves condamnés conjointement...* (Paris: Dezauche, 1834); Maurice Nicolas, *L'Affaire de la Grand'Anse* (Fort-de-France: Théodore Marchand, 1960); Schloss, *Sweet Liberty*, 154-64; and Adélaïde-Merlande, ed., *L'Historial antillais*, 259-69.

The colonial reform in 1833 accompanied by the Grand'Anse affair signaled a shift in the direction of French antislavery debate. Before the Charter of 1833, the issue of equal rights for free people of color had prevailed in colonial affairs. Legal equality and colonial justice appeared to be a safer option for reforming colonies and preparing for eventual emancipation, no matter when it would come. On their part, the colonial party was adamant in their conviction that any concession to free people of color would be a death warrant to plantocracy and slavery. As the events of 1833-34 clearly revealed the metropole's intention to challenge white supremacy, the white planters turned to defending their last stronghold: they shifted "their attentions away from preventing the realm's *gens de couleur* from exercising their rights and toward supporting the metropolitan proslavery lobby in emancipation debates."⁴⁵ As Jennings shows, the proslavery lobby went to great efforts to buy off metropolitan newspapers during the July Monarchy.⁴⁶

Bissette was deeply disappointed by the result of the colonial reform in 1833, which betrayed the bright expectations of 1830. Confronting both the *colons*' intransigence at the prospect of any change and the dubious approach of the metropolitan government, Bissette veered toward the antislavery project, embracing the abolition of slavery as the sole means of regenerating the colonies. The attempt to merge free people of color and whites into a united class of legal freedom ended in failure because the plantocracy was never ready to resign white supremacy. Whatever the legal documents said, the white *colons* threw free people of color into the same category as black slaves, ever emphasizing their common "African" ancestry. As a

⁴⁵ Schloss, *Sweet Liberty*, 164.

⁴⁶ Jennings, "Slavery and the Venality of the July Monarchy Press."

consequence, Bissette sought after another union: that between free people of color and black slaves for the common cause of emancipation.

La Revue des Colonies: *The French Revolution, Haiti, and Emancipation Project*

In the middle of the Grand'Anse affair proceedings, Bissette set up a central strategy for his next campaign against colonial slavery. In July 1834, Bissette and his colleagues founded a monthly journal named *Revue des colonies* (hereafter the *Revue*)⁴⁷ in Paris. The journal was published by *Société d'hommes de couleur*, and its founding members included Bissette's close circle such as Fabien, Mondésir Richard, and some metropolitan supporters like the lawyer Gatine.⁴⁸ The initial contributors included Parisian abolitionists such as Gatine and Corcelle (secretary of the SFAE), but Bissette himself was largely responsible for the journal's contents and direction.

Although he managed to obtain some financial support from his *gens de couleur libres* friends, the journal suffered constantly from a financial deficit that ultimately halted publication in 1842.⁴⁹ The actual number of paying subscribers to the *Revue* was very low, not exceeding

⁴⁷ The full name is *Revue des colonies: recueil mensuel de la politique, de l'administration, de la justice, de l'instruction et des mœurs coloniales*.

⁴⁸ For the journal, see Stella Pâme, "La Revue des Colonies," in *L'Historial antillais*, vol.3, 530-36; Antoine, *Les écrivains français et les Antilles*, 214-16; Bryant, "Black But Not African"; Brickhouse, "A Francophone View of Comparative American Literature".

⁴⁹ After the *Revue des colonies* ceased in 1842, Bissette shortly (for one year) revived it as *la Revue abolitionniste* in 1847.

250 in 1840.⁵⁰ Whereas the major French proslavery journals, such as *le Globe*, *le Journal du Havre*, and *la Presse*, were well-subsidized by colonial lobby groups and had much larger readerships, the *Revue* did poorly both in finance and readership. Since the colonial authorities reckoned it to be very dangerous political material, it could not gather many subscriptions in the colonies, at least not openly, which is one of the reasons why scholars have underestimated the impact of Bissette's apparently minor journal.

When the circumstances under which people reacted to the journal's provocative content are taken into consideration, however, the *Revue* was much more influential than its subscription number indicated, in both metropolitan and colonial political scenes. Bissette's prestige in colonial affairs, acquired by his political martyrdom and unrelenting campaign, imparted no small importance to the *Revue*. Parisian commentators often cited the journal as a rare and valuable source of information on the colonies. Moreover, as Bongie suggests, the contents of the journal never failed to give rise to counterpolemics and lawsuits, despite its limited readership.⁵¹ The direct accusations Bissette made in his journal against virtually every party—proslavery spokesmen, French abolitionists, and the royal government—did not pass without raising new series of exchanges in newspapers and pamphlets.

In the case of the French colonies, Kelly Duke Bryant observes that the *Revue* formed a common platform for free people of color in the colonies to raise their own voices about various colonial issues: "Readership in the colonies most likely outweighed subscription, as residents faced personal risks by subscribing to this periodical that challenged the status quo. The

⁵⁰ Jennings, *Cyrille Bissette*, 54.

⁵¹ Bongie, "C'est du papier," 447.

periodical itself indicates that it managed to circulate across great distances, even if not in large quantities, as it contained articles or letters to the editor from contributors in at least four British West Indian colonies, three French Caribbean colonies, (British) Mauritius, (French) Bourbon, (French) Senegal, and Haiti.”⁵² From the other direction, the colonial authorities’ oversensitive response to the *Revue*’s colonial readers stands as a testament to the journal’s influence. The authorities often seized copies of the journal and arrested those who circulated its contents. For the elite planters of the colonies, the *Revue* embodied the kind of seditious political materials that inflamed the “dangerous” classes of the colonies.⁵³

What did this contentious journal argue? On the opening page of the very first issue of the *Revue*, Bissette reproduced the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, proclaiming the Declaration to be the essence of the French Revolution, a basis of every institution to come, and the harbinger of the history. According to his vision,

All the principles of ‘89 are in this declaration; and, whatever happens, it was in these principles that the French Revolution, through its republican and imperial armies sowed in the land of Europe, and by its books everywhere in the universe, a potential that one will fail to stifle.⁵⁴

As clearly seen in this “Declaration of Principle,” Bissette proclaimed that the French Revolution would form the basis of his project for the colonies. The Revolution of 1789 had presented a glorious blueprint for a new society for both France and colonies, which the 1830 Revolution had

⁵² Bryant, “Black But Not African,” 260.

⁵³ Conseil colonial de la Martinique, *Procès-verbaux du conseil colonial de la Martinique*, 4th session (Fort-Royal: unknown, 1836), 395.

⁵⁴ “Declaration de Principe,” *Revue des colonies*, vol.1, no.1 (July 1834): 8.

been assumed to fulfill, but unfortunately had not. Along with other liberal historians, he believed in the inevitable march of the history launched by the French Revolution. To Bissette, the Declaration of the Rights and the decree of abolition in 1794 formed a moment of revelation for the colonial people, and one to which he would always return. This revolutionary history runs like a vital artery through all the volumes of the journal, providing an overarching master-narrative and inspiring examples.

Given this, how did Bissette and his collaborators in the *Revue* approach the history of the Great Revolution? How did they narrate the entangled events of the French and Haitian Revolutions? How was the vision of the *Revue* different from those of metropolitan abolitionists who also upheld the French Revolution as the ground of legitimacy for the antislavery cause? In particular, the *Revue* invested the Haitian situation with greater meaning than any other metropolitan commentator—how did Bissette and his journal interpret the disconcerting situation of Haiti, and for what purposes?

Like the abolitionists of the SFAE, Bissette accentuated the early phase of the French Revolution in which the Declaration of the Rights was born. However, Bissette had a different point of emphasis, which was the initiative of the free-colored people on the revolutionary political scene. To him, the crucial moment was when the *gens de couleur libres* delegates stood up for their equal rights in the metropolitan assembly for the first time with the support of prominent revolutionaries like General Lafayette, Brissot, and Grégoire.⁵⁵ In particular, the 1791 decree of the Constituent Assembly granting equal rights for qualified *gens de couleur libres* set

⁵⁵ “Necrology of General Lafayette,” *Revue des colonies*, vol.1, no.1 (July 1834): 38-40. The speech of Lafayette in 1791 at the National Assembly on the rights of the free-colored.

a great precedent, which Bissette thought the unsatisfactory Colonial Charter of 1833 should have followed.⁵⁶

In reviewing the historical course toward the decree of abolition in 1794, Bissette's story more clearly diverged from the standard narrative told by metropolitan liberals.⁵⁷ Bissette claimed that the emancipation project was not inscribed in the blueprint of the French Revolution. He glorified the opening of the 1789 Revolution, but still pointed out that the French revolutionaries of 1789 had little concern for the colonies. It was only by the intervention of mulatto politicians pressing the issue of color equality that the colonial problems entered into the revolutionary stage. Afterward, the French Revolution marched further and reached the colonies, plunging the whites into a civil war. However even then, no party—republic or royalist—mentioned the emancipation of slaves. It was only when the British army arrived ashore as a counterrevolutionary force, and the threat to French Saint-Domingue was the greatest, that the civil commissioners made a decision of abolishing slavery in defense of the Republic.⁵⁸

The agenda of abolishing slavery was therefore thrust upon the French Revolution by the force of the events in Saint-Domingue. However, Bissette continues, the National Convention redeemed itself by the spontaneity and speed with which it resolved on the abolition decree: “The National Convention had hardly been aware of the acts of Polverel and Sonthonax, their commissioners, with respect to slaves, when it approved them. And at once, to the applauses

⁵⁶ “A Word about the Discourse Pronounced by M. Isambert in the Last Session of 8 May (1834),” *Revue des colonies*, vol.1, no.1 (July 1834): 18.

⁵⁷ “Of the Abolition of slavery by the National Convention—project of law of the Revue des Colonies,” *Revue des colonies*, vol.2, no.1 (July 1835): 1-11.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 3-5.

of the immortal assembly, was pronounced right away by the demand of Dufay, not only the enfranchisement of the whole black race, but also their reintegration into the grand national family.”⁵⁹ Revolutionary France proved to deserve its great destiny when it responded to the colonial people’s initiative with a universal decree of emancipation and integration. For Bissette, it was at this moment that the metropole and colonies achieved the highest order of revolutionary synthesis.

However, this narrative had a problem; how could the *gens de couleur libres*, who were presumably fiercely loyal to France and its universal ideals, pursue the independence of Haiti? He attributed the secession of Haiti from France to the reestablishment of slavery in 1802. As Napoleon betrayed the French Revolution with this treacherous act, the mulatto leaders were forced to join the black army: “The *hommes de couleur*, until then such great partisans of the metropole, for which they had sacrificed everything since the origin of the troubles, united with the blacks who had made such a disastrous war under the command of Toussaint L’Ouverture.”⁶⁰

In his version of the history of the War of Independence, Bissette placed mulatto military leaders like General Pétion at the center of the story. When confronting “the libticial law of Floréal” (Napoleon’s revocation of emancipation), Pétion—not Toussaint Louverture as other narratives told—was the first to call for arms. Another mulatto leader, Boyer, who merged the northern kingdom and Spanish part of the island in 1820-22, accomplished the task of building a unified nation and making “from Haiti a whole homogeneity.”⁶¹ According to the *Revue*,

⁵⁹ Ibid., 5.

⁶⁰ “Affaire Haiti,” *Revue des colonies*, vol.1, no.5 (November 1834): 20.

⁶¹ Ibid., 20-21.

therefore, the Haitian Revolution was born in the French Revolution but developed into a greater revolution itself, bringing about emancipation and creating a new nation. Bissette criticized the metropolitan people's warped view of the colonial revolution. If they acknowledged the achievements of the French Revolution despite all the bloodshed, why could they not also acknowledge the Haitian Revolution?

The revolution of Haiti still terrified minds. Such inconsistency! Those who felt only enthusiasm for the works of the French Revolution saw in the independence of Saint-Domingue only the massacre of Le Cap. They did not yet understand that through these terrible convulsions, a grand social and political question had come to a light, and that the revolution of Haiti despite the massacre of Le Cap, just like the French Revolution despite the Massacre of September, had created a new people dedicated to the principles of justice and humanity.⁶²

With this narrative, the *Revue* tried to install the mulatto revolutionaries as not only the legitimate sons of the French Revolution but also as the driving force of revolutionary emancipation. Bissette insisted that the struggle for free people of color's equal rights should be acknowledged as a significant stepping stone to peaceful emancipation, not a parochial interest of elite mulattoes as both planters and white abolitionists often said. In praising the free-colored men's claim for equal rights in 1789, Bissette underlined this point: "The *hommes de couleur*, it is true, spoke only for themselves in their petition; however, in their mind the blacks could not be excluded from the concessions they demanded."⁶³ The mulatto revolutionaries' leadership led to the birth of Haiti, the first republic built on general emancipation. As a natural result of this revolutionary initiative, the *Revue* positioned free people of color at the vanguard of nineteenth-

⁶² "Retrospective Review", *Revue des colonies*, vol.3, no.1 (July 1836): 4.

⁶³ "Documents for serving the history of colonies," *Revue des colonies*, vol.3, no.7 (January 1837): 277.

century abolitionism. Bissette argued that having been educated and enlightened by revolutionary experiences, free people of color directly addressed the emancipation of slavery as an integral part of their claims for equal rights.⁶⁴

In fact, this position was hardly a consensus in the late 1830s among the free people of color in the French colonies. According to the census, the *hommes de couleur libres* of Martinique owned 13,585 of the 78,076 total slaves on the island, although colored slave owners, most of who possessed coffee production or ran small businesses, rarely owned a large number of slaves.⁶⁵ Some *gens de couleur libres* did not want to see the lowermost class of colonies beneath them disappear. The *Revue* also included the free-colored men's protests against Bissette and Fabien's emancipation project. These protestors acknowledged Bissette and Fabien's steadfast efforts for their "political liberation," but urged them to stop their campaign for the abolition of slavery because the latter would lead to the destruction of the basis of colonies—slavery—resulting in another Saint-Domingue. Once the metropole granted full civil and political rights to the *gens de couleur libres*, their interest should be with the whites, their equals in the status of freedom and property.⁶⁶

The *Revue* criticized those who held these positions for being manipulated by white planters and their old strategy of "divide and rule." When the *Revue* was first launched, Bissette still clung to the idea of fusing together the free people of color and whites in terms of legal freedom: "The civil, political, and social rights of the two free classes, divided until the present,

⁶⁴ Ibid., 278.

⁶⁵ Ministère de la marine et des colonies, *Notices statistiques sur les colonies françaises* (Paris: Imprimerie royale, 1837-40), 50.

⁶⁶ *Revue des colonies*, vol.3, no.7 (January 1837): 281-83.

would have to be united, would be developed, and supported with an indefatigable zeal.”⁶⁷

However, with the repercussions of the 1833 colonial reforms, including the Grand’Anse affair, it did not take long time for him to change his position. In the very next issue of the *Revue*, Bissette asserted, “They [people of color] know by experience that as long as there exist slaves, it is in vain that they request for themselves the fulfillment of political rights.”⁶⁸ Rather than trying for a futile alliance with whites, he insisted that the free-colored class and black slaves should unite for their common cause—that is, the abolition of slavery—because slavery was at the root of all their miseries.

For this purpose he revisited the connotation of “*gens de couleur*.” The *Revue* recalled the mulatto elites’ petition for equal rights in 1789 and argued that their generic expression of “men of color” was for “all those who were not part of the white caste in the colonies.” In the words of Anna Brickhouse, “Bissette thus distinguished between the colonial meaning of the term “men of color” and a meaning that would embrace any person of African descent in a common cause against white oppression.”⁶⁹ He attempted to convert the phrase “men of color” into an inclusive category for all non-white people who had African ancestry and shared the experiences of humiliation and suffering under slavery and plantocracy. Bissette criticized anti-abolitionist free people of color for misunderstanding the true interest of their own class.

Bissette’s shift in alliance made him change his view of his own past—a past he had once boasted about as evidence of his patriotism and respect for the colonial order. He regretted

⁶⁷ “Prospectus,” *Revue des colonies*, vol.1, no.1 (July 1834): 7.

⁶⁸ “Society for the abolition of slavery,” *Revue des colonies*, vol.1, no.2 (August 1834): 19.

⁶⁹ Brickhouse, “A Francophone View of Comparative American Literature,” 102.

his participation in suppressing the Carbet slave rebellion in 1822. When black slaves fought for liberty by the only means they had, the free people of color, including Bissette himself, should have supported them instead of helping to suppress them: “The people of color are more Negroes than whites: they should not forget it.”⁷⁰ Once a mark of degradation, African blood became the blood of entitlement in Bissette’s new vision because the experiences of suffering and humiliation sanctioned their common victimhood and legitimized their struggle for liberation.

As seen here, the *Revue* had no doubt about the legitimacy of the revolution and rebellion. Bissette emulated the liberal historians’ historical fatalism and went toward embracing violence as the means of both the weak and of history. According to Bissette’s definition, a revolution is “the consequence that is forced by things that are accomplished for themselves when the hand of men does not want to accomplish them.”⁷¹ When people do not move toward inevitable social progress, they are carried away by it. French society became what it is now only after the violent destruction of the French Revolution because the Old Regime curbed all progress until the very last hour: “to the eyes of the old masters of France, a bourgeois, and especially a peasant, were brutes without intelligence, as incapable of comprehending human dignity as they were of enjoying political liberty.”⁷²

Bissette drew a clear parallel between France of 1789 and the French colonies of the present time to underscore the priority of immediate abolition. The planters were still talking about the inferiority of blacks in Bissette’s time, just as the aristocrats of the Old Regime did

⁷⁰ *Revue des colonies*, vol.2, no.7 (January 1836): 300.

⁷¹ “La Revue des colonies in la Revue des deux mondes,” *Revue des colonies*, vol.2, no.5 (November 1835): 196.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 202.

about the commoners. Moderate liberals clung to the gradualist approach to emancipation, but there was one crucial lesson from revolutionary history—there was no postponing emancipation without inviting disaster. Bisette believed in the transformative power of social relationships: “It is not always that men make the institutions; the institutions also make men, elevate them up to themselves.”⁷³ Thus, he envisioned revolution in a contradictory mode. While Bisette glorified the past revolutions and rebellions as an inevitable path toward progress, the lesson of that history was to teach France to avoid another revolution.

As a result, Bisette came forward as the vanguard of immediatism as early as 1835. He declared that what was now important was not whether there would be a bill of emancipation, but how liberation would be implemented—that is, the mode of emancipation.⁷⁴ He grew more critical of gradualist approaches; the *Revue* labeled the gradualist projects conceived by the French government and moderate abolitionists as those of “*abolitionists temporiseurs* (temporizing abolitionists).” Bisette appreciated the initiative taken by the SFAE in the Chamber of Deputies on colonial reforms, but expressed his deep dissatisfaction all the same with its various projects for gradual emancipation. In reviewing the various projects of the SFAE members, such as Isambert, Lainé de Villevesque, Montrol, Auguste Billard, and Lutteroth, Bisette laid down a fundamental principle for evaluating any abolitionist project: he did not believe in any project for emancipation without the precondition that slavery would be immediately abolished.⁷⁵ He rejected the project of Isambert, who had been his champion in the

⁷³ Ibid., 196.

⁷⁴ “Immediate Abolition,” *Revue des colonies*, vol.1, no.10 (April 1835): 3-5.

⁷⁵ “The Examination of the Project of Law of the SFAE,” *Revue des colonies*, vol.1, no.12 (June 1835): 8.

Affaire Bisette, because it was based on slaves' self-redemption, thereby sanctioning the state of things engendered by slavery.⁷⁶ Instead, Bisette gave his support to other projects to suggest that the priority of emancipation should surpass any preparatory arrangement.⁷⁷

Haiti was very significant for the immediatism embraced by the *Revue*. When French abolitionists were turning toward British colonies as the primary example of emancipation, Bisette brought out the Haitian example, which still surpassed the British emancipation because the latter was compromised by the period of Apprenticeship. For Bisette's immediatism, Haiti was evidence that proved the abolition of slavery itself could bring about enough social dynamics to transform slaves into responsible citizens and free laborers. Haiti was forcibly transformed into a land of emancipation in the vortex of the Revolution, without any preparatory phase. Bisette argued that the development of Haiti was to verify that the abolition of slavery was not only a philanthropic matter, but also a precondition for social and industrial progress.⁷⁸ The *Revue* repeatedly underscored the importance of collecting data on Haiti as an indispensable reference for conceiving the mode of emancipation in French colonies:

An essential point, that is to draw attention to what progress the two races of the black and colored can make through the examples that the republic of Haiti gives us. We owe a duty to France to initiate it into the history of this country, about which it has only false notions. In observing the immense step that was made by a society of slaves abandoned to themselves, falling a prey to the civil war and foreign war for twenty five years, we will conceive that, under the enlightened protection of France, the colonies could arrive peacefully at a social revolution, that they possess all the elements of the

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ "Examination of the Different Projects of Law of the SFAE," *Revue des colonies*, vol.2, no.3 (September 1835): 97-102.

⁷⁸ "Of the Emancipation of Slaves, Considered as the First Element of Social Progress in Colonies," *Revue des colonies*, vol.1, no.7 (January 1835): 2-14.

most powerful and intelligent society, if these elements are combined with justice and with measures.⁷⁹

However, as seen in the previous chapters, the “real” situation of Haiti was not a subject that guaranteed easy consensus. The *Revue* ardently confronted the French authors who spoke ill of Haiti, mostly proslavery and proplanter ones. For example, in 1835 the *Revue* grappled with an article in *Revue des deux mondes* on Haiti, which concluded its proslavery tract with a denunciation against Haiti: “Furthermore, don’t we have under our eyes the example of Saint-Domingue, which before the revolution we called the France of the Antilles? What has she become, this France? The Negroes work there under the penalty of galleys; misery replaced the former splendor, and today they import sugar in a colony that once furnished it to all Europe.”⁸⁰ Refuting its arguments, the *Revue* acknowledged that the prior splendor of old Saint-Domingue had indeed disappeared. But Bissette demanded a switch from judging Haiti according to the state of its economy to that of state-building: “The birth and maintenance of the republic of Haiti are, however, facts a hundred times more worthy of surprise to us than the loss of the former commerce of Saint-Domingue in the midst of the upheavals. And these two facts demonstrate that, while deprived of every education, the blacks comprehend three things: the homeland, independence, and discipline.”⁸¹ The metropolitans were criticized for being so obsessed with the bygone glamour of the world’s sugar capital that they failed to see the obvious miracle—the ex-slaves could make and sustain a stable society from the ashes of the revolutionary wars.

⁷⁹ “Retrospective Review,” *Revue des colonies*, vol.3, no.1 (July, 1836): 6.

⁸⁰ “*La Revue des colonies in la Revue des deux mondes*,” *Revue des colonies*, vol.2, no.5 (November 1835): 208.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 209-10.

The *Revue* argued that color prejudice badly influenced the metropolitans' judgment on Haiti. It pinpointed French attitudes towards the two first independent republics of the Americas, and the disparity between the admiration shown to the United States and the mostly despised Haiti. The Constitution of the United States was widely praised, but the *Revue* lamented, "What good is it to proclaim the Bill of Rights for men when they tread under foot all the rights of humanity?"⁸² The first article of the Declaration of Independence in 1776 was stained by the practice of slavery in its home country. On the contrary, blacks in the Republic of Haiti destroyed slavery and built a civilized nation, becoming "a center of lights and liberty" in the Caribbean. Like the ancient Greeks, Haitians were both warriors and peasants, ready to fight to the death to preserve freedom. The contrast between a republic of whites and a republic of blacks should receive more attention.⁸³

Therefore, in order to evaluate Haiti's situation fairly, the *Revue* asked the metropolitan public to cast out their color prejudice and take the long-term perspective. Saint-Domingue had been given an enormous enterprise to undertake, that of implanting liberty and free labor in such a short time, and without any preparation. In Europe, the transition from feudal serfdom to modern liberty was made gradually through centuries. Considering the magnitude of the mission, the journal urged readers to allow Haitian rulers exceptional measures that could have been criticized as radical or despotic in France.⁸⁴ In particular, when considering the socioeconomic

⁸² "Parallel between a Republic of Whites and a Republic of Blacks," *Revue des colonies*, vol.2, no.6 (December 1835): 241.

⁸³ Ibid., 241-47.

⁸⁴ Corcelle, "Saint-Domingue: Concerning the Emancipation of the Colonies," *Revue des colonies*, vol.2, no.10 (April 1836): 433-40.

system of Saint-Domingue, the infamous *Code Rural* by Boyer was inevitable: “But what would be in France or in England a mixture of Jacobinism and Saint-Simonian doctrine, a violation of individual rights, was present at that time in Saint-Domingue as a necessary safeguard of all private and social rights.”⁸⁵

After the priority of immediate emancipation, another essential point in the *Revue*’s deliberation of the modes of emancipation was that the metropole should supervise the whole process of emancipation. Bissette’s ardent support for state-sponsorship allowed no room for white planters. The *Revue* suggested that revolutionary history and recent events in the French colonies testified to how depraved and corrupted the colonial planter class had been by slavery and tyranny. To publicize this point, the *Revue* featured a series of colonial legal scandals highlighting the cruelty of slave owners. The journal singled out for special mention the *Affaire Madame Marlet* in 1828, in which a white mistress in Martinique was prosecuted for having killed one of her slaves and mutilated others. The scandal proved how powerless the protective regulations for slaves were against the plantocracy. The *Revue* lamented how slavery had not only dehumanized slaves but also degenerated their masters, even those of the “gentler sex” whom planter ideology extolled. Those who exploit others cannot help depraving themselves.⁸⁶

As a result, the *Revue* disqualified both planters and slaves as the agents of emancipation: the former were too depraved by tyranny, while the latter were too victimized by their sufferings: “It is thus the elevated minds of France and Europe that are most suited to taking the initiative of the projects for colonial reform, as well as the government to solve the real

⁸⁵ Ibid., 435.

⁸⁶ “About the Emancipation of the Colonies,” *Revue des colonies*, vol.2, no.8 (February 1836): 353.

difficulties that these projects raise.”⁸⁷ This point is repeated through all of the volumes of *Revue*. Following the noble example set by the National Convention in 1794, slavery was to be abolished in all the French colonies, and the French government would take on the role of moderator to regulate the contract and salary between cultivators and proprietors.⁸⁸ Without the metropolitan intervention, the colonies could not continue to be a European-style society. They would, the *Revue* insisted, crumble under the pressure of conflict and force.

It is here that the free people of color enter the picture as a moderating force next to the French state: “The intermediary race is a necessary link between old and new social orders, a keystone of the new social edifice.”⁸⁹ In Bissette’s design, free-colored people had a morally higher ground in the emancipation project than the slaves and planters because they were supposed to be less damaged by the degenerating influence of slavery. They belonged to the oppressed class, but were also acculturated and enlightened enough to take the initiative in creating the postemancipation society. Antislavery politics could strengthen the position of the *gens de couleur libres* in French colonies.

As for redeeming the quality of the *sang-mêlés* people, Bissette focused on deconstructing the rigid definitions of race and color promoted by planter ideology. On one hand, he questioned the naturalness of whiteness over other “tainted” bloods. As the legal difference between whites and mulattoes became blurred by the *Charte Coloniale* in 1833, the white elites of the French colonies adhered more stubbornly to white supremacy based on the purity of white

⁸⁷ Ibid., 354.

⁸⁸ “Project of Law for the Abolition of Slavery in French Colonies,” *Revue des colonies*, vol.2, no.1 (July 1835): 7.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 10.

blood. As Rebecca Schloss notes, this ideology of whiteness depended on “an ideal of white womanhood that cast them as the physical guardians of white purity and as custodians of the cultural markers of white identity.”⁹⁰ This fragile definition of whiteness relied on “the myth that white women only had sex with their white husbands.”⁹¹ Since the status of children born in the colonies followed that of their mothers, the sexual morals of women became an issue of great contention. It was assumed that every man or woman of mixed blood was born from a white man and his colored concubine. Bisette was enraged at the widespread notion that mulattoes were in principle “a race of bastards” and that women of color lived in sexual debauchery as concubines, mistresses, and prostitutes of white men.

Challenging this myth of whiteness, Bisette dared to attack a point no abolitionist ventured to question: the virtue of white women in colonies. The *Revue* collected the cases of “foundlings,” abandoned babies born from the union between white women and colored men.⁹² Mocking the virtue of the white ladies in the colonies whom Granier de Cassagnac called “princely beauties,”⁹³ the journal provided official documents of those children called “*mulâtre-blanc* (mulatto-white),” who were presumed to be nonexistent in planter ideology. This common secret unmasked a sham behind the naturalness of racial distinctions in colonial society. The *Revue* emphasized this irony: when a white woman is intimate with the lowest black slave, her

⁹⁰ Schloss, *Sweet Liberty*, 7.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² “Mulâtres-Blancs,” *Revue des colonies*, vol.8, no.9 (March 1842): 383-84; “Foundlings,” *Revue des colonies*, vol.8, no.10 (April, 1842): 427-29; “Foundlings: Aristocracy of Skin” *Revue des colonies*, vol.8, no.11 (May 1842), 477.

⁹³ *Revue des colonies*, vol.8, no.9 (March 1842): 384.

child is declared white and free; when a woman slave gives birth to a child by a prince, the child is a slave. If so, what is so natural and great in planters' eulogy of whiteness?

On the other hand, Bissette endeavored to overcome the earlier degrading meanings attached to African ancestry and redefine it as a blood-tie binding all the people of color. Here, Haiti was given a crucial mission to testify to the superior quality of the leadership of free-colored people, which would redeem the entire race of *gens de couleur* in the eyes of Europeans. The *Revue* observed the situation in Haiti with the greatest interest: "It is important to know well the state of the civilization, liberty, and enlightenment in this republic of *hommes de couleur*."⁹⁴ To Bissette, Haiti was above all the land in which his own class was given a chance to rule.

Yet the way in which Bissette proved the equal quality of colored people was not so different from the strategy of the European abolitionists, especially that of Abbé Grégoire, Bissette's most cherished hero. Following the Enlightenment belief that literacy was paramount evidence of blacks' human quality, the *Revue* carried many articles on cultural refinement in Haiti. It testified to the fact that Haitians were developing European-style civilization on their own. At the time of slavery, the people of Saint-Domingue could not receive any education, and the civil war destroyed all the books. Once liberated from the yoke of slavery however, "Without teacher, without books, finally without guidance, without any instrument, Haitians became men of the state, literature, and poetry; the pen succeeded the sword in the defense of our rights."⁹⁵ An embodiment of this Haitian victory was Ignace Nau. Born in 1808, he was the first Haitian poet born after the independence of Haiti. Being part of the Haitian mulatto elite group, he led a

⁹⁴ *Revue des colonies*, vol.1, no.2 (August, 1834): 31, 31-33.

⁹⁵ "Sketch of the Men of Letters of Haiti: Dupré" (by Saint Rémy of Haiti), *Revue des colonies*, vol.3, no.11 (May 1837): 470.

literary circle in Haiti. The *Revue* eagerly published his poems as an ideal example of Haitian accomplishment.⁹⁶

As seen here, Bissette never doubted the superiority of European civilization, or French civilization in particular, which was the foremost model to be transplanted in the colonies.

Bissette passionately embraced the superiority of Europe in terms of her civilizing and democratic forces. For him, the problem was that European colonizers practiced in colonies what they would not have dared to do in the metropole. Now it was time for Europe to clear its debts by correcting its mistakes of the past:

After having exercised on all the points of the globe her military and commercial genius, Europe nowadays brings to them her civilizing spirits and democratic principles. It is because Europeans established or maintained slavery to exploit their conquests, that Europe herself is called to intervene in the social order of all other continents, and that the certain result of their intervention should be the total disappearance of slavery.⁹⁷

Emancipation, therefore, was a part of the greater project of European colonialism, or a chance to rectify past errors and renew in a superior manner that grand project. Bissette insisted that emancipation was a matter of recivilizing and recolonizing colonies. “Is the emancipation question between blacks and whites? No, a thousand times no. The question of slavery is a

⁹⁶ “Sketches of Haiti: Isalina or A Creole Scene,” *Revue des colonies*, vol.3, no.1 (July 1836): 37-40; “Sketches of Haiti II,” *Revue des colonies*, vol.3, no.2 (August 1836): 84-86 ; “Sketches of Haiti III and IV,” *Revue des colonies*, vol.3, no.3 (September 1836): 124-32 ; “Poems of Ignace Nau,” *Revue des colonies*, vol.3, no.11 (May 1837): 467-9. Besides the Nau brothers, the *Revue des colonies* enlisted many Haitian mulatto writers, including Bavais Lespisenasse, Saint-Rémy, and Ardouin.

⁹⁷ “The Examination of the Project of Law of the SFAE,” *Revue des colonies*, vol.1, no.12 (June 1835): 7-8.

matter between the whites of Europe and the whites of colonies. Europe wants to bring her justice and her civilization to her territories.”⁹⁸

In this vein, militant abolitionism of the *Revue* approved colonialism in an “enlightened” form. Bissette’s view on colonialism was more clearly seen in the articles on Algeria. The Algerian conquest, having begun in the Restoration as a desperate measure to salvage the sinking monarchy through military glory, turned into a vast French colony in North Africa during the July Monarchy. The *Revue*’s key approach to the Algerian conquest was to praise the civilizing mission of French expansion, while criticizing the modes of conquest, especially the brutal expedition and military administration. If only the colonial government had ruled with justice and equality, Algeria would be a prospering French province: “Let us not talk about *colonizing* Algeria!.....*Civilize* Algeria, quickly!”⁹⁹

The First Clash between Bissette and Schoelcher, 1842-46:

Who Can Speak for the Colonial People?

Engaging in an unending controversy with proslavery spokesmen, Bissette drew another battle line, this time against a rising star in the metropolitan abolitionist circle, Victor Schoelcher. When Schoelcher made an appearance on the Parisian political scene in the early 1830s, Bissette warmly welcomed the young and fierce republican writer to the antislavery crusade. In a review

⁹⁸ “*La Revue des colonies in la Revue des deux mondes,*” *Revue des colonies*, vol.2, no.5 (November 1835): 198.

⁹⁹ “Colonies of Alger,” *Revue des colonies*, vol.1, no.9 (February 1835): 15-16. Also see “A Page of History Concerning Alger,” *Revue des colonies*, vol.3, no.8 (February 1837): 313-30.

of Schoelcher's antislavery article, "Abolition of Slavery," the *Revue* praised the author for challenging a large corpus of literature that supported color prejudice.¹⁰⁰ This goodwill did not last long, however. In 1841, Bissette's journal criticized Schoelcher's remark on the cruelty of a Martinique provost, on the grounds that it was factually incorrect.¹⁰¹

It was after Schoelcher published two books describing his recently completed trip to the Americas, *Des colonies française* (1841) and *Colonies étrangères et Haïti* (1843), that Bissette turned completely against him. With these books, Schoelcher won fame as a prominent abolitionist with firsthand colonial experience, which was very rare among Parisian abolitionists. He was the first French abolitionist to visit Haiti since the island's independence. The left-wing journals carried extracts of his books, and the proslavery party protested against them. *La Réforme*, a republican newspaper, congratulated this new champion of emancipation, while *le Globe*, a new proslavery journal, was indignant at his "calumny."¹⁰² Abolitionist deputies cited his works as convincing and enlightening testimony. Although he kept some distance from the main circle of the SFAE for a while, Schoelcher rapidly rose to be called "a French Wilberforce."¹⁰³

Bissette did not hesitate to express his disapproval of this spotlight on Schoelcher. After the publication of Schoelcher's books, Bissette published a series of refutations of them, and

¹⁰⁰ "Abolition of Slavery: Critical examination....by Schoelcher," *Revue des colonies*, vol.7, no.3 (September 1840), 81-85.

¹⁰¹ *Revue des colonies*, vol.8, no.4 (October 1841): 148-50.

¹⁰² *Le Globe* (organ of the colonial party), October 30, 1841.

¹⁰³ Bissette, *Réfutation du livre de M. Victor Schoelcher, intitulé Des colonies françaises* (Paris: A.-T. Breton, 1843), 39.

Schoelcher in turn retorted in newspapers and journals, albeit with less enthusiasm than Bissette. Hence began both a textual and political confrontation/dialogue between the two abolitionists, which would continue until the final showdown with the electoral campaign of the Second Republic.

In 1843, Bissette published a book-length refutation of Schoelcher's first book about his trip to French colonies.¹⁰⁴ In the preface, Bissette clarified his reasons for confronting another abolitionist: Schoelcher's wrong opinion was all the more dangerous because it came from an abolitionist. Bissette wrote, "What I refute are those errors the author indulges in when he presents as friends of blacks even those who have shown themselves their greatest enemies; the unjust critique he made of the conduct of mulattoes toward blacks; his malicious evaluation of their principles and their morality; lastly, the bad tendency of this book to divide blacks and mulattoes."¹⁰⁵ On one hand, Bissette questioned the credibility and authority of Schoelcher as an abolitionist and as a spokesman for the enslaved people. On the other hand, Bissette was opposed to Schoelcher's ways of depicting his own group, the *gens de couleur libres*, and the race relationship in the colonies. These two points would be repeated whenever Bissette confronted Schoelcher.

At first, it was Schoelcher's mistakes in presenting colonial facts that induced Bissette to criticize his books. This critique of factual—often, very trivial—errors developed into Bissette's main tactic for discrediting Schoelcher's credentials as an abolitionist.¹⁰⁶ Yet Bissette argued that

¹⁰⁴ Bissette, *Réfutation....Des colonies françaises*.

¹⁰⁵ Bissette, *Réfutation....Des colonies françaises*, 1.

¹⁰⁶ For example, Bissette cited Schoelcher's incorrect and insufficient knowledge of the colonial *causes célèbres*, like the Affaire Douillard-Mahaudière and the revolt in Carbet.

the ignorance of the young abolitionist concerning colonial affairs originated from a more systematic cause. The sorest point for him was Schoelcher's acquaintance with the elite planters. In his trip to the Caribbean colonies, Schoelcher was received by prominent planters and enjoyed their hospitality. In particular, Schoelcher made friends with Perrinelle, a rich and prominent planter in Saint-Pierre, Martinique. He welcomed Schoelcher to his great plantation house, which Schoelcher casually described as reminding him of "the splendors of Saint-Domingue."¹⁰⁷ A good host to Schoelcher, the Perrinelle family belonged to the colonial group who had persecuted Bissette and his friends in 1824.¹⁰⁸ Bissette could not forgive Schoelcher for being on friendly terms with those who had signed the writ of execution for his branding and deportation.

Besides personal grievances, Bissette asserted that Schoelcher's goodwill toward the *colons* was bound to compromise his position as an abolitionist. How can a book dedicated to "hosts of the French colonies,"¹⁰⁹ namely, white *colons*, properly speak for the abolition of slavery? Schoelcher was naïve and gullible enough to employ such an absurd term as "abolitionists-*colons*" to designate apparently reformist planters.¹¹⁰ Bissette insisted that this revealed the limits of the metropolitan abolitionist's expertise on colonies issues. According to Bissette, all the slave owners, no matter how benevolent his or her nature might be, were systematically disposed towards tyranny and oppression. Look at one of Schoelcher's good hosts, Douillard-Mahaudière: Parisian newspapers publicized this planter's criminal case in

¹⁰⁷ Schoelcher, *Des colonies françaises*, 2.

¹⁰⁸ Bissette, *Lettre à M. V. Schoelcher* of October 18, 1843. (Paris: Ébrard, 1843).

¹⁰⁹ Schoelcher, "A mes hôtes des colonies françaises," in *Des colonies françaises*, v.

¹¹⁰ Bissette, *Réfutation....Des colonies françaises*, 35.

Guadeloupe, where he had incarcerated his female slave in a private prison until her death, but been acquitted by the colonial court.¹¹¹

More harshly, Bissette drew a parallel between Schoelcher and proslavery spokesman Granier de Cassagnac. The latter also published his proslavery writing after a trip to the Caribbean colonies and Haiti.¹¹² However, Bissette questioned their assuming authority as direct witnesses and observers—if the testimony of de Cassagnac was biased by his incorrigible color prejudice, then Schoelcher’s privileged status as a white metropolitan elite placed him in good terms with the enemies of abolitionism, to the extent of blinding him to the realities of colonies. Therefore, Bissette insisted, Schoelcher should remain an outside observer to colonial issues, not only for his ignorance of colonial facts but also for his privilege as a white French elite man.¹¹³

Bissette contended that Schoelcher’s impossible mission of “conciliating the interest of the *colons* with that of humanity” led the white abolitionist to deprive free people of color of all public esteem and dignity.¹¹⁴ Schoelcher’s book degraded free people of color by depicting them as having neither custom nor familial order. In particular, Schoelcher insulted mulatto women by condemning their loose sexual morals.¹¹⁵ To Bissette, there was no difference between planter

¹¹¹ Bissette, *Réfutation....Des colonies françaises*, 9, 27. Bissette highlighted the *Affaire Douillard-Mahaudière* in *Revue des colonies*, vol.7, no.12 (June 1841): 464-73.

¹¹² Bissette, *Réfutation....Des colonies françaises*, 9-13; Granier de Cassagnac, *Voyage aux Antilles françaises, anglaises, danoises, espagnoles, à St-Domingue et aux Etats-Unis d'Amérique* (Paris: Dauvin et Fontaine, 1842-44).

¹¹³ Bissette revealed an episode during Schoelcher’s stay in colonies: although he received a letter from a black slave saying *colons* deceived him, Schoelcher chose to believe his own observations. Bissette, *Réfutation....Des colonies françaises*, 22-23.

¹¹⁴ Bissette, *Réfutation....Des colonies françaises*, 58.

¹¹⁵ Bissette, *Réfutation....Des colonies françaises*, 59-66; Schoelcher, *Des colonies françaises*, 245.

ideology and Schoelcher's writing: both of them were full of old-fashioned calumny against free-colored men and women, confining miscegenation into sexual terms.

As a conclusive message, Bissette warned mulattoes and blacks not to be deceived by a new brand of abolitionists represented by Schoelcher.¹¹⁶ Bissette was displeased at Schoelcher being lauded as "a French Wilberforce." In spite of his respect for British abolitionists, Bissette insisted that a true example of any French abolitionist ought to be found in the French Revolution, "the honorable founders of the first *Amis des noirs*, Grégoire and Brissot," and not among foreigners.¹¹⁷ For Bissette's vision, the true memory that mulattoes and blacks should conserve for their emancipation was that of those old-school revolutionaries who considered the equal rights of free people of color to be a prerequisite to colonial reform and emancipation. With those "true" abolitionists of the past now gone, Bissette insisted that blacks should be united under the leadership of mulattoes, not Schoelcher, for the sake of emancipation.¹¹⁸

On September 16, 1843, *le National* published Schoelcher's response to Bissette's refutation. Schoelcher accused Bissette of condemning him as an enemy of the free people of color by making up a farfetched story in which Perinelle had intimidated Schoelcher into not visiting the homes of mulattoes. He argued that he had always considered slaves and mulattoes to be the victims of the same vice and same prejudice. Both Schoelcher and Bissette mobilized support from mulattoes of French colonies and Haiti, and vied for their loyalty. Schoelcher pointed out that his work had received a warm welcome from not only the Parisian mulattoes,

¹¹⁶ Bissette, *Réfutation....Des colonies françaises*, 74.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 84.

but also from the Haitian mulatto journal *le Patriote*. In response to this, Bissette published a series of pamphlets asserting his original position, attaching many letters of support from his mulatto friends in France and the colonies.¹¹⁹

On the whole, it is impossible not to see that much of Bissette's antagonism came from personal issues: his resentment of the Perinnelle family, Schoelcher's indifference to Bissette's sufferings at the hands of planters, and his jealousy of this "newcomer" star abolitionist. As Jennings says, as a man of unbridled temper and poor finance, let alone his skin color, Bissette had difficulty finding his place in the Parisian abolitionist circle composed of white bourgeois elites. However, Bissette's personal resentment was entangled with his positioning as a mulatto abolitionist in the metropole. Much of Bissette's bitterness was inseparable from his own sense of difference and isolation on the metropolitan political ground. When *le National* rejected his response to Schoelcher's article that was published in the same newspaper, Bissette shouted that it was because Schoelcher was "a Frenchman of Europe" and he was "an expatriate from overseas territories, a French mulatto descending from Africa."¹²⁰ He complained that color prejudice was rampant even in the most enlightened circle of Europe. Moreover, he was quite correct when he criticized French abolitionists for constituting a closed rank of privilege, operating through personal connections, and praising one another without serious criticism.

¹¹⁹ Bissette, *Deux mots sur une note de M. V. Schoelcher* (Paris : Ébrard, 1843); Bissette, *Déclaration de M. Bissette au sujet de sa dernière brochure sur l'ouvrage de M. Schoelcher* (October 10, 1843) (Paris: Ébrard, 1843), and *Lettre à M. V. Schoelcher* (October 18, 1843). See the letters attached to *Deux mots*, from Houat of île Bourbon, B. Imbert of Haiti, S. Remy Mondesir of Martinique, and J. Sainte-Rose of Cayenne.

¹²⁰ Bissette, *Deux mots*, 4.

However, Bissette also took advantage of his isolated position to fashion for himself a position as the rightful spokesman for colonial people. In this way, his inferior position in the metropole was reversed to uphold his “naturally” superior position as a true representative of the non-white population of colonies because he was one of “them” in terms of both suffering and skin color. For Bissette, creating a confrontation with Schoelcher was part of his political self-fashioning strategy. He pitted the unavoidable ignorance and credulity of metropolitan abolitionists against the “true” knowledge that “we” have. The *Revue* insisted that Schoelcher’s knowledge of colonial slavery “is nothing in comparison to what we know, we, who are from Martinique.”¹²¹ His two books of *Réfutation* against Schoelcher repeatedly designated him and his group as “*nous autres mulâtres et nègres*”: it is “us Negroes and mulattoes, the only ones competent in this question,” who can verify Schoelcher’s credential as an abolitionist.¹²² In particular, Bissette questioned Schoelcher’s special credentials as a firsthand witness to colonial situations. Bissette said,

And it is a *phenomenal* error to pretend that it is enough for him to have traveled a few times to the Antilles, to have acquired intuitive knowledge, and believing himself capable of writing about the customs and all the colonial questions of great volumes *destined to be made an authority in the question of emancipation*.¹²³

As Bongie analyzes, in Bissette’s opinion, “the experience of color prejudice is something that has to be lived to be truly understood, and a short stay in the tropics is not a sufficient base from

¹²¹ *Revue de colonies*, vol.8, no.4 (October 1841), 148.

¹²² Bissette, *Réfutation du livre de M. V. Schoelcher sur Haïti* (Paris: Ébrard, 1844), 68.

¹²³ Bongie, “C’est du papier,” 465. Originally, Bissette, *Réponse au factum de M. Schoelcher, intitulé « La Vérité aux ouvriers et cultivateurs de la Martinique »* (Paris: Poussierlgue, 1850), 122.

which to make the sort of claims that are repeatedly and *patronizingly* put forward in Schoelcher's volumes about the French Antilles and Haiti."¹²⁴

The irony was that Bissette himself never visited Haiti in person, let alone lived there, although he repeatedly attacked Schoelcher's claim to mastery of Haitian situations on the basis of his short visit. Schoelcher, coming from a wealthy family, went on fact-finding trips abroad for gathering anti-slavery data, which Bissette could not afford. Most of Bissette's sources on Haiti were derived from his mulatto correspondents, very often belonging to the lighter-skinned ruling elite group. More ironically, as Bongie points out, Bissette's "nativism" of colonial knowledge was not so different from that of the proslavery party.¹²⁵ As shown in the first chapter, the leitmotiv in proslavery arguments since the late eighteenth-century had been that metropolitan people could not fully understand the peculiar situation of the colonies. The metropolitan suggestions for colonial reforms were often dismissed as derived from ignorance and naïve idealism. When the planters opposed emancipation on the basis of their firsthand knowledge of colonies and blacks, Bissette presented the abolition of slavery as a subject to which only certain group with lived experiences in colonies, the *hommes de couleur libres* in this case, could fully access.

Bissette therefore mobilized identity politics to bestow authority on himself. After the *Affaire Bissette*, he had already assumed the position of the *gens du couleur libres*' mandate in the metropole, which was a widely accepted fact. Now, coming forward as an abolitionist, Bissette regarded not only free people of color but also black slaves as his "natural" constituency.

¹²⁴ Bongie, "C'est du papier," 465.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

He thought that black slaves were too victimized by slavery to raise their own voice. This point was a consensus Bissette shared with the abolitionists of the SFAE. In 1836, Lamartine clarified the position of metropolitan abolitionists as the representative of enslaved people. In his parliamentary speech, Lamartine said,

.....a thing that surprises me, Messieurs, it is that everyone is represented here, except slaves. The state is present here with all the power of administration; the *colons* have representatives, a budget, a treasure, delegates, advocates; the blacks have neither a budget, nor treasure, nor advocates; they have no other defender but our conscience. We are obliged to make us their official advocate.¹²⁶

Bissette agreed to this point that enslaved people should be represented by more enlightened advocates, only replacing metropolitan abolitionists with him and free-colored activists.

Consequently, Bissette was very irritated at the advent of Schoelcher assuming the title of a new protector of black slaves. There is an episode illuminating this aspect of Bissette's antagonism against Schoelcher. In 1846, Bissette had some trouble with Étienne Arago, who was the editor of a republican antislavery journal *la Réforme*. Étienne was the brother of François Arago, the future Minister of Marine and Colonies in the Second Republic, and Schoelcher was a close friend of the Arago brothers. The trouble originated from a drama column written by Étienne Arago in *la Réforme* on a play that was being performed in a Parisian theater with much applause.¹²⁷ The play in question was a romantic melodrama entitled *le Docteur noir*, a story about a doomed love affair between a mulatto doctor and a white lady set in colonial Île Bourbon and revolutionary France.¹²⁸ Although the play was not so much about slavery as an interracial

¹²⁶ Lamartine, AP, CD on May 25, 1836.

¹²⁷ *La Réforme*, August 3, 1846 (feuilleton).

¹²⁸ Auguste Anicet-Bourgeois and Philippe Dumanoir, *Le Docteur noir* (Paris: Lévy, 1853). About

love story plotted in the fashion of French Romanticism, the Parisian literary circles welcomed this hit theatrical piece as “breaking a lance in favor of the emancipation of slaves.”¹²⁹ In his review of this play, Arago attributed this progress to Schoelcher and his enlightening books, and Schoelcher was praised as the patron of the blacks and colored men: “the *hommes de couleur* naturally fell in the domain of Schoelcher by virtue of his dedication to their cause.”¹³⁰

Bissette intervened here to rectify a wrong assumption of metropolitan men about colonial issues, “by the quality of a descendent of Africans.”¹³¹ Bissette argued that Arago’s personal connection with Schoelcher affected his judgment. In Bissette’s opinion, Schoelcher’s works were being given excessive praise because the young republican was part of the core group of Parisian elites. More troublesome for Bissette was that Schoelcher, with the support of French abolitionists, was assuming the privileged position of a white benefactor toward colored people. Bissette regarded this gesture as symbolic tyranny in the sense that Schoelcher posed himself as a savior of the black race:

These true friends of our cause, whom we admit and recognize, have never had the pretense of giving themselves to us as saviors, nor exercised this sort of tyranny by requiring our recognition by a continuous obsession; because that is a veritable tyranny, Monsieur, and tyranny, in whatever form which it presents, is always odious, always revolting to those it wants to subject.¹³²

this play, see Barbara Cooper, “*Le Docteur noir*: A French Romantic Drama in Blackface,” *French Forum* 28, no.1 (Winter 2003): 77-90.

¹²⁹ *L’Argus des théâtres*, 3e année (6 août 1846): 1 (feuilleton); see Cooper, “*Le Docteur noir*: A French Romantic Drama in Blackface,” footnote no.13.

¹³⁰ *La Réforme*, August 3, 1846.

¹³¹ Bissette, “Lettre à M. Étienne Arago,” in *Lettres politiques sur les colonies, sur l’esclavage et sur les questions qui s’y rattachent* (Paris : Ebrard, 1845), 225-34.

¹³² Bissette, “Lettre à M. Étienne Arago,” 226.

Although black slaves could not speak for themselves, they had more natural and rightful spokesmen for their cause—acculturated mulatto men like Bissette.

Bissette's Vision of the Haitian Revolution and Haiti

It was in Schoelcher's next book on Haiti that Bissette found a source of an unbridgeable breach between them. Their conflicting approaches to the Haitian Revolution and Haiti were at the center of their dispute. Schoelcher's book on Haiti did not view the island in a favorable light. To the French abolitionist, the most problematic aspect was the mulatto elites' oligarchy that exploited the black populace, to the detriment of abolitionist cause. To Bissette, these accusations aimed at the Haitian mulatto ruling elites were the most unsettling aspects of all. In his estimation, the entire scheme of Schoelcher's book on Haiti came down to a false division between the black masses and the mulatto faction, namely, to a division between "*parti noir* (black party)" and "*faction jaune* (yellow faction)."¹³³ Bissette insisted that it was Schoelcher himself who endangered the cause of emancipation by stating the very things the proslavery party wanted to hear.

As shown in the previous chapter, Schoelcher's narrative of the Haitian Revolution was predicated on the revolutionary dialectic among three groups—whites, mulattoes, and blacks—in which the conflict between whites and mulattoes paved the way for the black slaves' struggle for liberation, who were comparable to the revolutionary mass of the French Revolution. Once the

¹³³ Bissette, *Réfutation du livre de M. V. Schoelcher sur Haïti*, 4.

mulattoes' struggle for enfranchisement instigated the slaves' demand for liberty, Schoelcher exclusively spotlighted the black slaves and Toussaint Louverture. He downplayed the mulattoes' group politics as a selfish attempt to secure their parochial interest.

Bissette pitted this narrative against his alternative story of the Haitian Revolution, as a great achievement of the free people of color, devoted to the cause of emancipation. From the opening of the French Revolution to the birth of Haiti, only the initiative and leadership of free people of color could seamlessly relate the history of liberation and emancipation as one progressive narrative. Bissette focused on rehabilitating three mulatto figures, Vincent Ogé, Julien Raimond, and Alexandre Pétion, who were "specially denigrated" by Schoelcher. For this purpose, Bissette relied on the authority of the sources written by the *Amis des noirs* and the members of the National Convention, embodied by Abbé Grégoire's writings. He argued that the uncompromising revolutionary career of those authors vouched for the truth of their testimonies against the problematic sources of Schoelcher.¹³⁴

In this conflict, the first point of contention was Ogé, the mulatto revolutionary who claimed equal rights for the free people of color in the National Assembly and was brutally executed in 1791 by planters after his failed attempt to instigate a revolt in Saint-Domingue.¹³⁵ Whereas Schoelcher judged that Ogé's agenda was restricted to the political rights of the *gens de couleur libres*, Bissette insisted that Ogé should be reconstituted as a vanguard of emancipation and the first martyr of Haitian liberty.¹³⁶ He compared Ogé to the heroes of the Mexican

¹³⁴ Bissette, *Réfutation du livre de M. V. Schoelcher sur Haïti*, 93.

¹³⁵ Bissette, *Réfutation du livre de M. V. Schoelcher sur Haïti*, 26-68.

¹³⁶ Bissette, *Réfutation du livre de M. V. Schoelcher sur Haïti*, 50 and 68-69.

Revolution, Hidalgo and Allende.¹³⁷ He criticized Schoelcher, who claimed to be “an abolitionist historian,” for having consulted completely wrong sources about Ogé, mostly written by the ex-*colons* of Saint-Domingue.¹³⁸

Concerning Julien Raimond, Bissette charged Schoelcher with the same mistake as in the case of Ogé. A wealthy planter himself, Raimond was the mulatto politician who pursued equal rights for free people of color from the start of the French Revolution, with the support of the *Amis des noirs*. Bissette insisted that Raimond was neither the enemy of blacks and emancipation, nor had an ulterior motive for dominating blacks instead of whites.¹³⁹ He spotlighted the fact that Schoelcher was in fact reiterating the rhetoric of the *colons*’ spokesmen—Pierre Page, Augustin Brulley, and Thomas Millet—when in 1795 they prosecuted Raimond for the destruction of Saint-Domingue.¹⁴⁰ Bissette asked: isn’t it strange that the self-proclaimed abolitionist agreed with the spokesmen of colonial interest?

In his alternative narrative of emancipation, Bissette insisted that both Ogé and Raimond pursued the equal rights of free people of color as a commencement for liberating black slaves. The intention of mulattoes and free blacks was to follow the policy line suggested by the

¹³⁷ Belonging to Creole elites, Hidalgo and Allende were executed by Spanish army in the opening of the Independence War.

¹³⁸ Most of Schoelcher’s description of Ogé came from *colons*’ propaganda: Page, Brulley, Thomas Millet, Daugy, Gatereau and other ex-*colons* of Saint-Domingue. See *Réfutation du livre de M. V. Schoelcher sur Haïti*, 28-29. For his part, besides Grégoire and Brissot, Bissette greatly valued the lengthy reports of Jean-Philippe Garran-Coulon on the colonial revolution. Garran-Coulon was a Conventional, hostile to the colonial party. He was the author of *Rapport sur les troubles de Saint-Domingue* (1795-97). He supported the decision of Sonthonax and Polverel to proclaim emancipation in 1793.

¹³⁹ Bissette, *Réfutation du livre de M. V. Schoelcher sur Haïti*, 71.

¹⁴⁰ The references to Page, Brulley and other *colon* spokesmen are spread widely throughout Bissette’s book. See Bissette, *Réfutation du livre de M. V. Schoelcher sur Haïti*, 26-92.

revolutionary assembly and the *Amis des noirs*. According to Bissette, both *colons* and revolutionaries knew that claiming political franchise for free people of color would lead to the destruction of the already-precarious colonial system based on color segregation, ultimately bringing about emancipation. Thus, there was a good chance of accomplishing liberty and equality without revolutionary violence:

All this proves that only the mulattoes and free blacks had reason, only they wanted to save the country from incendiaries and murders; because they wanted, with the National Assembly, with the friends of the Revolution, with philanthropists and *Amis des noirs*, to accomplish liberty and equality, without incendiaries, without the misfortunes that accompany civil war.¹⁴¹

In this sense, Bissette invoked the decree of May 15, 1791, which promised equal political rights for qualified free people of color, as a most glorious moment that could have started a peaceful colonial revolution and emancipation.¹⁴² It was only after this path to liberty was obstructed by the obstinacy of planters that the free people of color joined with the black slaves. Bissette thereby insinuated that the *gens de couleur libres* would choose the same side if the abolition of slavery was denied once again. He implied that the present time was a turning point in history, as it had been in a similar way during the French Revolution; French colonies could be secured only by emancipation.

The last figure over which Bissette and Schoelcher disputed was Alexandre Pétion, the first and lifetime president of the Republic of Haiti (1806-18). By this point, they were arguing over the present state of Haiti. Schoelcher regarded the hero worship of Pétion in Haiti as the embodiment of the mulatto propaganda for perpetuating their hegemony over the black populace.

¹⁴¹ Bissette, *Réfutation du livre de M. V. Schoelcher sur Haïti*, 53.

¹⁴² Bissette, *Réfutation du livre de M. V. Schoelcher sur Haïti*, 88-90.

In the government-fabricated official narrative, Pétion was worshiped as the founder of the Haitian nation, usurping the place Schoelcher reserved only for Toussaint Louverture. Annoyed and angered, Schoelcher said that it was in Haiti that the black general was the least honored. In Haiti, he suggested that a normal government should be composed of the representatives of the majority of the population, that is, “a black government.”¹⁴³

This sparked Bissette’s strong opposition. Bissette insisted that there was no division between mulattoes and blacks in Haiti. According to Bissette, Schoelcher’s ignorance of colonial situations induced him to judge the complicated color relationship in Haiti in terms of a dichotomy between mulattoes and blacks. Even if Haiti still suffered from political disorder, it was not caused by the conflict between the two color groups. Bissette insisted that mulattoes and blacks were on both sides of the conflicting parties. He argued that Schoelcher’s mistake was to apply to Haiti the lens used for observing the slavery societies still dominated by color distinctions. After independence and the expulsion of whites, skin color no longer played a vital role in Haiti: “In Haiti, there is a nation whose citizens are free and equal in laws; their citizens are called Haitians, just as we call French all the citizens of the kingdom of France, even if they are yellow, white, red, brown, or black.”¹⁴⁴

Here Bissette and Schoelcher respectively represented the opposing sides of the competing national narratives of Haiti—what David Nicholls calls the “mulatto legend” and the *noiriste* counternarrative.¹⁴⁵ In fact, Bissette reproduced what the “mulatto legend” dictated

¹⁴³ Schoelcher, *Colonies étrangères et Haïti*, tome.2, 241.

¹⁴⁴ Bissette, *Réfutation du livre de M. V. Schoelcher sur Haïti*, 113-14.

¹⁴⁵ See Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier*.

about the past of the island, quoting from mulatto historians like Charles Malo. As the historians of Haiti show, there *did* exist a conflict and distinction between light-skinned elites and the black masses in the postindependence Haiti.¹⁴⁶ The mulatto ideology invented the national cult of the mixed-blood leaders like Ogé, Rigaud, and Pétion as founding fathers of the Haitian nation. The claim of common African origin served to consolidate national unity, while disavowing the class rift among the Haitians of different complexions. The spokesmen of this legend insisted that any remark on the color division in Haiti was part of the scheme to foment discord in the allegedly united nation. In his book, Schoelcher attacked the government-fabricated historical narrative glorifying wealthy mulatto elites as the origin of Haitian liberty, at the expense of Toussaint Louverture and other black chiefs. When he lamented that Haitian historians sacrificed their erudition for the hegemony of the mulatto ruling elite, Schoelcher was on more solid ground than Bissette.¹⁴⁷

Why did Bissette cling to the ideology of the ruling mulatto elite of Haiti when a series of political crisis in Haiti from 1843 generally discredited the mulatto leadership among French abolitionists? Beside his pride of the men of his “own” class who ruled the first emancipation society, he gave priority to the strategic position of Haiti in the antislavery debates. As long as Haiti stood as the evidence of abolitionism and African perfectibility, any remark on the defects of the island cannot help being twisted by the proslavery advocates. In the writings of the ex-*colons* of Saint-Domingue, the tyranny of mulattoes over black masses had been the very pretext for calling for the reconquest of the island. If such a remark came from an abolitionist, it was all

¹⁴⁶ About the social history of Haiti, see the bibliographic information in Introduction.

¹⁴⁷ Bongie, “C’est du papier,” 462.

the more dangerous to the cause of emancipation—Bissette bitterly remarked how proslavery spokesmen relished turning the Schoelcher's book on its head. Bissette cited an example from a proslavery journal in the US that had already used Schoelcher's work to provoke a civil war in Haiti.¹⁴⁸ Because of the still highly-contested status of Haiti in the antislavery battle, Bissette believed in preserving its idealist image for the greater good.

More fundamentally, he problematized the French observers' way of regarding Haiti as only a theater or a testing ground for abolitionism and black perfectibility, and of measuring every event in Haiti as a testimony, symbol, or symptom of a greater cause or its failure. Bissette thought that once Haiti joined the civilized nations, it should be treated as a normal nation-state, with a normal amount of vice and virtue. Throughout the entire book, he repeatedly demanded that his readers reconsider their questions about the qualities of Haitians by asking themselves if they would ask the same questions of French history: "Therefore do not accuse only Haitians for that [being imperfect], because they could tell you: 'For the virtues that you demand from us poor Africans to be white, do you know many whites who are worthy of being black?'"¹⁴⁹

Nonetheless, concerning the symbolic "mission" of Haiti, Bissette was torn between conflicting impulses. While he was opposed to the ways in which European abolitionists confined Haiti to the antislavery discursive track, Bissette was still carrying the torch for Haiti. In Bissette's vision, Haiti should embody more than a postemancipation society: the newborn republic was the successor to an antiracist revolution. Bissette believed that Haitian nationalism had the transformative power to surmount color prejudice inherited from slavery society. Since

¹⁴⁸ Bissette, *Réfutation du livre de M. V. Schoelcher sur Haïti*, 140. The USA article brought about an angry response from Haiti (*Sentinelle de la Liberté*, November 15, 1843).

¹⁴⁹ Bissette, *Réfutation du livre de M. V. Schoelcher sur Haïti*, 101.

the independence of Haiti in 1802, its rulers had stressed how it was born from the combination of anticolonial and antiracist struggles: Haiti was the first nation to overcome racism and colonialism at the same time. The War of Independence not only expelled whites, but also created the Haitian nation beyond color lines. Dessalines's Declaration of Haitian Independence in 1804 proclaimed that a decade of war against slavery and colonial powers formed a pact of blood among all the Haitians. All the Haitian rulers had been emphatic about this transcending nature of Haitian nationalism, built upon emancipation and anticolonial war.

Embracing this vision, Bissette drew a clear line between the colonial past and the postcolonial present in Haiti. Even if Haiti was far from being free of its colonial legacies, Bissette assumed that it had made a wholly new start with emancipation and independence, and thus the new nation defied any framework for observing the colonial situation that came from the past, especially ones predicated on color distinctions. Bissette blamed Schoelcher for being blind to this new national unity and for confining Haitian people in the cage of color prejudice that he thought they had already overcome.

This position was deeply affected by Bissette's conception of racism. In contrast to the abolitionists of the SFAE who thought fighting color prejudice could bring about emancipation, Bissette regarded racism as a by-product of slavery. He supposed that since the slave trade and slavery existed, people had made the habit of dividing humans in two groups—masters and slaves, or freemen and slaves—extracting color prejudice from this situation. Back in 1840, Bissette had positively reviewed Schoelcher's article as defying the very habit of color prejudice. Bissette concluded two things from his review of the history of slavery: "first, that the prejudice of skin color is a sort of modern idea; second that, because it is certain that this prejudice is not

related in any way to primitive times and to the antique civilizations, it is in consequence only an accident, and that it should disappear with these circumstances.”¹⁵⁰ In Bissette’s eyes, Schoelcher was now reverting to the old color prejudice by perpetuating color division in a postemancipation society. Because color prejudice was nothing substantial without the institution of slavery, Bissette predicted that emancipation would be accompanied by the end of racism, facilitating the fusion of different colors.

Therefore, when Schoelcher suggested “a normal government” in Haiti should be “black,” Bissette argued that the French abolitionist lost sight of this historical process that made color differences meaningless in postemancipation Haiti. Once the Haitian Constitution and universal suffrage guaranteed the legitimacy of the present government, questioning it in the name of racial dominance was an expression of European hubris, and harmful because such a statement could lead to creating the very color distinctions that it intended to rectify.

A half of century later, this vision would find its way to a neighboring island, postindependence Cuba. José Martí, the leader and ideologue of Cuban independence, articulated Cuban nationalism as surpassing racism and forming interracial bonds. Anticolonial struggles dismantled the racial differences and created Cubans neither white nor black.¹⁵¹ Certainly, this national discourse for a colorless society had potential and “provided a set of legitimate principles and goals for those who sought to turn the ideal into a tangible reality.”¹⁵² In Haiti as

¹⁵⁰ *Revue des colonies*, vol.7, no.3 (September 1840): 82.

¹⁵¹ Ada Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba: Race, Nation, and Revolution, 1868–1898* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999) ; Alejandro de la Fuente, “Race, National Discourse, and Politics in Cuba: An Overview,” *Latin American Perspectives* 25, no. 3 (May 1998): 43-69.

¹⁵² De la Fuente, “Race, National Discourse, and Politics in Cuba,” 45.

well as in postrevolutionary Cuba, however, the emphasis on national unity too often worked to suppress open discussion of persisting racial discriminations and class problems. It is undeniable that Bissette's valorizing discourse of Haiti exempted the ruling class of Haiti from criticism, just as Cuban elites justified the subordination of the black mass in the name of racial equality. Demanding silence on race issue, Bissette often confused a colorless society as a goal, with one as a reality. Once again, Haiti was a place where postcolonial problems were displayed in advance.

Three Abolitionist Places, Africa, Haiti, and France: Bissette's Transatlantic Vision of Liberation and Redefining the French Nation

Recently, some postcolonial scholars have taken notice of Bissette's unique position in French abolitionism. In particular, two literary critics highlight Bissette's distinctive spatial sense in expanding the conventionally imagined geography of French abolitionism by introducing transatlantic and diasporic links. Anna Brickhouse situates Bissette's journals in the making of a francophone transamerican literary world. When francophone print culture in favor of abolitionism was repressed in other places, the *Revue* provided "a collective forum for the literary and political dissent of its Caribbean contributors."¹⁵³ The *Revue*'s extended horizon gives us a glimpse of "a larger and still emerging story shaping a transamerican public sphere."¹⁵⁴ In a similar vein, Bryant illuminates Bissette's role in the constitution of a

¹⁵³ Brickhouse, "A Francophone View of Comparative American Literature," 87.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

francophone black diaspora. With much interest in Africa and Africans, Bissette's journal "demonstrated links between blacks in Senegal, blacks in France, and blacks in the French Antillean and Indian Ocean colonies, creating a self-conscious francophone black diaspora that occupied the political space of the French empire but that possessed affective ties that extended beyond."¹⁵⁵

Both Brickhouse and Bryant focus on Bissette's transatlantic or diasporic vision that linked the French-speaking blacks in France, Africa, and the Americas. It leads us to inquire into the nature of the "African Diaspora" in Bissette's discourse. Was Bissette a pioneer of the African Diaspora? Throughout his career and works, it is clearly shown that Bissette's primary goal was the political emancipation of the *gens de couleur libres* and their full inclusion in the French national community. His discourse for redeeming the quality of the black or "African" race was deployed to construct an affirmative identity for the people of color. The *Revue* gathered the fruits of the French-speaking transamerican black literary world: Victor Séjour (New Orleans), L.-T. Houat (Île Bourbon), and Ignace Nau (Haiti). Bissette's project was inherently double: self-consciously collecting and shaping the transatlantic/diasporic voices of the people of color; and presenting the glorious group of educated and culturally-refined men of color fighting for liberty as an admission ticket to the French national community.

Therefore, although Bissette redefined his skin color not as a liability, but as a credential in the antislavery struggle, his core identity was French. It was on this French identity that a constellation of other identities centered. There is a triangular vision embedded in his abolitionist project, linking Africa, Haiti, and France. In this spatial scheme, Africa is "the site of origin

¹⁵⁵ Bryant, "Black But Not African," 256.

without the corollary of return.”¹⁵⁶ Overcoming white racism against blacks, he took great pains to redeem the “Dark Continent” by evoking its glorious past and ancient civilizations. Yet Africa was a place for the past, never a homeland to return. The variety of people populating Africa were mostly alien to Bissette, an acculturated French man of color. Although he aligned himself with the struggle of the people of color in French Senegal, Bissette felt no affinity with the Algerians under French invasion, whom he called Moors, Turks, and Berbers.¹⁵⁷ In Bissette’s configuration of imperial space, there was a profound difference between the “indigenes” or “barbarians” of Algeria, and the “blacks” of French colonies.¹⁵⁸ It was beyond dispute that Africa was far behind in the march of civilization, suffering from the slave trade and indigenous slavery. Liberating the people of color from the yoke of planters’ tyranny in the French colonies would be a decisive step for civilizing Africa. Thus, in the words of Bryant, Bissette was “Black But Not African.”

Haiti was at the center of the story Bissette tried to retell about slavery, emancipation, and liberty. The history of the French and Haitian Revolutions recast by Bissette reminded the *hommes de couleur libres* of their initiative in the first abolition of slavery, for which French abolitionists rarely gave them credit. The writings of the Haitian writers and poets that Bissette so diligently published in the *Revue* showed off the fine qualities of Haitian society and Haitians on their way toward civilization. However, although Bissette took trouble to justify the independent state of the Haitian Republic, he and his mulatto colleagues had absolutely no desire

¹⁵⁶ Bryant, “Black But Not African,” 253.

¹⁵⁷ *Revue des colonies*, vol.3, no.8 (February 1837): 314.

¹⁵⁸ Bryant, “Black But Not African,” 271-72.

to promote black nationalism as a political option for colonial people. Secession from the metropole was a traitorous scheme on the part of white planters, to block out the “lights” from France, and to maintain slavery and color segregation. In Bissette’s story, Haiti was forced to secede from the metropole by the errors committed by greedy planters and the ill-advised Napoleon. The birth of Haiti was thus far from a historical necessity. Though standing as a glorious example, Haiti could never be an appropriate political model for other French colonies to follow.

The real homeland was France, “the longed-for political nation from which *hommes de couleur* remained in exile.”¹⁵⁹ In Bissette’s vision, both Africa and Haiti were a kind of bridge connecting them to the final destination, France. They were the places that testified to the essential fact that people of color deserved to be fully included into the French national community. In the process, Bissette intended to redefine the French nation. Bissette, along with metropolitan abolitionists, revived the old maxim of “Free French Soil.” In supporting the lawsuits for the freedom of black slaves brought to France, Bissette reminded the French public of “the miracle of the French soil,” and demanded that France resume its glorious tradition.¹⁶⁰ Yet the most important source for Bissette was the tradition of the French Revolution. By emphatically evoking the glorious precedent of the Great Revolution, Bissette urged the metropole to remember that the French nation was built upon the acts of collective political will, not upon any specific skin color or ancestry. He reworked the idea of France as “a universal

¹⁵⁹ Bryant, “Black But Not African,” 253.

¹⁶⁰ See Bissette, *Lettres politiques sur les colonies*, 1-34. He sent letters to Lamartine (January 25, 1845), La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt (March 15, 1845) and the Ministry of Marine and Colonies (multiple times in January, 1845) for the freedom of slaves brought to France.

nation,” proclaimed by revolutionary France to disintegrate its territorial or ethnic boundary, and uphold its liberating mission as the core of the nationhood. When Bissette envisioned the metropole as an ideal—preferably republican—France, the memory of revolutionary France served to fortify this mythical image of the *Mère-Patrie* as the only recourse against plantocracy and color prejudice.

L.-T. Houat, Bissette’s young colleague, aptly expressed this vision in his poems. A mulatto born in Île Bourbon, Houat was the Bissette of the July Monarchy. In 1835, Houat and other mulattoes were arrested and prosecuted for instigating a slave rebellion. One of the charges against him was that he had the *Revue des colonies* and other “seditious” abolitionist materials. Bissette passionately publicized this case, “Affaire Houat,” or “Affaire Bourbon” as another demonstration of colonial injustice.¹⁶¹ Houat, expelled from Bourbon, came to France just as Bissette had ten years previously. In a poem entitled “To France” and published in 1838, Houat, an exile from his native island, embraced France as a “home” to correct injustice and end his exile.¹⁶² In his poem, Houat said that when others proclaimed a negro or a mulatto had no

¹⁶¹ About *Affaire Houat*, see the issues of *Revue des colonies* (September 1836; December 1836; March 1837; April 1837; May 1837; June 1837). L.-T. Houat, *Mémoire pour Louis Timagène Houat* (Paris: Félix Malteste et Cie, 1838) The prosecutor, Charles-Ogé Barbaroux, also published his mémoire about the case, *De l'application de l'amnistie du 8 mai 1837 aux condamnés de l'île Bourbon, et du mémoire de M. Houat, l'un des amnistiés* (Paris: Gratiot et J.-B. Gros, 1838). About the life of Houat, see Mercer Cook, “The Life and Writings of Louis T. Houat,” *The Journal of Negro History* 24, no. 2. (April 1939): 185-98.

¹⁶² Houat, *Un proscrit de l'île de Bourbon à Paris* (Paris: F. Malteste, 1838), 19-24. The poems of Houat were published in the *Revue* as paramount evidence of the talent of people of color. About this poem, see Vergès, *Monsters and Revolutionaries*, 35-37.

fatherland, France “adopted” him in her “beautiful maternal bosom” and declared him to be her own son.¹⁶³

.....

Even if my skin color is African
The glance that penetrates into my veins
Sees there the French blood!¹⁶⁴

As Françoise Vergès says, this representation of the metropole as a protective mother against the abuses by colonial plantocracy echoed the republican allegories of the revolutionary era.¹⁶⁵ The mulatto abolitionists thus confirmed and reasserted the metropolitan vision of France and its universal mission proclaimed by the Great Revolution. The present *monarchie censitaire* was undoubtedly failing to keep up with this glorious vision.

Bissette’s spatial vision linking three abolitionist places challenges the conventional definition of diasporic identity, as opposed to national identity. Although the research on Bissette adopts the term “diaspora,” or “African Diaspora,” to indicate his allegiance to the imagined community of people of color scattered over the Atlantic World, the political positions and cultures of African American communities have historically been, and currently are, so diverse that these groups challenge any uniform definition. As Rogers Brubaker and others point out, the uses of “diaspora” have recently multiplied to such an extent that its meanings have become dispersed and attenuated. Against the trend of deflating diaspora, Brubaker suggests “de-

¹⁶³ Houat, *Un proscrit de l'île de Bourbon à Paris*, 20. The translation comes from Vergès, *Monsters and Revolutionaries*, 36.

¹⁶⁴ Houat, *Un proscrit de l'île de Bourbon à Paris*, 20. The translation is my own.

¹⁶⁵ Vergès, *Monsters and Revolutionaries*, 36-37.

substantializing” it: “rather than speak of ‘a diaspora’ or ‘the diaspora’ as an entity, a bounded group, an ethnodemographic or ethnocultural fact, it may be more fruitful, and certainly more precise, to speak of diasporic stances, projects, claims, idioms, practices, and so on.”¹⁶⁶ He also argues that the tendency to take diaspora as the antithesis of the nation-state has a risk or countereffect of essentializing “national identity” as something perpetual and homogeneous.¹⁶⁷

When we grapple with Brubaker’s suggestion, Bissette’s group politics betrays a peculiar diasporic project within the French Empire that did not premise the existence of a bounded entity. This disenfranchised group, who were neither black nor white, presented its diasporic identity as a ticket for inclusion into the French nation—a nation that they redefined as a political entity redeemed by the Revolution and emancipation. Thus, Bissette’s antislavery politics shows how diasporic identity served to intervene in and extend the French national identity, revealing the nexus of transatlantic (African Diaspora), national (French), and local (Caribbean) identities. Thus I understand Bissette’s ambivalent politics concerning the African Diaspora not so much in postcolonial terms of ambiguity or of hybridity as a way of negotiating the French national identity. As Brubaker says, “The conceptual antithesis between nation-state and diaspora obscures more than it reveals.”¹⁶⁸ Bissette’s attempts to navigate the African Diaspora toward France are a testament to the enduring importance of national identity as a unit of analysis intersecting other deterritorialized identities.

¹⁶⁶ Rogers Brubaker, “The ‘Diaspora’ Diaspora,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 28, no.1 (2005): 13.

¹⁶⁷ Brubaker, “The ‘Diaspora’ Diaspora,” 10.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

Conclusion

Frederick Cooper and Ann Stoler said that “a most basic tension of empire” is “how a grammar of difference was continuously and vigilantly crafted as people in colonies refashioned and contested European claims to superiority.”¹⁶⁹ Living as an exile at the center of the French Empire, Bissette embodied this tension of empire. At the fringe of the French Empire, or readjusting the boundary of the empire, Bissette and his mulatto colleagues intervened incessantly in the dominant metropolitan discourse concerning slavery, emancipation, race, and colonies, and disclosed the unheeded similarity between abolitionist and proslavery discourses. His forte was the revisionism of the history of the French and Haitian Revolutions. Through his revised narratives, Bissette complicated the binary definition of colonial slavery—a Hegelian division of masters and slaves, between whom metropolitan philanthropists (and the French state) were supposed to intervene to speak for the otherwise voiceless black slaves. He introduced another important agency, the *gens de couleur libres*, to French abolitionism. Bissette pitted metropolitan abolitionists’ assumed authority against “us Negroes and mulattoes,” and posed the essential question of “Who can speak for/as the Other?”¹⁷⁰

This does not, however, mean that Bissette’s identity politics embraced the essentialist definition of race, or pursued any separate identity for the people of color. Rather he deconstructed the planter ideology’s rigid definition of race, and showed how the meticulously

¹⁶⁹ Frederick Cooper and Ann Stoler, “Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda,” in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 4.

¹⁷⁰ Bongie, “C’est du papier,” 465.

drawn chart of color shades was artificial and ridiculous. He tried to redefine the category of *hommes de couleur* not as any specific racial group, but as an inclusive political category for denoting all the non-whites, bound by their common experience under slavery and plantocracy. His efforts to redeem the quality of the black race through the examples of Africans and Haitians aimed to prove they deserved to be fully incorporated into the French national community, where skin color was to lose meaning after emancipation.

Bissette's "nativism" therefore, which was a half-step toward assimilation, did not promote the people of color as the actor of emancipation. He made it clear that liberation should come from the metropolitan state. Bissette neither questioned the legitimacy of the metropole to intervene in colonial affairs, nor called to account the metropole's long history of complicity in colonial slavery. France redeemed herself with the Great Revolution. What Vergès calls a "colonial family romance" was born in the French Revolution. The Great Revolution revolutionized, like everything else, the metropolitan-colonial relationship, by transforming blatant exploitation into an affective tie between family members. The French republican "fable" about colonial expansion was that "Colonization was the expansion of republican brotherhood, and France was *La Mère-Patrie*, protecting her colonized children from the abuse of local tyrants."¹⁷¹ Although this vision was institutionally installed by the colonial officials of the Second and Third Republics, it should be noted that Bissette and his mulatto colleagues were promoting this notion earlier than those metropolitan apostles of order and labor.

During the July Monarchy, Bissette insisted that France was indebted to her colored subjects because the French Revolution had promised liberty and equality regardless of skin

¹⁷¹ Vergès, *Monsters and Revolutionaries*, 4.

color. Once the Second Republic fulfilled this promise through the abolition of slavery and universal suffrage, it was the colonial people who were indebted to the French Republic. In light of this reasoning, Bissette's "betrayal" was not so out of the blue.¹⁷² In the early years before the 1833 colonial reform, Bissette carefully coupled his own class with the white property class, in that both classes had a great stake in colonial security against slave rebellions. By the 1840s, Bissette sided with the black slaves in advocating immediate abolition of slavery as a crucial measure for colonial regeneration. After the Second Republic abolished slavery, he joined the party of the metropolitan authority and property class, becoming "the spokesman of the Creoles and the Martinican Party of Order."¹⁷³ Once the Republic fulfilled her promise of abolition and political inclusion, the duty of the freed people was to forget the past and repay France with gratitude and hard labor.

Bissette's abolitionism was thus a strange mixture of conformity and insurgency, of colonial discourse, anticolonial criticism, and postcolonial questions. In postcolonialist terms, he was "writing back" both *against* and *into* the Empire. It is therefore superficial to define Bissette as a vanguard of the black consciousness or to distinguish him as the "black" intellectual from Schoelcher the Frenchman.¹⁷⁴ Rather, Bissette's story complicates and blurs the line between

¹⁷² Bissette's political choices after 1848 were deeply influenced by his isolation in the abolitionist circle. At the outbreak of the 1848 Revolution, Schoelcher, supported by the inner circle of the Provisional Government, presided over the proclamation of emancipation. He excluded Bissette from the process of making the abolitionist decree in 1848. As Schoelcher preoccupied the place of candidate for republicans, Bissette turned on Schoelcher's enemies to gather support. See Schmidt, *Abolitionnistes de l'esclavage*, 339-48.

¹⁷³ Vigier, "The Reconstruction of the French Abolitionist Movement under the July Monarchy," in *The Abolitions of Slavery*, 250-51.

¹⁷⁴ Bongie, "C'est du papier," 466.

resistance and accommodation in narrating colonial history, problematizing the binary model itself. In what Bongie described as “mimetic rivalry,”¹⁷⁵ the confrontation and entanglement between Bissette and Schoelcher reveals a fuller picture of antislavery politics in the French Empire, which the binary model of resistance and complacency cannot grasp. Their rivalry demonstrates “the complex relations that join these two men together in their every attempt at differentiating themselves from one another.”¹⁷⁶ If Bongie and Bryant explain Bissette’s politics in terms of ambivalence in postcolonial discourse or the ambiguity inherent in the concept of the African Diaspora, then this chapter has intended to explain it by focusing on his project of assimilationism for *gens de couleur libres* that appropriated his “heterological” discourse about colonies and race.

In a very personal prologue to her book, Françoise Vergès, a native of French Reunion, asks, “What was the importance of the French republican ideal of liberty, equality, fraternity for the colonial movement of emancipation?”¹⁷⁷ This was also a crucial question for Bissette in his attempt to forge a legitimate place for his own people. Vergès says, “The great narratives of emancipation weigh on us, imprisoning us, and yet they offer us the means to escape.”¹⁷⁸ For Bissette, the memory of the two revolutions, French and Haitian, worked in a similar way, both enabling him to conceive alternative narratives and countersubjectivity and confining the effects of his dissenting discourse to the hegemony of French assimilationism and republicanism.

¹⁷⁵ Bongie, *Islands and Exiles*, 313-14.

¹⁷⁶ Bongie, “C’est du papier,” 466.

¹⁷⁷ Vergès, *Monsters and Revolutionaries*, 1.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

CHAPTER VI. CONCLUSION: Reprocessing the Haitian Revolution and Haiti through Modern Political History

The Moment of Emancipation in 1848

In 1848, French slavery was once again abolished through a metropolitan revolution. When the February Revolution overthrew the July monarchy and proclaimed the Second Republic, the Provisional Government was staffed with many SFAE republicans and their colleagues. If the Revolution of 1789 found its antislavery radicalism in Sonthonax and Polverel, then the February Revolution had Schoelcher as a figure of radical abolitionism. Schoelcher had the support of his friends in the Provisional Government—François Arago (Minister of Marine and Colonies) in particular. He played a leading role in drafting the decree of emancipation: first as Undersecretary of State for the Navy and Colonies (a position created to deliberate emancipation) and as President of the Commission for the abolition of slavery (established by the March 4 decree).¹

Schoelcher urged the leaders of the new regime to push the issue of emancipation to completion in the shortest time possible. Once the Republic was proclaimed, he predicted it was

¹ About the process of emancipation in 1848, see Jennings, *The French Anti-slavery*, 275-84; Schmidt, *Abolitionnistes de l'esclavage*, 319-86; Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery*, 507-12; Régent, *La France et ses esclaves*; Nelly Schmidt, *Victor Schœlcher et l'abolition de l'esclavage* (Paris: Fayard, 1994); Nelly Schmidt, "The Drafting of the 1848 Decrees" in *The Abolitions of Slavery*; Lara, *La liberté assassinée*; Maâti Monjib, "Victor Schoelcher et l'abolition de l'esclavage" in *Esclavage et abolition*; Girollet, *Victor Schoelcher*; Fabienne Federini, *L'abolition de l'esclavage de 1848: une lecture de Victor Schoelcher* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1998). About the Commission of the Abolition of Slavery, see Jacques Adélaïde-Merlande, "La commission d'abolition de l'esclavage," *Bulletin de la société d'histoire de la Guadeloupe*, nos. 53-4 (1981): 3-34.

only a matter of time until the colonies were thrown into disorder once again if emancipation was not delivered in a timely manner. Under these circumstances, the memory of the Haitian Revolution as the epitome of a slave revolt was resurrected with full force, both voluntarily and involuntarily. Against the now-desperate colonial lobby and still-hesitant policy makers of the Commission, Schoelcher declared that immediate abolition was the only way to avoid another Saint-Domingue.² He argued that the black slaves would naturally expect emancipation from the French Republic, but this was not just powerful rhetoric meant to press for immediate abolition—it was a genuine belief based on his knowledge of revolutionary history in the French colonies.

The news of the February Revolution took until late March to arrive in the colonies, and the black slaves and free people of color were agitated upon receiving it. The arrival of every boat carrying French news created scenes of political anxiety. Blacks were seen migrating from plantations for cities. As the news of the Republic was declared, even the planters were certain that emancipation would be “one of the first acts of the Republic.”³ They were terrified that history might repeat itself—the bloody Terror of 1793 and the “butchery” of Saint-Domingue reenacted.⁴ The colonial officials were confronted by escalating worries and were anxious to

² Schmidt, *Abolitionnistes de l'esclavage*, 328.

³ Pierre Dessalles, *Sugar and Slavery, Family and Race: The Letters and Diary of Pierre Dessalles, Planter in Martinique, 1808-1856*, translated and edited by Elborg Forster and Robert Forster (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 206. The original work in French is Léo Élisabeth and Henri de Frémont, eds., *La vie d'un colon à la Martinique au XIXe siècle* (Courbevoie: Frémont, 1986).

⁴ See the entries from March to May (1848) in Dessalles' diaries. Dessalles, *Sugar and Slavery, Family and Race*, 206-17. In the original French version, see Dessalles, *La vie d'un colon à la Martinique*, vol.4, 25-44.

keep order.⁵ In fact, the governor of Martinique abolished slavery even before the emancipation decree (April 27) arrived from the metropole. In Martinique, a series of commotions developed into outright revolt on May 22 and in fear of an all-out slave revolt, the governor proclaimed emancipation the next day—a decision that the governor of Guadeloupe soon made as well under similar circumstances.⁶ Thus, the effects of the revolutionary legacies accumulated into a synthesis of overlapping initiatives—abolitionists’ threats and slaves’ actions—that Dubois suggests to be “a connection rooted in the history of the 1790s.”⁷

If the revolutionary circumstances revived the idea of Saint-Domingue as a paragon of colonial violence, then Haiti entered the debate on impending abolition as an example of failed emancipation. When the Commission for the abolition of slavery was debating whether to grant the freedmen full political rights, none other than Isambert opposed it with a reference to Haiti. The anarchy in Haiti proved that the “negro race” should not be given full political rights before they had sufficiently cultivated their intellectual faculty.⁸ A petition against full emancipation even asserted that Saint-Domingue/Haiti was proof that the labor regime conceived by

⁵ Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery*, 496-99.

⁶ This situation made the two conflicting memories and two frameworks for explaining emancipation: Schoelcher and the victory of French republicanism on the one hand and insurgent slaves and their revolt leading to local emancipation on the other hand. Instead of these binary frameworks, I want to present this as another instance of revolutionary emancipationism made out of the metropolitan-colonial interactions. See Bongie, *Friends and Enemies*, 200; Edouard Delépine, “22 May 1848: Against ‘Tropical Neo-Revisionism’” in *The Abolition of Slavery*, 314-17.

⁷ Dubois, “The Road to 1848,” 157.

⁸ Girollet, *Victor Schoelcher*, 249; *Abolition de l’esclavage: procès-verbaux, rapports et projets de décrets de la commission instituée pour préparer l’acte d’abolition immédiate de l’esclavage* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1848), March 14, 1848, 72-73.

“socialists” would lead to the disintegration of society.⁹ Haiti was no longer upheld as an example of freedom as it had been in the 1820s and 1830s. While France anticipated setting a grand example of emancipation, Haiti only served as a lesson learned from failure.

The debates surrounding the creation of the emancipation decree therefore demonstrate that the terms “Haitian Revolution” and “Haiti” had become interchangeable. They referred to the failure of emancipation in both process and result: an out-of-control slave revolt and the failure of the free labor system. It resulted in the disappearance of Haitian memories from a Pantheon of French emancipation now crowded with French republican imaginaries. Later in 1864, Adolph Gatine recollected the moment of emancipation as “a Nativity in the human family”: the Second Republic overcame the stigma of Saint-Domingue and fulfilled the glorious revolution of 1789 by redeeming 250,000 slaves.¹⁰

This erasure process was accelerated by postemancipation politics. According to Schmidt, the emancipation language in practice was “order, work, gratitude to the liberating Republic and the forgetting of the past.”¹¹ As the abolition of slavery was presented as “a gift of freedom” given by the metropole, it erased colonial resistance and agency, and made colonial people indebted to the metropole.¹² Moreover, once emancipation was implemented, the “*la politique de l’oubli* (politics of forgetting)” that characterized the post-1848 colonial regime was put into effect: the history of slavery was forgotten in order to assimilate the colonies and pursue

⁹ Schmidt, *Abolitionnistes de l’esclavage*, 366.

¹⁰ Adolphe Gatine, *Souvenirs d’un abolitionniste* (Paris: Cordier, 1864).

¹¹ Schmidt, *Abolitionnistes de l’esclavage*, 374.

¹² See Vergès, *Monsters and Revolutionaries*; Wood, *The Horrible Gift of Freedom*.

social reconciliation.¹³ In 1848, when the French Republic fulfilled the promise of the French Revolution, it was the colonial people who were expected to be grateful and move on, leaving behind the unsavory past. Together with slavery, the Haitian Revolution and other revolutionary stories of Caribbean liberty fighters were thrown into compulsory oblivion. From 1848 onward, the repression of memory, or “blocked memory” that Ricoeur identifies as a very common practice of memory abuse,¹⁴ would be a main mechanism in “Silencing the Haitian Revolution.”

***Revolutionary Legacies in French Abolitionism
and “Silencing” the Haitian Revolution***

In the preceding chapters, my thesis has worked toward three goals. First, it demonstrated the key role of the legacies of the French and Haitian Revolutions in shaping French antislavery discourse. The Revolution from 1789 to 1804 significantly changed the direction of the French antislavery debate in the nineteenth century. Revolutionary abolition produced a radical precedent of emancipation—revolutionary emancipationism—that the following generations had to consult when considering slavery and the colonies. It also imposed on French abolitionists a crucial mission to overcome the revolutionary stigmas and re-legitimize abolitionism. Their efforts here struck at the heart of French domestic politics because contestations over revolutionary antislavery were part of the conflict over the interpretations of the French Revolution. Lastly, as a result of revolutionary history, the Haitian Revolution and the situation

¹³ Myriam Cottias, “La politique de l’oubli.”

¹⁴ Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 69.

of postindependence Haiti were installed as a critical element in French antislavery debate. By critiquing the uniform image of the Haitian Revolution as fearful and traumatic, this project excavated the multiplicity of its meanings for different groups in shifting political situations. It also emphasized the importance of the example of Haiti as the first society born out of general liberty and as proof of the equal capability of blacks, while examining how postindependence Haiti challenged the French abolitionists' ideas of post-emancipation society.

Second, by tackling revolutionary legacies, this project has delved into a wider array of issues engendered by the antislavery debate. It delineated the overlapping and often conflicting concepts of Frenchness, race, and colonialism contested by various groups who sought to appropriate revolutionary examples. By investigating the dispute over the status of colonial groups in the French national community, my thesis argues that the negotiations over French citizenship and Frenchness were at the center of the antislavery debate. The refugee *colons* and the colonial party tried to reestablish the prerevolutionary meaning of Frenchness defined in terms of whiteness and economic contribution to the French Empire. On the opposing side, in their efforts for inclusion, Bissette and the free people of color attempted to redefine French citizenship as being expanded by the Revolution and emancipation and to deracialize the French body politic. Antislavery liberals and republicans discredited the *colons'* narrow definition of Frenchness and established emancipation as a manifestation of the French national character and an inherently inclusive project. Yet their predominant politico-cultural discourse of "civilization" structured cultural and social differences as issues that needed to be resolved through assimilation before the colonial subjects "deserved" French citizenship.

Contestations over Frenchness were linked to those over “Africanness” or “blackness.” The competing meanings of “black” or “African” reveal a variety of politico-cultural idioms that articulated “blackness” in relation to the battle for or against emancipation. The French abolitionists regarded Haiti as testimony to “African perfectibility” and a pioneer for conveying (French) civilization to Africa; while the proslavery party made “Africanness” antithetical to Frenchness through their condemnation of black rebels’ “African savagery” and of Haiti becoming “another Africa.” Bissette presented the splendid work of the francophone Black Atlantic as a ticket for its inclusion into the French nation, while the mulatto ruling elite of Haiti upheld their republic as an icon of black dignity but abhorred “African” customs in favor of French-style culture. Bound by their common zeal for emancipation, all the antislavery groups—metropolitan abolitionists, free-colored abolitionists, and Haitian elites—reaffirmed and reproduced the negative images of Africa as an object of antislavery missions.

The position of Africa in French antislavery debate leads us to question the relationship between abolitionism and colonialism. Abolitionists criticized the old practices of colonialism—slavery, color discrimination, plantocracy, and mercantilism—as the origins of the Haitian Revolution and insisted that only colonial reforms could prevent another Saint-Domingue. However, this criticism was not channeled into an anti-colonial stance. Instead, colonialism itself was refashioned to be part of an emancipation project in the guise of recivilizing the colonies, as seen in the free trade colonialism of the Restoration and a variety of neocolonial ideas for a Franco-Haitian relationship. As Blackburn says, “Most of the great abolitionist acts had a link to the fate of empires, with antislavery sometimes helping to symbolize a new imperial vision.”¹⁵

¹⁵ Blackburn, *The American Crucible*, 459. In case of British abolitionism, Ralph Austen and

One of the appeals of antislavery was that it offered an “enlightened” vision of new colonialism, as shown in direct or indirect support of abolitionists for African colonization, although it is difficult to bind the French antislavery of the Restoration and the July Monarchy to any specific imperial project.¹⁶ Once France accomplished emancipation in its own colonies, antislavery would embellish the universal mission of the French Republic in Africa.

Third, my dissertation has traced the historical process through which the contestations over revolutionary antislavery mobilized a variety of meanings of the Haitian Revolution, and how the hegemonic narrative of the French emancipation eventually “silenced” the alternative meanings of the Haitian Revolution and Haiti, confining its meanings to the realm of colonial violence. This process shows a kind of dialect between denial and acknowledgment in making silence on the Haitian Revolution.

During the Restoration, the refugee planters were the group with the greatest interest in keeping the memory of Saint-Domingue fresh in the metropole. In fighting the official policy of the *oubli*, however, the *ex-colons*’ campaign created the groundwork for “silencing the Haitian Revolution” by situating it outside of political history. They left behind a ready-made story of

Woodruff Smith argue that abolitionism turned into an impetus to the colonization of Africa. They say, “the idea of increased, reform-oriented English penetration into Africa became a part of the whole notion of ending the slave trade.” Austen and Smith, “Images of Africa and British Slave-trade Abolition: the transition to an imperialist ideology, 1787-1807,” *African Historical Studies*, II, 1 (1969), 80.

¹⁶ About the relation between French abolitionism and Algerian colonization, the most obvious link is the *Institut d’Afrique*. Tocqueville’s support for Algerian conquest is another link, although most of French abolitionists were satisfied with criticizing improper modes of Algerian conquest. See Alexis Tocqueville, *Writings on Empire and Slavery*, ed. Jennifer Pitts (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).

conspiracy and horrifying images of black rebels that would last for long.¹⁷ Restoration liberals advocated the Haitian Revolution as a part of their defense of the French Revolution, but this conditional endorsement was dropped by the time of the July Monarchy. In the early 1830s, the French abolitionists were reassured by the change of political situation, so they reinstated the French Revolution as the basis of legitimacy for emancipation and removed the Haitian Revolution from the grand narrative of French-given universal liberty. Bissette struggled to reframe the Haitian Revolution as an achievement of free people of color, but his assimilationist politics induced him to incorporate the colonial revolution into the greater project of the French Revolution and its universal mission.

The situation of post-1804 Haiti played a decisive role in dismissing the Haitian Revolution from the story of emancipation. During the Restoration, French liberals surrounded postindependence Haiti with their projections for post-emancipation society and black national sovereignty. In the words of Brière, the “partisans of Haiti” of the Restoration “invented in advance a history of Haiti which should be the satisfaction of a purely European dream.”¹⁸ As French abolitionists became “disillusioned” in the 1840s with the present condition of Haiti—the fall of the plantation economy, erosion of civil and political liberty, and the sociopolitical instability—this led to the demotion of the Haitian Revolution and Haiti in abolitionist discourse. The terms became synonymous with failed emancipation. Bissette criticized this excessive representativity imposed on Haiti (“Why should every event in Haiti be connected to a greater

¹⁷ The *colons*’ anti-enlightenment and counterrevolutionary narrative of the French Revolution can be found in a proslavery spokesman’s 1850 version of the history of the French Revolution. See Adolphe Granier de Cassagnac, *Histoire des causes de la révolution française* (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1850).

¹⁸ Brière, *Haïti et la France*, 309.

cause or its failure?”), but he also could not help burdening Haiti with another symbolic duty—expecting it to prove the capability of the mulatto ruling elite. One by one, French abolitionists bade adieu to the Haitians as Haiti betrayed their expectations: first, Abbé Grégoire in the Restoration, and later Isambert, Schoelcher, and the men of the SFAE.

Therefore, when the outcome of the colonial revolution failed to prove itself, metropolitan abolitionists joined the procolonial spokesmen in their conclusion about the Haitian Revolution: the unfortunate people of Haiti had acquired liberty too early and before they were ready to enjoy its fruits. From then on, the main task of French abolitionists was to prevent Haiti from being a hindrance to French abolitionism. It led to changing the narrative of the Haitian Revolution in abolitionist discourse, from a romance as part of the French Revolutionary epic during the Restoration, to a tragedy of immature liberty in the July Monarchy, and finally to its “silencing” in the chronicle of emancipation.¹⁹

Reprocessing the Haitian Revolution and Haiti through Modern Political History

In a wider sense, my thesis intends to join the collective attempt to answer the question posed by Trouillot and other theorists such as Susan Buck-Morss, Sibylle Fischer, Srinivas Aravamudan, David Scott, and Nick Nesbitt.²⁰ In the words of Laurent Dubois, they commonly

¹⁹ David Scott indicates a similar change from romance to tragedy of the story of the Haitian Revolution in C. L. R. James’s writings. See David Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).

²⁰ Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*; Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History*; Aravamudan, *Tropicopolitans*; Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity*; Nick Nesbitt, *Universal Emancipation: The Haitian Revolution and the Radical Enlightenment* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2008).

ask the crucial historical question of “how should we think about the Haitian Revolution within and against broader, reigning narratives of the emergence of modern political culture?”²¹ When the history of the Haitian Revolution and Haiti is reintegrated into that of the Age of Revolution, the Enlightenment, and Modernity, how does it change our view of ‘modern’ political history?

Among them, Buck-Morss, in her renowned article “Hegel and Haiti,” tries to link the Haitian Revolution directly to the core of the Enlightenment philosophy.²² By arguing that Hegel’s master-slave dialectics referred to the colonial event and did not come from Western inner intellectual tradition as was usually assumed, Buck-Morss insists that colonial slavery had a far deeper impact on European history and attacks the West’s self-contained definition of the Enlightenment and Modernity. Whether we can prove “Hegel knew,”²³ her approach is significant in the sense that it challenges the established way of thinking in the West, which has ruled out the possible intellectual connection between metropole and colonies, and opens another door to redefining the Enlightenment in terms of “Atlantic Modernity.”

In the prior historiography of the transatlantic world, we often encounter a kind of division of labor in conceiving modernity: transatlantic slavery is important, but only in economic terms (especially in relation to the birth of capitalism), while intellectual and political ideas for freedom, democracy, and natural rights originated in Europe and spread into the “rest of the world.” In a similar way, it is often said that the revolutionaries of the Haitian Revolution,

²¹ Laurent Dubois, “The French Revolution and Its Global Others; or, a French Atlantic Revolution,” unpublished draft for a panel at the AHA on “New Approaches to the French Revolution,” January, 2010.

²² Her article “Hegel and Haiti” in *Critical Inquiry* 26, no. 4 (Summer 2000), 821-65, was republished as *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009).

²³ About the reception of “Hegel and Haiti,” see Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, 26-38.

most of who were illiterate, told their stories through their actions and blood. This statement celebrates the spontaneous uprising of slaves, but it does not allow the colonial revolution to enter the site where the ideas of liberty and emancipation were forged and exchanged. More broadly, Myriam Cottias uncovers an analogy in the French historiography of Caribbean colonies: those “*vieilles colonies* (old colonies)” were well-covered in socioeconomic history, but they occupied little room in French political history.²⁴

In Laurent Dubois’s call for writing “an intellectual history of the enslaved,” he suggests challenging this European monopoly of political ideas and concepts and reenvisioning the transatlantic zone as an interconnected world in which not only commodities but also ideas were exchanged and transformed.²⁵ In reconceptualizing the Enlightenment, he is opposed to the model of binary confrontation between racist European modernity and liberating Caribbean (or colonial) countermodernity.²⁶ He is also reluctant to conceive multiple modernities and enlightenments because it compartmentalizes each world at the expense of the history of interpenetration. Instead, Dubois suggests “an integrated story”—that “the discovery of the Americas generated a space for new ways of thinking about humanity and natural rights, and out of encounters between Native Americans, Africans and Europeans there emerged new ways of thinking about belonging, governance, subject-hood and, eventually, citizenship. These new

²⁴ Myriam Cottias, “Le silence de la nation: les ‘vieilles colonies’ comme lieu de définition des dogmes républicaines (1848-1905)” *Outre-Mers* 90, no.338-39 (2003): 21-45; Cottias, “Et si l’esclavage colonial faisait histoire nationale ?” *Revue d’histoire moderne et contemporaine* 52-54 bis, supplément (2005): 59-63.

²⁵ Laurent Dubois, “An Enslaved Enlightenment: Rethinking an Intellectual History of the French Atlantic,” *Social History* 31, no. 1 (February 2006): 3.

²⁶ Dubois, “An Enslaved Enlightenment,” 4-7.

ways of thinking may have been written down overwhelmingly by the educated elites in Europe and the colonies, yet they drew on the circulation of meanings and ideas in which those who were not literate participated.”²⁷

With a problem similar to Dubois’s, Fischer proposes embracing not only interconnection, but also the conflicts that arise from transatlantic contacts when rethinking modernity. In reviewing “Hegel and Haiti,” Fischer points out that not only did the colonial revolution affect Hegel’s ideas, but also that Hegel retreated into silence at the very moment when the Haitian Revolution reached the climax. Yet Hegel’s silence is “an ambivalent, pregnant, and meaningful silence,” which enables us to observe a historical process by which universal history was conceived through the disavowal of slavery and the slaves’ revolution.²⁸ This is Fischer’s model for conceptualizing “disavowed modernity.” If our criticism of the Eurocentric notion of modernity stops at replacing it with the countermodernity of colonies, then we will never understand the tumultuous process by which certain concepts of modernity, claimed only by Europeans (in fact, only some of them), obtained hegemony, but not without leaving “the gaps and silences in hegemonic concepts of modernity.”²⁹ As Fischer suggests, reconstructing this “disavowed” history can help us to illuminate “the conflictive and discontinuous nature of modernity in the Age of Revolution.”³⁰

Therefore, taking the cue from Dubois and Fischer, this thesis has tried to provide a framework for excavating the “disavowed” impact of the Haitian Revolution and Haiti on the

²⁷ Ibid., 14.

²⁸ Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, 32.

²⁹ Ibid., 37.

³⁰ Ibid.

formation of French abolitionism. It analyzes how the Haitian Revolution and Haiti challenged the French political elites, and how they struggled to accommodate its meanings. By this, I intended to demonstrate that the Haitian Revolution was a key political and intellectual event whose repercussions deeply affected Europe, as well as the Americas. While Dubois says that the Haitian Revolution is ideal food for thought that allows us to rethink modernity, it should be also noted that the story of Saint-Domingue/Haiti was very provocative food for thought for the nineteenth-century French elites as well. As in the story of Hegel and Haiti, the colonial revolution challenged the established circuit of political thinking in France, deepening the fissures and conflicts in post-revolutionary French politics.

For French abolitionists, postindependence Haiti was all the more complicated as an issue because the newborn state emitted very contradictory messages to European observers, ultimately defying their assumptions and dashing their hopes. While Haiti was a figural laboratory in which to work out French ideas of liberty and civilization, it was also a place where postcolonial and postemancipation problems were displayed in advance: the dilemma of free labor, the predicament of nation-building, and racial/ethnic conflicts. In spite of the French abolitionists' hope for Haiti, the black nation surrounded by hostile countries could never start from a *tabula rasa*. The widening distance between their projections and the island's reality confused and disturbed French abolitionists, who produced a series of apologies, justifications, and explanations. When the Haitians followed their own aspirations and, restricted by historical conditions, strayed from the "right path" delineated by metropolitan abolitionists, Haiti was eventually relabeled as "a failure" in French antislavery discourse, disappearing from the grand story of emancipation.

I suggest, therefore, that the Haitian Revolution was not exactly “unthinkable.” Although the colonial revolution was unexpected and unbelievable, the French people could at least understand it as part of the French Revolution that had also been “unthinkable” before 1789. As seen in revolutionary emancipationism, the colonial revolution could gain recognition and alliance when metropolitan politics was radicalized, or when liberalism and republicanism were on defense in the metropole. The postcolonial/postemancipation state building in Haiti and the freed people’s aspiration for autonomy were closer to actually being “unthinkable.” When the Haitians dismantled their thriving sugar plantation economy and became small-holding peasants, they took “the reverse of the path taken in Europe, where “progress” has been measured in terms of industrialization, urbanization, and the breaking down of traditional rural culture.”³¹ According to Valerie Kaussen, the Haitian masses’ pursuit of autonomy embodied not backwardness but alternative modernity.³² Yet, in the French observers’ emplotment of modernity, this phenomenon was regarded as a retreat into self-sufficient rural economy—the so-called Haitisation that was feared by other postemancipation regimes. Therefore, if the Haitian Revolution and Haiti were relegated into the “margins of history,” it was not so much because they were unthinkable as because they were deemed as a failure of modernity.

³¹ Gregg Beckett, from his unpublished 2011 manuscript of upcoming book, *A New Haiti: Beyond Crisis and Intervention*, Chapter II, 8.

³² Valerie Kaussen, *Migrant Revolutions: Haitian Literature, Globalization, and U.S. Imperialism* (New York: Lexington Books, 2008), 1–25.

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