Title
Arousing Freedoms: Re-Imagining the Haitian Revolution through Sensuous Marronage

Author
Beauchemin, Bianca

Publication Date
2021

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Arousing Freedoms:

Re-Imagining the Haitian Revolution through Sensuous Marronage

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in Gender Studies

by

Bianca Beauchemin

2021

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Arousing Freedoms:
Re-Imagining the Haitian Revolution through Sensuous Marronage

by

Bianca Beauchemin
Doctor of Philosophy in Gender Studies
University of California, Los Angeles, 2021
Professor Aisha Finch, Chair

Arousing Freedoms: Re-Imagining the Haitian Revolution through Sensuous Marronage, deploys a Black feminist and queerly diasporic approach to dismantle colonial, masculinist and militaristic discourses that have become concomitant with narratives of the renowned Haitian Revolution. This research project is uniquely positioned within the intersections of diasporic histories of enslavement and rebellion, Black feminist gendered analyses of resistance and freedom, Black feminist discourses of racialized sexuality, Black Queer Studies, Postcolonial Literature, and studies of Afro-diasporic spirituality. Not only intervening epistemologically within these varied fields, this project also introduces an innovative methodological framework to re-imagine the Saint-Domingue rebellion. Through what I call "sensuous marronage," I examine how embodied epistemologies absorbed through the sensorial, the spiritual and the sensual, translate into dreams, plans and tactics of Black liberation.

Anchored in historic moments of the Haitian Revolution and Haitian Independence, this research project unearths the queerly diasporic revolutionary consciousness of Afro-diasporic

religious rituals, alternative embodied femininities and masculinities, Black women's labor, and sensuous practices of liberation. Indeed, beneath the surface of the Bois-Caïman ceremony, early insurgent battles of the revolution, the implementation of French emancipation laws, and post-independence literature, reside opaque, yet ingenious formulations of Black liberation and resistance that unsettle colonial discourses of archives, modernity, time and space, gender formation and relation, and of course, freedom. In part, I assert that that the embodied mythologies of Vodou, its ritual space and its spiritual practices, constitute an alternative archival repository with the potential to re-narrate Black liberation. More specifically, I uncover the ways in which spiritual iconographies and mythologies, ritual spiritual embodiments such as possession rites and dancing, and drumming, as well as conceptions of freedom framed in the artistic and literary imagination, can serve as counter-archives. Although I do not wish to obfuscate the presence or importance of heroic male figures such as Toussaint Louverture and Jean-Jacques Dessalines, nor am I trying to refute the massive importance of military organization, coalitions, and strategies, I ask what can be uncovered by paying close attention to the role of women, sexuality, sensuousness, alternative gender formations and spirituality in the arduous process of gaining freedom?

The dissertation of Bianca Beauchemin is approved.

Sarah Haley

Uri McMillan

Robin D.G. Kelley

Aisha Finch, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2021

To the sensuous actors of Haiti who are still dreaming of, and fighting for freedom

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I always enjoyed reading the acknowledgment sections of dissertations and books because they are always brimming with gratitude, and now that it is my turn, I am incredibly excited to show appreciation for the wonderful people that have supported me throughout this PhD journey. First and foremost, thank you to my dissertation advisor, Aisha Finch, who pushed me in ways I did not even know I needed! Her dedication and support have helped me become a more structured and well-rounded scholar, writer, and teacher. The meticulous engagement and care that she showed my work, along with her mentorship and her patience have been invaluable to me and to this doctoral project. I want to also show my appreciation to Sarah Haley, who was so encouraging and understanding throughout my time at UCLA. I will hold many of our Black feminist conversations close to my academic heart. Thanks to Uri McMillan who helped me develop a deeper engagement with visual and performance art, and who was always down for a sarcastic chuckle. Many thanks also to Robin D.G. Kelley for his unwavering generosity and radical care. However, thanks to him, each time I have a glass of wine, I think, "I could have bought a book." When I would tell folks in the know who the members of my committee were, I was always met with a resounding WOW, and WOW is right! Thank you all for inspiring me and shaping my thinking through all our interactions and through your ground-breaking works.

Beyond my committee, I would like to show appreciation for the staff, faculty and graduate students in the Gender Studies department that have supported me along the way. Thank you to Jenna Miller-Von Ah, Samantha Hogan, Richard Medrano, and Van Do-Nguyen for all the hard work that they do that keeps the department running. I also want to acknowledge the intellectual labor and care I received from Elizabeth Marchant, Jenny Sharpe, Azza Basarudin, and Purnima Mankekar. A special thank you to Sherene H. Razack who aside from

her stirring scholarship, has been so supportive and encouraging throughout my journey at UCLA. Huge thanks to the members of my trouble-making cohort who embodied empathy, conscientiousness and pure genius! I want to show gratitude to Elizabeth Dayton (s/o to Fleur) for her generosity, Stephanie Chang for her compassion, and Shondrea Thornton for all the #BlackGirlMagic she infuses into my life. I could not have done it without you all! I also want to acknowledge some of the Gender studies graduate students – past and present – who have impacted my personal and academic trajectory. Special thanks to Preeti Sharma, Savannah Kilner, Sarah Montoya, Esha Momeni, Lina Chhun, Dalal Alfares, Stephanie Lumsden, Jaimie D. Crumley, Taryn Marcelino, and Stephanie Santos. Sending a big thank you to Sa Whitley for being a constant source of inspiration, support and awe. Thank you to my students, whom I keep learning from and who push me to develop more engaging pedagogies. Also, I would like to thank the UCLA custodial workers of Rolfe Hall, in particular Hilda, who always regaled my spirits during long nights in the office.

Across campus, I want to acknowledge and give thanks to other workers, professors, students, and community members that have positively informed my time at UCLA through their support or/and intellectual generosity. Thank you to Eboni Shaw, Jemima Pierre, Peter James Hudson, and Caroline Streeter. Also, I have endless gratitude for all my comrades in The Undercommons Freedom School, and I am humbled to have worked alongside them and witnessed their vast intellect and their commitment to social justice. Special thanks to Thabisile Griffin, Marques Vestal, Olúfẹ́mi O. Táíwò, Alexis Cooke, Joan “Boston Joan” Donovan, Shamell Bell (s/o to Seijani), TK, Aerik Francis, and Catherine Williams. My time with you all was unlike anything I have experienced, and I will cherish those memories forever! I also want to acknowledge other exceptional friends and colleagues for their comradeship, thoughtfulness

and intellectual camaraderie. Indeed, thanks to Mary Senyonga, Sarah Beach (s/o to Sophia and Giada), Madina Thiam, Javier Muñoz, Winter Schneider (s/o to Idris), Janice Levi, Osceola Ward, and Aman Gabe. Also, shout out to UAW 2865 for all the work they do on behalf of student workers.

This dissertation would not have been possible without the financial support from the Center for the Study of Women's Mariame Kaba Graduate Fellowship in Black Feminist Research, the UC Consortium for Black Studies and the Canadian Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. I would also like to thank the artists and art collector that granted me permission for using their beautiful and inspiring paintings for my dissertation. Thank you to Jean-Pierre Ulrick, Manuel Mathieu and Marcus Rediker (for Jean Richard Coachy's piece) for adding depth and splendour to my project.

Throughout my PhD journey, I have had the opportunity to meet, interact and receive advice from a myriad of scholars, aiding the production of my dissertation and my broader scholarly development. Thank you to Roderick Ferguson, Laurent Dubois, Sean Mills, Marlene Daut, Susan Stryker, Rinaldo Walcott, Andrea A. Davis, and Nola Hopkinson, for intentionally or perhaps, unknowingly providing me with direction, tips, and/or support. Back in Canada, I owe a depth of gratitude to Katherine McKittrick – my guardian angel from the North – who prepared me for the turmoil of academia and who continuously had my back through it all. I also want to give thanks to Danyel Haughton, Shawn Newman, and Yasmine Djerbal, who have inspired me during my time at Queen's University and who continue to provide me with guidance and opportunities. In June 2021, I had the chance to be part of the inaugural Black Studies Summer Seminar, and I would like to thank the organizers Mark V. Campbell and Kristin Moriah, for creating such a generative space where Black Studies can flourish within the

Canadian landscape. The lessons and experiences from that seminar have been invaluable to my dissertation and will surely enliven my future scholarship. I am truly grateful for the participants of BSSS and their brilliant insights and contributions, and especially for Emilie Jabouin, Shaunasea Brown, Marcus Singleton, Katrina Sellinger and Adesoji Babalola for creating working and sharing spaces with me and/or for simply checking in and showing care. I also want to acknowledge Stephanie Latty for being a motivating study buddy.

Graduate school is not for the faint of hearts – particularly during a global pandemic – so I would like to show gratitude to the friends and family that have supported me through some of these tougher times. I would like to express appreciation to Zarrin Darnell-Martin (s/o to Esmé), Iwa Nawrocki, Tina Nawrocki and Rhys Darnell-Martin who helped me during one of the most difficult periods in my life. Your compassion, and loving labor will never be forgotten. Special thanks to Cassandre Roc for being my biggest cheerleader, and to Maria Presta (s/o to Edward) for unfailingly recognizing the light in me. Thank you to my father Pierre-Paul Beauchemin, to my mother Marie “Manouchka” Rigaud for inspiring me with her strength and resilience, and to my grandmother Paula Voyard for her prayers and uplift. Although this may sound silly, I am also so grateful for my cat Pussy and his loving cuddles! Finally, to my love April Duggan, thank you for all your sacrifices, your commitment, and your encouragement. Through the highs and lows, we have made it this far, and I am excited to witness how the seeds we sowed together will continue to flourish.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Education

2015- 2021 **PhD** Candidate, Gender Studies, University of California, Los Angeles

2016 **M.A**., Gender Studies, University of California, Los Angeles

2013- 2015 M.A., Gender Studies**,** Queen's University, Kingston
Degree completed at UCLA

2008–2013 **B.A. with Honours**, *Summa Cum Laude*, Women's Studies, York University, Toronto

2003-2004 B.A., Psychology, McGill University, Montreal
Degree completed at York University (credits transferred)

2001-2003 **DEC**, Social Science, Marianopolis College (CEGEP), Montreal

Awards, Distinctions, Scholarships/Fellowships

- Mariame Kaba Graduate Fellowship in Black Feminist Research (1,000$, 2019-2020)
- UCLA Department of Gender Studies Travel Award (500$, 2019-2020)
- UCLA Department of Gender Studies Travel Award (900$, 2018-2019)
- Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC-Canada) doctoral fellowship (40,000$, 2018-2020)
- UC Consortium for Black Studies California Graduate Award (4,000$, 2018)
- UCLA Department of Gender Studies Travel Award (600$, 2017-2018)
- Vice Chancellor for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Non-Resident Tuition Fee Fellowship (15,102$, 2017-2018)
- Gender Studies Fellowship Stipend (5,789$, 2017-2018)
- Graduate Summer Research Mentorship, GSRM (6,000$, Summer 2017)
- Kanner Graduate Student Fellowship (3,994$, 2016-2017)
- Twin Pines Fellowship (2,331$, 2016-2017)
- Non-resident Tuition Dean's Supplementary Fee Fellowship (15,102$, 2016-2017)
- Graduate Summer Research Mentorship, GSRM (6,000$, Summer 2016)
- Del Amo Fellowship (30,784.09$, 2015-2016)
- UCLA Fellowship Stipend (25,999$, 2015-2016)
- SSHRC Canada Graduate Scholarship- Master's, CGS-M, (17,500$, 2014-2015)
- Queen's Graduate Award, QGA (500$, 2014-2015)
- Sutherland Grant (10,000$, 2013-2014)
- Queen's Graduate Award, QGA (4,000$, 2013-2014)
- Graduate Entrance Tuition Award, GETA (6,258$, 2013)
- LA&PS Dean's Circle of Student Scholars (2012-2013)
- York University Continuing Student Scholarship (432.00$, 2012)
- York University Continuing Student Scholarship (480.00$, 2011)

Publications

Book Reviews

- Review of Brittney C. Cooper, "Beyond Respectability: The Intellectual Thought of Race Women", in *Antipode: A Radical Journal of Geography* (September 2017)

Conference and Scholarly Presentations

October 2021 **"The Beating Heart of the Haitian Revolution"** *Gender Matters* series at Queen's University, Kingston, ON.

March 2021 **"Equity and Education for All: A Conversation// L'équité et l'éducation pour toutes et tous: Une conversation"** talk hosted by education unions cfs/fcéé, CAUT/ACPPU, CUPE/SCFP, PSAC/AFPC, and National Union.

October 2020 **"Sensuous Interdisciplinary Opening: Re-imagining Diasporic Black Radical Insurgency"** part of The Centre for Ethics **"Race, Ethics, and Power"** Emerging Scholars Series University of Toronto, Toronto, ON. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0S5ET-QAth4

November 2019 **"The Revolutionary Potential of Black Women's Sexuality: A Re-narration of the Haitian Revolution"** part of the panel **"Coloniality, Slavery, and Modes of Freedom"** 2019 American Studies Association (ASA) Annual Conference *Build as We Fight*, Honolulu, Hawai'i.

November 2018 **"Arousing Freedoms: Re-Imagining the Haitian Revolution through Black Women's Sexual Subjectivities"** 2018 UC Consortium for Black Studies of California Conference UCLA, Los Angeles, CA

November 2018 **"The Climatic Route to Freedom"** part of the panel **"Caribbean Sexualities"** 2018 National Women's Studies (NWSA) Annual Conference *JUST IMAGINE. IMAGINING JUSTICE: Feminist visions of freedom, dream making and the radical politics of futures*, Atlanta, Georgia.

November 2017 **"The Sensuous Sound of Liberty: Uncovering Black Women's Subjectivity"** part of the Panel **"Finding Home in the Black Queer Diaspora"** 2017 National Women's Studies Association (NWSA) Annual Conference: *Forty Years after Combahee: Feminist Scholars and Activists Engage the Movement for Black Lives*, Baltimore, MD.

May 2017 **"The Undercommons as the Antithesis to the Neoliberal University"** roundtable discussion *Radical Democracy VI: What's the Matter*, The New School, NYC, NY.

November 2016 **"Ambiguous (Be)longings: Queering Mixed Race Subjectivity"** part of the panel **"Queer Intersectional Perspectives on Political Radicalization Processes and Violence"** 2016 Social Science History Association Conference (SSHA) *Beyond Social Science History: Knowledge in an Interdisciplinary World***,** Chicago, IL.

April 2016 **"Reimagining Mixture: Blood, Race, Culture and Solidarity"** part of the roundtable Discussion **"Colonial Intimacies: Remapping the Relationship between Black & Indigenous Communities"** *Strategies of Critique Conference 30. Human: Race | Reconceptualizing the Human in Difficult Times*, York University Social & Political Thought Graduate Student Conference, Toronto, ON.

March 2014 **"Strap On! It will be a Bumpy Ride: The Production of Sex Toys"** Sociology/Anthropology ENGAGE Conference, Guelph University, Guelph, ON.

INTRODUCTION

The Haitian Revolution has been a contentious historical moment that has had a quite controversial historiographical trajectory. From racist interpretations to complete erasure, the slave revolution of Saint-Domingue still offers a wealth of knowledge that has yet to be documented and analyzed. The narratives of the infamous slave rebellion of Saint-Domingue found in the French, British, Spanish and U.S. colonial archives, either mourn the revolutionary event as a colonial economic disaster, or simply erase the formidable fight for emancipation and independence as an "unthinkable"[1] possibility. Conversely, one of the most celebrated texts on the Haitian Revolution, C.L.R. James's *The Black Jacobins* crafts a counter-narrative to the imperial understandings (or erasure) of the slave insurgency that led to the creation of the first independent nation of the Caribbean.[2] However, in his passionate storytelling of the Haitian Revolution, James naturalizes the relationship between masculinity, militarism, and Black liberation.

Indeed, the contours of the historiography of the Haitian Revolution can be traced mostly along colonialist paradigms, and through discourses of heroic Black militant liberation. Most historical accounts of Black insurgency and rebellion not only negate the participation of women, but also, the role of sexuality, the erotic, the spiritual and the sensuous in creating freedom-making practices.[3] Aside from perhaps highlighting the heterosexual reproductive capacities of

[1] Here, I am referencing Trouillot's statement that "The Haitian Revolution […] entered history with the peculiar characteristic of being unthinkable even as it happened." Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 73.

[2] C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, 2nd ed. (New York: Random House, 1989)

[3] Similar to James's *The Black Jacobins* to W.E.B. Du Bois's *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880* provides a counter-history to past Civil War narratives that erased the participation of enslaved peoples in the fight for their

women in birthing sons for the fight for freedom, the common refrain of Black liberation discourses relegates the revolutionary potential of African descendants through war metonyms of swords, gunpowder, and fire. Although I do not wish to obfuscate the presence or importance of heroic male figures such as Toussaint Louverture and Jean-Jacques Dessalines, nor am I trying to refute the massive importance of military organization, coalitions, and strategies, I ask what can be uncovered by paying close attention to the role of women, sexuality, sensuousness, alternative gender formations and spirituality in the arduous process of gaining freedom? Put another way, what can be gained from shifting discourses of Black freedom from Westernized and heteropatriarchal definitions of liberation? How does the erotic work in tandem with the spiritual to enact a politic of liberation intrinsic to a diasporic Black Radical Tradition? Finally, how would a queer theoretical framework re-conceptualize the notion of freedom through queerly diasporic practices of redefinition and reinterpretation?

Disrupting this authority of the colonial archive and of prevalent masculinist framings of insurgency discourses, I explore the ways in which embodiment, labor, sensuousness, spirituality, marronage, resistance and alternative sexualities and genders, re-imagine the edicts of freedom and Black liberation. Anchored in historic moments of the Haitian Revolution and Haitian Independence, my research unearths the queerly diasporic revolutionary consciousness of Afro-diasporic religious rituals, alternative embodied femininities and masculinities, Black women's labor, and sensuous practices of liberation. Indeed, beneath the surface of the Bois-

freedom. Through his analysis of the "general strike," he ascribes revolutionary agency through slave flight practices, as well as military participation. There is a burgeoning black feminist scholarship on US-centered gendered analyses of resistance vis-à-vis Du Bois's *Black Reconstruction* that critique the masculinist purview of his analysis. See, W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880* (New York: Atheneum, [1935] 1992); Thavolia Glymph, "Du Bois's Black Reconstruction and Slave Women's War for Freedom," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 112, no. 3 (2013): 489- 505; Alys Eve Weinbaum, "Gendering the General Strike: W.E.B. Du Bois's Black Reconstruction and Black Feminism's 'Propaganda of History,' *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 112, no.3 (2013): 437-463.

Caïman ceremony, early insurgent battles of the Revolution, the implementation of French emancipation laws, and post-independence literature, reside opaque, yet ingenious, formulations of Black liberation and resistance that unsettle colonial discourses of archives, modernity, time and space, gender formation and relation, and of course, freedom. Through my theoretical framework of sensuous marronage and through what Katherine McKittrick calls a "rogue interdisciplinarity,"[4] this project re-narrates the Haitian Revolution and re-conceptualizes the notion of Black liberation through Black women's and alternative genders' queer and erotic diasporic practices of redefinition and reinterpretation.

The crux of my epistemic and methodological deployment of alternative freedom narratives is articulated through what I call, sensuous marronage. Heavily influenced by Audre Lorde's prominent essay "The Uses of the Erotic," sensuous marronage seeks to reclaim the creative energy of the erotic found in women's language, history, dancing, loving, work and lives.[5] Emphasizing the ways in which the erotic constitutes a resource that is female and spiritual, the erotic provides an innovative lexicon to reconstitute historical narratives of the Haitian Revolution through Black women's (and men's) eros, which I understand through the concept of the sensuous.[6] As her view of the erotic goes beyond the usual equating of the eros with love (often meaning solely sex), she re-writes a type of Lordean eros as an all-

[4] Katherine McKittrick, *Dear Science and Other Stories* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021), 119.

[5] Audre Lorde, "The Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power," in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Berkeley: Crossing Press, [1984] 2007), 55.

[6] Lyndon Gill expands on the notion that the erotic is a strictly female attribute. I will engage on this idea more thoroughly in chapter two. See, Lyndon K. Gill, "In the Realm of Our Lorde: Eros and the Poet Philosopher," *Feminist Studies* 40, no.1 (2014): 169- 189; Lyndon K. Gill, *Erotic Islands: Art and Activism in the Queer Caribbean* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018).

encompassing sensual experience that also centers feeling and embodied satisfaction.[7] I expand on Lorde's theorization to conceptualize a broader framework of marronage that encompasses a wide range of sensual, and indeed *sensuous* experiences and forms of knowledge. What I identify as "the sensuous" represents the interplay of sensorial aspects of knowledge that can be felt and are not solely sight-based; embodied spiritual connections with unquantifiable, contradictory, and at times opaque epistemes; and erotic and sexual affect that manifests through desire. In relation to how Lorde describes the concept of the "erotic principle" that reimagines spirituality and sexuality as "interdependent modalities,"[8] the diasporic counter-archive of Vodou engenders the multiplicity of the self that symbiotically encompasses the drives and appetites that come from the body, and those that come from the spirit and mind.[9] Indeed, since the edicts of Vodou and other Afro-spiritual traditions often eschew the bifurcation between spirituality and sexuality – a central trait of Western religiosity which reformulates Enlightenment reasoning, such as the Cartesian mind/body split – understandings of sensation, embodiment and affect become productive sources of knowledge production, and structures of collective remembering and resistance.

Also disrupting Western modernity, my conceptual framework of sensuous marronage re-articulates colonial classifications and empiricisms by de-centering cognitive and sight-based

[7] Here I borrow the term "Lordean eros" from Lyndon Gill, albeit in a slightly different way. See, Gill, "In the Realm of Our Lorde,"180-181.

[8] Gill, "In the Realm of Our Lorde," 181.

[9] For more on the multiple soul complex of Vodou and West African cosmologies see, Brown, "Afro-Caribbean Spirituality." Also, much of Roberto Strongman's analyses on Black Atlantic religions originate from the distinction between Afro-diasporic religions and Western philosophical and religious discourses. He states, "a thorough study of Afro-diasporic religions reveals how – unlike the Western idea of the fixed internal unitary soul – the Afro-diasporic self is removable, external, and multiple." See. Roberto Strongman, *Queering Black Atlantic Religions: Transcorporality in Candomblé, Santería, and Vodou* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), 10.

knowledges and privileging the embodied, sensory, sonic, sexual and spiritual freedom-creating capacities of blackness. Here, marronage does not simply invoke the practice of flight from the struggles of slavery, but relates to the creation of alternate and unique notions of freedom and the formation of resistance strategies towards societal transformation. Thus, sensuous marronage highlights a sensory, spiritual and erotic articulation of Black liberation that is in part, tied to the re-formulation of time, place and mobility, and agency in constructing one's own subject-position and history through embodied structures of knowledge. Following in the steps of Carolyn Fick, who centers the role of the masses and peasantry in assessing the deployment of the Haitian Revolution, I utilize embodied epistemologies, and creative and multiscalar methodologies to attend to sensuous, sensorial and spiritual freedom-making practices that emerge "from below." While uncovering the roles and experiences of revolutionary enslaved Black women and alternative Black masculinities constitutes a major part of this historical re-telling, it is important to note that a gendered and sexual analysis of slave resistance it is not merely an additive process. In fact, the deep examinations conducted by many historians with a feminist/intersectional lens showcase how gender and sexuality completely alter the entire scope of history by shifting how it is told, effectively creating transformative epistemologies and methodologies of resistance and Black liberation.[10] Indeed, through a re-narration of the Haitian

[10] See, Angela Davis, "The Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves," *The Black Scholar* 3, no. 4 (1971): 2-15; Hilary Beckles, *Natural Rebels: A Social History of Enslaved Women in Barbados* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1989); Barbara Bush, *Slave Women in Caribbean Society, 1650-1838* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990); Bernard Moitt, *Women and Slavery in the French Antilles, 1635-1848* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001); Stephanie Camp, *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Thavolia Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Aisha K. Finch, *Rethinking Slave Rebellion in Cuba: La Escalera and the Insurgencies of 1841-1844* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015); Marisa J. Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016); Jessica Marie Johnson, *Wicked Flesh: Black Women, Intimacy, and Freedom in the Atlantic World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020); Vanessa M. Holden, *Surviving Southampton: African American Women and Resistance in Nat Turner's Community* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2021).

Revolution, this project creates a sensuous genealogy and cartography of Black radical insurgency, whilst providing a creative Black feminist and queer approach to the study of diaspora.

Framing a Sensuous Revolution: Historical Background

As my analysis utilizes a queer temporal framework, linear structures of history are often disrupted throughout this project. Nonetheless, I examine four historical points of reference and/or periods to ground my theorizing of Black feminist and queer freedom-making possibilities. I begin with the Bois-Caïman ceremony, which is believed to be the catalyst of the Haitian Revolution. On August 21, 1791,[11] a group of about two-hundred enslaved people congregated in a clearing of the Northern plains to inaugurate a spiritual and strategic plan towards freedom. Vodou *hougan*, Boukman Dutty, and *mambo*, Cécile Fatiman presided over the spiritual gathering, calling to arms the participants to enact vengeance on the white planters who enslaved them.[12] During the Vodou ceremony, Boukman recited his infamous oath, inspiring the slaves to fight back against the institution of slavery, while Fatiman enacted several Vodou rites, which were immortalized in narratives of the Haitian Revolution. Indeed, as she summoned the ancestral spirit, Ezili Dantò, Fatiman sacrificed a black pig and distributed its blood amongst the partakers. The first to write about this event was Antoine Dalmas, a doctor at the Gallifet

[11] There are many differentiating accounts of the actual date of the Bois-Caïman ceremony. Many suggest that it happened on the night of either August 21 or August 22, 1791, while others confuse the August 14 Morne Rouge assembly with the Bois-Caïman ceremony, since there is a lot of interplay between these two events and the 1791 insurrections. The key differentiating factor is that the gathering on the later date is considered an organizational, as well as a religious gathering. See Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*: *The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004); Carolyn Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990)

[12] The term *mambo* means Vodou high priestess and *hougan* means Vodou high priest in Haitian *Kreyòl*

plantation, who after surviving the insurrection, wrote about the mysterious gathering in 1793-1794, finally publishing his writings in 1814.[13] Although, many other writers of the time, such as Antoine Métral and Civique de Gastine, added details to Dalmas's account, Herald Dumesle's 1824 story is considered to be the first to introduce Boukman's speech.[14] Along with a few other versions, these archival morsels highlight not only the organizational skills of the slaves, but also the importance of the Vodou religion in the formidable fight for freedom, and eventually, independence.

The Bois-Caïman ceremony was immediately followed by a massive revolt across the Northern plains, where slaves went from plantation to plantation, burning cane and coffee fields, recruiting other enslaved people into the fold, executing their white oppressors and pillaging. This rebellion grew exponentially throughout the months and across the island, as large-scale revolts started to happen in the South and West provinces, albeit less frequently than in the North. As free people of color were fighting their lack of citizenship rights, they sometimes joined forces with the insurgent slaves to fight against urban white radicals and French troops. The August 1791 rebellion ushered in an unstable period of revolts and insurgencies, that threw

[13] Antoine Dalmas and Charles Etienne Pierre Wante, *Histoire de la Révolution de Saint-Domingue, Depuis le Commencement des Troubles, Jusqu'à la Prise de Jérémie et du Môle S. Nicolas par les Anglais; Suivie d'un Mémoire sur le Rétablissement de cette Colonie* (Paris: Chez Mame Frères, imprimeur-libraires, 1814), 116-12, http://archive.org/details/histoiredelarv00dalm

[14] Antoine Métral, *Histoire de l'Insurrection des Esclaves dans le Nord de Saint-Domingue* (Paris : Chez F. Scherff, libraire et Com.re pour la Suisse, place du Louvre, no.12 : Rey et Gravier, quai des Augustins, no.55 : Delaunay, galerie de Palais-Royal; Et a Genève : chez Manget et Cherbuliez, 1818), 15-20, http://archive.org/details/histoiredelinsur00mt ; The first archival mention documenting that the Bois-Caïman ceremony happened on a dark and stormy night was in Civique de Gastine, *Histoire de la République d'Haïti ou Saint-Domingue: L'Esclavage et les Colons* (Paris : Plancher, 1819), 105, http://archive.org/details/histoiredelarpu00gastgoog. In particular, de Gastine mentions that it was a "temps très orageux" with "foudre qui serpentait dans les nues éclairait par intervalles," "bruit du tonnerre" and "les vents qui soufflaient dans les bambous rompus" (105) ; Hérald Dumesle, *Voyage dans le Nord d'Hayti, ou, Révélations des Lieux et des Monuments Historiques* (Les Cayes: Imprimerie du Gouvernment, 1824), 85-90, http://digitallibrary.usc.edu//cdm/ref/collection/p15799coll58/id/43145.

the plantation economy of the island into crisis, but that also left room for slaves to define their own vision of liberation. April 4, 1792 marked the implementation of the decree that granted full citizenship to all *gens de couleurs*, placating the ire of many mulatto property-owners, and largely leaving enslaved insurgents to fight with one less allied group.

The French Revolution (1789-1799) also contributed to many of the social and political upheavals in the colony. Indeed, the overthrow of the old regime in France altered the political structures and undercut the authority of governors, courts and militia in Saint-Domingue, eventually creating a royalist/republican divide. Furthering this division was the arrival of republican civil commissioners Léger-Félicité Sonthonax and Étienne Polverel, who dissolved the Colonial Assembly, all municipalities, and political clubs, and more importantly for the enslaved population, instated a multitude of emancipation decrees. This period of revolts and political unpredictability, although chaotic, highlighted the kind of liberatory possibilities enslaved people enacted in a world where the structures of colonialism and slavery were unraveling.

Following the smaller scale emancipation laws of 1793, the French republican government enacted the *Act of 16 Pluviôse, An II* on February 4, 1794, which extended emancipation to all French colonies, making all formerly enslaved people French citizens. This legislation – which was received with hostility by white planters and planters of color, and with suspicion by the formerly enslaved – ushered in an era of compulsory, yet waged labor on plantation estates. My research takes a very close look at the implementation of this new work regime, and the impact it had on female laborers. After the enactment of these emancipation decrees, the events of the Revolution continued to unfold for another ten years. Indeed, after the departure of the civil commissioners, Toussaint Louverture – ex-slave, and now military and

political leader – took control of the military and labor structure of the island. In 1802, under the command of French leader Napoleon Bonaparte, a military expedition traveled to Saint-Domingue to restore a white colonial government, and to reinstate slavery. This subsequent invasion and the kidnapping of Louverture spurred the War of Independence (1802-1804). At the Battle of Vertières on November 18, 1803, the army of Black soldiers and soldiers of color triumphed over the French forces. Finally, on January 1, 1804, Black military leader Jean-Jacques Dessalines proclaimed the Independence of Haiti.

In the years immediately following independence, the Haitian Revolution and the "unthinkable" accomplishment of Haitian Independence were celebrated culturally and aesthetically, in turn creating a new national collective memory and identity. Honoring the fight against slavery and oppressive colonial control, also meant establishing new political governance through legislative and military rule. However, national conceptions of citizenship and freedom were not disseminated equally, and often differed greatly from Haitian women's definitions of liberation. Although commonly the timeline of the Haitian Revolution spans from 1791 to 1804, it is evident from the post-Independence era – which encompasses the present moment – that Black feminist and queer epistemologies of freedom are still resisting the apparatus of racial and gendered capitalism, and heteropatriarchy.

Thinking Sensuous Marronage: Theoretical Framework

To attend to the Black feminist and queer liberatory underpinnings of the Haitian Revolution, I developed a conceptual framework that recognizes diasporic embodied modes of being and knowing that I call, sensuous marronage. I deploy this theoretical approach to demonstrate the symbiotic and paradoxical relationship between sensual, affective, erotic, corporeal, sensorial and spiritual ontologies and epistemologies, and how these knowledges

unleash liberatory possibilities. Throughout this dissertation, I highlight the ways in which sensuous marronage is used by people whom I call the sensuous actors of the Haitian Revolution to create "freedom dreams,"[15] freedom-making strategies, liberatory ontologies and methodologies. For instance, acts of resistance, protest, and refusal from Black women laborers,[16] as well as performances of gender-bending fugitive strategies and gender fluid self-making,[17] all represent examples of how wayward/uncontainable/ungovernable subjects express ideals of sensuous marronage. Moreover, the term also indicates the ways in which embodied, spiritual, discursive, artistic, poetic and at times, opaque epistemes, reveal alternate interpretations of how Black liberation can and should be enacted. In other words, sensuous marronage is also a methodological approach to re-imagine, re-narrate, re-interpret and re-member the liberatory potential of the Haitian Revolution. In this way, I see my own work as performing sensuous marronage, as I attempt to engage with mystical, unexplainable, unquantifiable and even unpalatable epistemologies and analyses, bringing them into the fold of Haitian Revolution historiographies.

Inspired by Audre Lorde's celebrated essay, "The Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power," I see sensuous marronage as a type of hermeneutic, similar to how Lorde explains that the erotic is a "lens through which we scrutinize all aspects of our existence, forcing us to evaluate those aspects honestly in terms of their relative meaning within our lives."[18] Seeing the

[15] I am invoking Robin Kelley's term to highlight the collective ways the sensuous actors imagined embodied freedoms. See Robin D.G. Kelley, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002).

[16] See chapter three.

[17] See chapter two.

[18] Lorde, "The Uses of the Erotic," 57.

self as part of a whole, illuminates the ways the embodied aspects of our lives, such as the sensual, spiritual and sensorial have an impact not only on our interior lives, but also on our political and collective existence. Indeed, all aspects of ourselves are in relation with the material consequences of our world, whether they can be articulated within Western paradigms of knowledge or not. Dismissing constrictive ideologies that define personhood along Western and heteropatriarchal ideals, Lorde understands spirituality and sexuality – two central facets of sensuous marronage – as interrelated forces, in a way that is akin to Vodou's traditional principles. Many have been inspired by Lorde's generative concept of the erotic, and as I build my own theoretical approach of sensuous marronage, I wish to nod to the other scholars I have been thinking in tandem with. To begin, Jacqui Alexander concurs with Lorde's imbrication of the sexual and the spiritual, as she reinforces the political dimension of the erotic through her concepts of embodied sacred praxis and erotic autonomy.[19] Lyndon Gill stresses the interdependence of the political-sensual-spiritual in his understanding of the erotic, again, noting the generative possibilities of the term.[20] Jafari Allen's notion of erotic subjectivity, is very similar to the ways in which I associate the sensuous with freedom and resistance, as he understand erotic practices as foundational to liberatory politics.[21] Mimi Sheller – whose work resonates strongly with mine, in part because she also examines the terrain of Haiti – uses the notions of embodied freedom and erotic agency, to highlight the resistance embedded within the

[19] M. Jacqui Alexander, *Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory, and the Sacred* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).

[20] Gill, "In the Realm of Our Lorde; Gill, *Erotic Islands.*

[21] Jafari S. Allen, "Black/Queer/Diaspora at the Current Conjuncture," in "Black Queer Diaspora," special issue, *GLQ* 18, no. 2-3 (2012): 211-248; Jafari S. Allen, *¡Venceremos? The Erotics of Self-Making in Cuba* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

erotic.[22] And finally, though L.H. Stallings embraces many of Lorde's modalities of the erotic, she also disrupts them by including the vulgar and the pornographic alongside the sensual, sensorial and sacred, as connected structures countering imperialism and Western patriarchy.[23] Stallings's formulation of funking the erotic parallels the ways in which I think of the sensorial aspect of sensuous marronage, as embodied, and not solely sight-based knowledges. Together, these profound mediations on the erotic help situate my notion of sensuous marronage as an embodied praxis of liberation that queers spatial and temporal structures through relational epistemes burrowed in the sensory, the corporeal, the spiritual, the sensual, the sexual and the affective.

While there has been a surging interest in the role of gendered and racialized taxonomies in analyzing the historiography of slave rebellions, considering the growing sphere of queer theory, it seems amiss that the notions of sensuality that have been explored vis-à-vis the Haitian Revolution, have been overly heteropatriarchal.[24] My research will address not only the heteropatriarchal and heteronormative assumptions of sexuality, but also, the racial limitations of the current discipline of queer studies, by unearthing the ways in which we can read time and space as queerly Black and diasporic. Although queer temporality is integral to understandings of sensuous marronage, it requires to be read alongside notions of blackness, embodiment and the

[22] Mimi Sheller, *Citizenship from Below: Erotic Agency and Caribbean Freedom* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012).

[23] L.H. Stallings, *Funk the Erotic: Transaesthetics and Black Sexual Cultures* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2015).

[24] The following section "Literature Review of the Haitian Revolution" will provide a comprehensive account of the historiography of the Haitian Revolution.

erotic. Similarly advocating for a more capacious study of queer temporality, theorist Elizabeth Freeman attests,

> If we reimagine "queer" as a set of possibilities produced out of temporal and historical difference, or see the manipulation of time as a way to produce both bodies and relationalities (or even nonrelationality), we encounter a more productively porous queer studies, one shaped by and reshaping not only various disciplines but also the studies of race, nation, migration, and postcolony.[25]

Flourishing alongside the imaginative interventions of Black Queer Studies in particular, I will explore the ways in which blackness is tied to queerness and how the making of contemporary racial/sexual subjects is deeply entwined with spirituality, modernity, labor, poetics, and of course, freedom. Through this lens, not only will I interrogate the possibilities of queer sexual, sensual and sensuous practices, I will also use the term queer as an indication of a "praxis of resistance" which Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley describes as "marking [a] disruption to the violence of normative order."[26] The queerly diasporic implication of her work, and of other scholars defining the landscapes of Black Diaspora Queer Studies, will help me sift through the rhizomatic queer temporality and spatiality of the Haitian Revolution and its potential for regenerating queer erotic epistemologies and ontologies as sources of freedom.[27]

---

[25] Elizabeth Freeman, "Introduction," in "Queer Temporalities," special issue, *GLQ* 13, no.2-3 (2007): 159.

[26] Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley, "Black Atlantic, Queer Atlantic: Queer Imaginings of the Middle Passage," *GLQ* 14, no.2-3 (2008): 199.

[27] See, Rinaldo Walcott, "Outside in Black Studies: Reading from a Queer Place in the Diaspora," in *Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Patrick E. Johnson and Mae G. Henderson (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 90-105 ; Rinaldo Walcott, *Queer Returns: Essays on Multiculturalism, Diaspora, and Black Studies* (London: Insomniac Press, 2016); Allen, "Black/Queer/Diaspora at the Current Conjuncture"; Allen, *¡Venceremos?;* Vanessa Agard-Jones, "What the Sands Remember," in "Black Queer Diaspora," special issue, *GLQ* 18, no. 2-3 (2012): 325-346.

As my discussion of sensuous marronage engages with the "afterlives of slavery" and their concomitant bodily, sexual and gendered modalities of blackness, I would be remiss not to reference Hortense Spillers's notions of the "flesh" and of the "ungendered."[28] In her instrumental essay "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," Spillers poignantly argues that enslaved subjects were "ungendered" through the dehumanization and violence of slavery, losing gender difference through the process, and relegating the Black female and male body to "a territory of cultural and political maneuver, not at all gender-related, gender-specific."[29] In fact, under slavery, Black enslaved people are not even understood through the discourse of the body, but through the primary narrative of the "flesh," where Black skin reads as a branding of the "flesh" – she calls "hieroglyphics of the flesh" – signifying powerlessness and total objectification transmitted through generational discursive trauma. In reference to Black women specifically, Spillers questions the "fleshy" grammars of sexuality, including terms such as reproduction, motherhood, pleasure and desire, and argues that these discourses are "thrown into unrelieved crisis."[30] In conversation with Spillers's Black gendered theorizations of slavery, sensuous marronage constitutes the antithesis of, yet also exists in relation to, the unprotected and "ungendered" female "flesh" that is central to the logic and functioning of the plantation. Although her theorizing highlights the genealogical qualities of racial slavery that renders Black women unintelligible – simultaneously invisible and hypervisible – this ambiguous position also generates an opening for re-invention and

[28] The "afterlives of slavery" is a term developed by Saidiya Hartman that refers to the enduring presence of slavery's racialized violence. See Saidiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007); for the concepts of the "flesh" and the "ungendered" see Hortense Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," *Diacritics* 17, no. 2, (1987): 64-81.

[29] Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe," 67.

[30] Ibid., 76.

redefinition, thus an opportunity for self-creation. This is exactly where sensuous marronage's imaginative possibilities come in, as an epistemology and methodology of resistance that attempts to find Black women's "verb."[31] Relatedly, Edouard Glissant's notion of "opacity" resonates with Spillers's theories, as opacity refers to that discursive unresolved ambiguity – the unseen – where embodied possibilities can be found that, ones that need not be transparent to Western and colonial ways of knowing.[32] Sensuous marronage continuously works through the relations and contradictions of these paradigms to offer embodied, sensual, sensorial and spiritual ontologies, epistemologies and methodologies to think through freedom discourses of the Haitian Revolution.

Finally, my theorization of sensuous marronage as a type of embodied freedom practice, is indebted to the genealogy of the practice of marronage in histories of slavery. Indeed, marronage was an integral element of resistance in slave societies across African diaspora and the Atlantic world. At the base, marronage can be described as the willful escaping of individuals or groups from conditions of enslavement. Many scholars of Saint-Domingue and Haiti are divided on the issue of marronage, debating whether it occurred as a direct form of resistance against the bondage of slavery or if it was simply an escape from the horrid conditions of enslavement.[33] Ultimately, these two causes are related, as the negation of the conditions of

[31] This is in reference to Spillers's plea to open up a discursive landscape for Black women's sexual grammar within the liminal space of the interstices. The "verb" alludes to the possibilities for redefinition of Black women's sexuality within this ambiguous space. See, Hortense Spillers, "Interstices: A Small Drama of Words," in *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*, ed. Carole S. Vance (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), 73-100.

[32] Edouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, [1990]2010).

[33] French scholars Gabriel Debien and Yvan Debbash tend to banalize marronage denying its revolutionary potential. Jean Fouchard Fouchard, Edner Brutus, and then Leslie Manigat and Carolyn Fick ennoble the practice and confirm its revolutionary value. See Leslie F. Manigat, "The Relationship between Marronage and Slave Revolts and Revolution in St. Domingue-Haiti," *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 292, no. 1 (June 1977): 420-21; Fick, *The Making of* Haiti, 5-9.

slavery – which are representative of European colonial ethos – may be expressions of the desire for freedom. Scholars also argue about the types of marronage enacted by enslaved people and attempt to categorize them through the taxonomies of *petit* and *grand* marronage. On one hand, *petit* marronage refers to temporary unauthorized flights from the plantation, acts of truancy, and/or "short lived-absenteeism."[34] Although the short absence of *petit* marronage might not in itself constitute a war or revolution, I appreciate Neil Roberts's insight highlighting *petit* marronage as a "micropolitical causal mechanism for the macropolitics of revolution and freedom."[35] On the other hand, *grand* marronage is distinctive from its counterpart in terms of time, scale, space and purpose. Indeed, it refers to the mass flight of individuals from enslavement to form a sovereign and free community, that is geographically isolated outside of the parameters of the plantation. Relatedly, Cedric Robinson – who understands marronage as a manifest expression of Black radicalism – argues that along with the rejection of European slavery and its racist paradigms, marronage was also about the preservation of a particular social and historical consciousness, and thus, a will to reconstitute community.[36] The multivalent and multiscalar use of the term marronage – ranging from short reprieve, to large-scale relocation and community building, and even to the formation of a collective Black consciousness – is what attracted me to the concept as a metonym for the creation of freedom dreams and freedom practices. Although akin to the framework of fugitivity – in particular, Tina Campt's usage of the concept as an act of everyday refusal, which includes sensorial refusal – I am drawn to marronage because of the implication that there is a larger Black collective consciousness for

[34] Manigat, "The Relationship between Marronage and Slave Revolts and Revolution in St. Domingue-Haiti," 423.

[35] Neil Roberts, *Freedom as Marronage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 98.

[36] Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, [1983]2000).

whom freedom is being enacted.[37] Even as I document instances of *petit* marronage throughout my project,[38] the way in which I deploy my notion of sensuous marronage transforms these fugitive acts into a larger-scale "societal transformation" to define a Black sense of freedom.[39]

To attend to this Black collective consciousness, I often turn to Vodou mythologies and epistemologies to unearth the potential of marronage. Indeed, there is a strong correlation with Afro-spiritual practices of Vodou and marronage, as the ritual traditions of the religion were outlawed, thus requiring its participants to retreat and meet clandestinely. The relation between Vodou and marronage constituted, as Carolyn Fick aptly remarks, "a politically ideological force," linking the cultural and spiritual with practical spatial applications.[40] Most importantly, the 1791 insurrection planning meeting at the Morne Rouge and the Bois-Caïman ceremony – the spiritual and political gathering that ushered in the Haitian Revolution – were both planned in marronage. In this light, the Haitian Revolution is indebted to this fugitive practice, and the conceptual framework of sensuous marronage as a freedom practice, is a constant reminder to this indebtedness. Moreover, my discussion in chapter one on the embodied practices of the Bois-Caïman's marooned gathering – such as dancing, drumming and possession rituals – mirrors Stephanie Camp's gendered and spatial analysis of marronage, which she defines as truancy and/or absenteeism.[41] Indeed, Camp turns to theories of the body and embodiment to expose the ways in which Black women reclaimed their bodies from holds of domination,

[37] Tina M. Campt, *Listening to Images* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017).

[38] Particularly in chapter two.

[39] Roberts, *Freedom as Marronage*, 7.

[40] Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, 57.

[41] Camp, *Closer to Freedom.*

transforming them into a source of pleasure and political resistance, in spaces she calls "rival geographies." Furthermore, some historians of Atlantic slavery have also highlighted the ways in which discourses of marronage intersect with women's day-to-day resistance and freedom-making strategies. Others delved deeper into the gendered labor structures of slavery, concluding that Black enslaved women had inferior geographical knowledge.[42] Intervening in this scholarly genealogy of flight and societal formation, my theoretical frame of sensuous marronage brings forward a Black feminist and queer articulation of freedom epistemologies and methodologies that conceptualize the embodied, the sensory, the erotic, the corporeal and the mystical as constitutive to the development of the Haitian Revolution.

Literature Review of the Haitian Revolution

The historiography of the Haitian Revolution is usually delineated through colonial tropes of loss, or through masculine and heroic discourses of Black liberation. Although, I do not wish to dwell on the racist and white supremacist narratives of the slave rebellion, a delineation of the Revolution's historiography draws necessary attention to the racial bias and contempt that defined not only the French colonial archives, but also the British, Spanish, and American archives. Early historical works, such as Lothrop Stoddard 1914 text *The French Revolution in San Domingo*, which framed the insurgent event as an imperial economic tragedy, were similarly defined by racist tropes.[43] Although Stoddard's analysis is abhorrent in the prevalence of

[42] Hilary Beckles, Barbara Bush, and Bernard Moitt all highlight how Black women engaged in marronage practices that align more so with practices of petit marronage and/or day-to -day practices. While Thavolia Glymph also emphasizes marronage as a practice of resistance among women, she questions attestations of enslaved women's inferior knowledge of geography based on justifications of gendered division of plantation labor and maternal duties, arguments seen in Bush and Camp's texts. See, Beckles, *Natural Rebels;* Bush, *Slave Women in Caribbean Society, 1650-1838*; Moitt, *Women and Slavery in the French Antilles, 1635-1848*; Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage*; Camp, *Closer to Freedom.*

[43] T. Lothrop Stoddard, *The French Revolution in San Domingo* (Boston: University Press Cambridge, 1914).

unapologetic racist assumptions, his work marks two epistemological breaks that have been prevalent in subsequent works on the Haitian Revolution. Indeed, the role of the French Revolution in contributing to the Revolution and the examination of ideologies of racial taxonomies in Saint-Domingue are two analytical sites that reverberate within this historiography. Furthermore, within the context of my own research, I will pinpoint how these texts attend to gendered and sexual analyses, and how they engage with notions of marronage and/or the role of Vodou in the unfolding of the Revolution.

Breaking away from imperialist historical traditions, C.L.R. James's seminal 1938 book *The Black Jacobins* embodies the spirit of Black radicalism, representing the Revolution as a historic triumph over white colonial authority and as the first successful slave insurgency leading to the independence of the original "Black Republic." His canonical text argued that the capital obtained from the sugar plantations of Saint-Domingue was the key catalyst to the formation of the French bourgeoisie, and eventually, the French Revolution of 1789. James highlights the unique formation of racial and class categorizations, and through a Marxist lens, he reads the way in which racial scripts informed class distinctions. He also highlights how these distinctions influence the differing interests and agendas of the groups that shaped the Revolution (and counter-Revolution). Although James's sophisticated account of the inner workings of the Haitian Revolution explores the various alliances across racial and class classifications, the author stresses that racial discrimination, white supremacy and anti-blackness were still pervasive constructs before, during and after the uprising. Though *The Black Jacobins* still remains one of the most influential books on the Haitian Revolution, within the purview of my research, it is imperative to mention that his analysis does not offer any kind of gendered lens, thus equating these liberatory events with masculinity and militarism. While he mentions the

influence of maroon societies and the role of Vodou practices in contributing to the unfolding of the insurgent actions, stating that "Voodoo was the medium of the conspiracy,"[44] he predominantly centers a hero-narrative around Toussaint Louverture to narrate the Haitian Revolution.[45]

Expanding the geographical and temporal purview of the Haitian Revolution, Eugene Genovese's 1979 *From Rebellion to Revolution* brings forward a broader diasporic/transnational account of the famous revolutionary struggle. Indeed, he argues that the Revolution in Saint-Domingue acted as a vanguard throughout the Atlantic world, effectively shifting enslaved peoples insurgent practices. Through this analytical framework, he also introduced some of the building blocks for the future epistemological interests in examining the effects of the Haitian Revolution vis-à-vis notions of modernity. In attempting to redress the agency of the Black subjects who enacted the Revolution, Genovese attests that the "revolutionary ideology in the 1790s was fed from both sides of the Atlantic."[46] However, his view of the "primitive-communal social relations" of maroons societies who seek a path to restoration in order to achieve freedom, is posited against the modern "Europenization" of Saint-Domingue, highlighting a Western

[44] James, *The Black Jacobins*, 86.

[45] Black feminists have been critiquing these overdetermined masculine hero-narratives. Notably, Hazel Carby's *Race Men* and Erica Edwards's *Charisma and the Fictions of Black Leadership* both highlight the overwhelming relationship between masculinity, race, nation and Black liberation. As Edwards focuses on Black leadership and the inherent assumption of masculinity through the conceptual framework of charisma, Carby highlights the long epistemic genealogy, stemming from the post-emancipation era to the 1990s, that assumes a male-specific understanding of the Black intellectual and/or race leader. In particular, Carby delineates C.L.R. James conceptual trajectories in developing "representations of autonomous, self-determining, revolutionary black manhood", like Toussaint Louverture in *The Black Jacobins*, through his analysis of the gendered aesthetics of body lines (113). Through an analysis of his novels, and in particular, his writings on cricket, Carby highlights the relationship between the heroic male figure and the people, using the cultural aesthetics of body lines countering Western modernist theories (116). See, Hazel Carby, *Race Men* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998); Erica Edwards, *Charisma and the Fictions of Black Leadership* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).

[46] 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), 90.

binary that still relegates the Black subject as a pre-modern entity.[47] Indeed, Genovese argues that Haitian Revolutionaries attained their freedom predominantly through the adoption of French Revolution ideologies and through the rule of a paternal and republican Toussaint Louverture. Furthermore, although he attests that "religion provided the ideological rallying point for revolt," he still contends that this is not due to an intrinsic revolutionary potential encompassed with Afro-diasporic religion.[48]

Carolyn Fick's 1990 historical monograph *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below* highlights the role of the previously unnamed masses that contributed to the Haitian Revolution, marking a break in earlier trends of lauding the influences of the French Revolution. As her title suggests, she is analyzing the Haitian Revolution from below and not relying solely on the narratives of prominent leaders: she centers the average Black uneducated slaves of Saint-Domingue as the main actors of their own freedom and emancipation, as well as the facilitators of their own national independence. A key aspect of her work is that she emphasizes the role of marronage as a tool for freedom. Although, she acknowledges the role of revolt and rebellion in other slave colonies in the Americas, she attests that as a form of resistance, marronage, was particularly prevalent in (although not exclusive to) Saint-Domingue, wherein "open confrontation gave way to guerilla warfare."[49] She counters the colonial idea that the Black slave masses were simply contesting their work conditions, highlighting the conscientious struggle for freedom that led the spirit of the Haitian Revolution. Although marronage is centered within Fick's work, the book does not extensively analyze the gendered

[47] Genovese, *From Rebellion to Revolution*, 91.

[48] Ibid., 28

[49] Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, 5

dynamics of the rebellion. However, she does center forms of cultural resistance and diasporic identity-making practices and argues that dancing was one of the favorite leisure-time activities of slaves with African diasporic ties. Furthermore, she attests that "despite rigid prohibitions, voodoo was indeed one of the few areas of total autonomous activity for the African slaves" where they could resist the horrors of slavery psychologically and spiritually.[50] Through this analysis, Vodou embodies a catalyst for liberation and independence, not just through self-expression, but also through collective organizing, exhibited for example, through the Bois-Caïman meeting. Her focus on marronage and embodied resistance practices align very closely with my work, whereas I will push this analysis further by centering the feminist and queer sensuous politics of Black enslaved women.

The year 1995 marks the release Michel-Rolph Trouillot's book *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, which attends to the methodological and epistemological challenges of historicizing the Haitian Revolution. He attests that the Haitian Revolution enters history as "unthinkable" as it was denied and erased by imperialist rulers and historians, thus highlighting the ways in which power becomes constitutive of historical narratives. Indeed, a recognition of the slave resistance of Saint-Domingue troubles Western discourses of modernity. Subsequently, Trouillot's intervention ushered in new approaches to discuss and analyze the Haitian rebellious insurgency in regard to notions of modernity. A sampling of texts that attend to these queries include David Scott's *Conscripts of Modernity*, Sibylle Fischer's *Modernity Disavowed*, and Susan Buck-Morss's *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History*.[51] On one hand,

[50] Ibid., 44.

[51] David Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); Sibylle Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed: Haiti and the Cultures of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); Susan Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009).

Fischer and Buck-Morss emphasize the historiographic resonance of the Haitian Revolution and independence, and assert the imperative role of reading modernity alongside this historical moment. On the other hand, Scott re-conceptualizes James's *The Black Jacobins* and questions its postcolonial romanticism articulated through discourses of subaltern or alternative modernities.

Relatedly, Trouillot's work also renewed the scholarly trend of exhuming the recognition and reverberations of the Haitian Revolution onto the outside world. In a similar vein of Genovese's work, David Geggus's *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, Laurent Dubois's *Avengers of the New World*, John Garrigus's *Before Haiti*, and Julius Scott's *The Common Wind* all contextualize the denouement of the Haitian Revolution within the events of that period in the Americas. For instance, Laurent Dubois's analysis avoids the essentialist discourses of race and concentrates on the shifting political meanings of the organized call for freedom in his aim to show how the Haitian Revolution indeed "transformed the world."[52] Through a chronological account of the Revolution, he centers the strained international relationship between Saint-Domingue, France, Britain, Spain and the United States. The framing of the Haitian Revolution as a pivotal moment in World history, also resonates through more recent works such as Ada Ferrer's *Freedom's Mirror* and Gerald Horne's *Confronting the Black Jacobins,* which specifically attend to the complicated relationship between emancipated Haiti and the Spanish colony of Cuba, and between the United States and the island of Hispaniola, correspondingly.[53]

[52] Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, 7. Also see, David Patrick Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002); John Garrigus, *Before Haiti: Race and Citizenship in French Saint-Domingue* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Julius S. Scott, *The Common Wind: Afro-American Currents in the Age of the Haitian Revolution* (London: Verso, 2018).

[53] Ada Ferrer, *Freedom's Mirror: Cuba and Haiti in the Age of Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Gerald Horne, *Confronting the Black Jacobins: The U.S., the Haitian Revolution, and the Origins of the Dominican Republic* (New York: New York University Press, 2015).

Moreover, I would add to this list Neil Roberts's *Freedom as Marronage,* as he argues that marronage practices during the Haitian Revolution "fundamentally reshaped the conceptual landscape of modern political thinking not only for Haiti and the Caribbean, but also for peoples and movements across space, time, and locales."[54] Although flight is an integral part of marronage, Roberts also contends that marronage involves a "societal transformation resulting from the struggle to institute a distinct concept of freedom."[55] Heavily inspired by Roberts's theorizing, I will in turn, seek to expand his notion of "freedom as marronage," by investigating the ways in which freedom is articulated in sensuous terms, through the liminal space and time of the Haitian Revolution. Although Roberts does not necessarily center gender or sexuality in his analysis of the historical period – though he does take these modalities into consideration – his notion of "freedom as marronage," opens up the conceptual terrain of liminal space and time, and invites various incarnations of freedom.

Many of the texts mentioned above are some of the most canonical in the realm of historical literature on the Haitian Revolution. However, historians, sociologists and other critical thinkers alike have recently taken up the task of re-narrating the Haitian Revolution to unearth its gendered and sexual implications. One of the reverberating refrains surrounding the difficulties of doing such work, involves the lack of archival documentations on women. For instance, Sue Peabody's article "Négresse, Mulâtresse, Citoyenne: Gender and Emancipation in the French Caribbean, 1650-1848," contends with this archival setback by opening up her temporal and spatial sites of analysis to cover two centuries of French colonization and France's three largest

[54] Roberts, *Freedom as Marronage*, 23.

[55] Ibid., 7.

slave plantation colonies: Martinique, Guadeloupe and Saint-Domingue.[56] Poignantly, she situates a dichotomy between French and American conceptions of gender and feminist scholarship, and argues that the French archives and historiographies of slavery and gender are less informed and thorough than American ones. This methodological observation informed my efforts not to impose U.S. conceptions of gender and sexuality on the landscape of colonial Saint-Domingue. Through the archives of colonial rule, Peabody showcases the masculinist ethos of Saint-Domingue and the limits of women's emancipation, promulgated in part by republican commissioners, who during the Haitian Revolution, implemented emancipation legislations and citizenship rights in accordance with militarized construction of manhood alongside patriarchal family values. By drawing connections with other social factors, events and processes that spans beyond the Haitian territory, she links the French and Haitian Revolution, the *Code Noir*, the Napoleon Civil Code as well as imperial racializing discourses, to emphasize the effects of gendered values systems transmitted via colonial relations. Echoing the transnational trend of the aforementioned historical works, Peabody's article delineates the construction of gender norms throughout the deployment of the Haitian Revolution, alongside the other Caribbean French colonies and the French empire itself. In conjunction with Peabody's investigation, Elizabeth Colwill's piece "'Fêtes de l'Hymen, Fêtes de la Liberté' Marriage, Manhood, and Emancipation in Revolutionary Saint-Domingue" also exposes the French Republic's promulgation of patriarchal and paternalistic constructs of manhood in revolutionary Saint-Domingue through the legislations of April 4, 1792 and of June 21, 1793.[57] Focusing on a

[56] Sue Peabody, "Négresse, Mulâtresse, Citoyenne: Gender and Emancipation in the French Caribbean, 1650-1848," in *Gender and Slave Emancipation in the Atlantic World*, eds. Pamela Scully and Diana Paton (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 56-78.

[57] Elizabeth Colwill, "'Fêtes de l'Hymen, Fêtes de la Liberté' Marriage, Manhood, and Emancipation in Revolutionary Saint-Domingue," in *The World of the Haitian Revolution*, eds. David Patrick Geggus and Norman Fiering (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009): 125-155.

particular period of the Revolution, Colwill is able to tease out with great detail, the ways in which Black masculinity permeated notions of citizenship and militarism, as well as values of family, marriage, and morality.

Continuing in this vein, Mimi Sheller's monograph *Citizenship from Below* examines the history of emancipation in Jamaica and Haiti, and analyzes the way in which gender, sexuality, race, and notions of labor and citizenship interact with post-slavery subjectivity in the Caribbean. Although, her work does not specifically investigate the timeframe of the Haitian Revolution, Sheller's analysis encompasses the rebellion's afterlife, as she contends with the impact of the militarized revolution and its effects on the masculinist national identity of post-independence Haiti. Indeed, Sheller hones in on the influences of militarism in the construction of Black masculinity, and via a critical analysis of the silences in the archive that render women practically voiceless, she also uncovers the modes of resistance enacted by women and other marginalized agricultural laborers. Throughout the piece, Sheller unfolds her concept of "citizenship from below" which "not only refers to the struggles for state recognition by excluded subaltern groups … but also alerts us to questions of embodiment, corporality and the 'vulgar'."[58] More specifically, she argues for a historiographical outlook that recognizes "embodied freedom" in order to highlight the centrality of racialized notions of gender and sexuality within the practice of slavery, to antislavery movements and rebellions, and to post-slavery and post-independence Caribbean communities. Her work definitely aligns with mine, as I also seek to uncover the "embodied freedoms" embedded within the Black diaspora, and, in this case, within the temporal and spatial locale of the Haitian Revolution. Viewing this

[58] Sheller, *Citizenship from Below*, 24.

formidable historical event through a bottom-up lens will uncover a space for revolutionary erotic intimacies and will destabilize the masculinist and heteronormative assumptions and dominant hero narratives of Toussaint Louverture.

Scholars who wish to illuminate the role of gender and sexuality in historicizing the Haitian Revolution, have also turned to literary analysis to supplement archival scarcity. Accordingly, Deborah Jensen's *Beyond the Slave Narrative,* Myriam Chancy's *From Sugar to Revolution* and Marlene Daut's *Tropics of Haiti,* all turn to literature to re-narrate the famous slave upheaval.[59] While both Jensen and Daut examines the written works produced at the time of the Haitian Revolution, crafting a genealogy of the Haitian literary tradition, Chancy examines the links between contemporary women writers and artists of Haiti, the Dominican Republic and Cuba, which in turn connects their revolutionary histories in gendered ways. As one of my methodological frameworks resembles those of Jensen and Daut, I seek to contribute to the analysis of storytelling traditions of the revolutionary era and broaden the scope of Haiti's revolutionary history by unearthing erotic and queer possibilities of freedom. Indeed, through her excavation of creole poetry from courtesans, Jensen highlights, via Gayle Rubin, that "[s]ex is always political" and that "there are also historical periods in which sexuality is more sharply contested and more overtly politicized", which, in turn, bolsters a renegotiation within the domain of erotic life.[60] I intend to deeply explore these possibilities through the conceptual

[59] Deborah Jenson, *Beyond the Slave Narrative: Politics, Sex, and Manuscripts in the Haitian Revolution* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011); Myriam Chancy, *From Sugar to Revolution: Women's Visions of Haiti, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2012); Marlene Daut, *Tropics of Haiti: Race and the Literary History of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World, 1789-1865* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015).

[60] Jenson, *Beyond the Slave Narrative,* 279.

framework of sensuous marronage, unearthing the dynamic and embodied gendered, sensual, sensorial and queer implications of the Haitian Revolution.

In many historical accounts of the Haitian Revolution, the Bois-Caïman ceremony has been remembered as the driving event that spurred the fight for freedom and independence. According to Laurent Dubois, the Bois-Caïman ceremony "serves as a shorthand for the complex and varied presence of religion in the planning and execution of the insurrection."[61] What the meagre oral and written documentation surrounding the mystical and revolutionary Vodou service reveal is the political dimension of the Vodou religion, and in turn, the role of women in galvanizing the slave rebellion. Indeed, how does Vodou and its reliance on possession, song, embodiment and dance imagine the gendered and sexual order of Saint-Domingue's slave societies and its fight for freedom? Considering the presence of Cécile Fatiman at the Bois-Caïman ceremony and the active participation of women within the spiritual sphere of Vodou, I propose that a keen exploration of the creole religion and its gendered, sensuous and queer structures can transform the ways in which the Haitian Revolution is re-imagined. Along with many other scholars who examine and re-interpret the customs and traditions of Haitian Vodou,[62] my work seeks to "read" the Afro-diasporic spiritual tradition as a repository of historical knowledge. Inspired by Joan Dayan and Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley, who have established the

[61] Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, 101.

[62] Karen McCarthy Brown, *Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Maya Deren, *Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti* (Kingston: McPherson, 1953); Zora Neale Hurston, *Tell My Horse: Voodoo and Life in Haiti and Jamaica* (New York: HarperCollins e-book, 1938); Joan Dayan, *Haiti, History, and the Gods* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Claudine Michel and Patrick Bellegarde-Smith, *Vodou in Haitian Life and Culture: Invisible Powers* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Strongman, *Queering Black Atlantic Religions*; Margarite Fernández Olmos and Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert, *Creole Religions of the Caribbean: An Introduction from Vodou and Santería to Obeah and Espiritismo*, 2nd ed. (New York: New York University, 2011); Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley, *Ezili's Mirrors: Imagining Black Queer Genders* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018).

groundwork for conceptualizing Ezili – the Vodou *lwa* of Love – as archive,[63] I aim to build on their theorization to expand the Black feminist and queer liberatory promises of the Haitian Revolution. I turn to sensuous marronage to shed some light on the freedom potential found within the embodied practices of Vodou, and to elucidate some of the gaps in the narratives of the Bois-Caïman ceremony, and in turn the Haitian Revolution.

Doing Sensuous Marronage: Methodology

The process of unearthing discourses of Black liberation through the silences and erasures of authoritative archives, remains one of the most intellectually imaginative endeavours of Black studies. As my doctoral project is uniquely positioned within the intersections of diasporic histories of enslavement and rebellion, Black feminist gendered analyses of resistance and freedom, Black feminist discourses of racialized sexuality, Black Queer Studies, French and Postcolonial Literature and studies of Afro-diasporic spirituality, I value the countless possibilities encompassed in the terrain of interdisciplinary research. Creating emancipatory methodologies and epistemologies through a radical/rogue interdisciplinarity, allows us to generate Black modes of knowing that refuse to be constrained within (Western) disciplinary silos.[64] In this sense, interdisciplinarity acts a method-making strategy, which linked with patient relational thinking can drastically alter how we understand historical events and the traces they leave in the present and the future. It is through this lens that I view the methodological approach encompassed in sensuous marronage.

[63] Tinsley directly refers to "Ezili as archive," in *Ezili's Mirrors*, 4. Also see, Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley, "Songs for Ezili: Vodou Epistemologies of (Trans)gender," *Feminist Studies* 37, no.2 (Summer 2011): 417-436; Dayan, *Haiti, History, and the Gods*; Joan Dayan, "Erzulie: A Women's History of Haiti," *Research in African Literatures* 25, no.2 (Summer 1994): 5-31.

[64] McKittrick, *Dear Science and Other Stories*, 119.

In the following chapters, I explore the relation between metaphors of the heart and Vodou processions, between male sexual mutilation and trickster figures, or perhaps between gendered labor[65] consciousness and emancipation decrees, which all embody the potential for redefining and creating freedom-making knowledges and strategies. While this dissertation aims to re-orient the boundaries of freedom narratives, it does so by respecting what Edouard Glissant calls, the "right to opacity." As part of his philosophy of "relation," opacity refers to how an individual or a group oppose the "leering looks" of Western thought that seek to make the subject perceivable according to prevailing epistemologies. Hence, using opacity as a methodology becomes a way of asserting an alternate notion of being, and of knowing, that are in turn, unintelligible to hegemonic structures that discipline, categorize and oppress. Using sensuous marronage to attend to the embodied, affective, sensual and sensorial epistemes, thus opens up a creative way to discover the liberatory possibilities that reside in Black feminist and queer modes of being and knowing. In other words, sensuous marronage offers imaginative, embodied, and at times, intangible ontologies and epistemologies of Black liberation, that are encompassed amongst the infinite possibilities of opacity. Although these ontologies and epistemes can be ethereal, impalpable, and undefinable, sensuous marronage gestures towards their existence, significant function and liberatory potential. The backdrop of the Haitian Revolution – a central emblem of Black liberation – offers such a wide arsenal of freedom dreams that counter colonial and masculinist conceptions of liberty, and that resonate across linear structures of time, and throughout the Black diaspora.

[65] I invite you to think of labor simultaneously as work and as being "in labor" – which invokes reproduction – similar to the way Jennifer Morgan refers to this *double entendre*. See, Jennifer Morgan, *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

To get to these liberatory stories and epistemes, I frequently use the spiritual (and thus sensual and sensorial) pathway provided by Vodou. The religious tradition of Haitian Vodou encompasses a multitude of personas, mythologies, rituals and iconographies that radically alter perceptions of gender, sexuality, community, kinship, resistance and survival. In order to decipher this embodied and spiritual *konesans*,[66] I turn to Vèvè Clark's conception of "diaspora literacy," which enables an intertextual reading practice between African diasporic texts of all vernaculars.[67] An essential methodological approach to the interpretation of Afro-spiritual culture, "diaspora literacy" also becomes critical in untangling corporeal epistemologies, as the body always constitutes the main site of instruction and learning in Vodou. Moreover, Clark's tandem framework of "*Marasa* consciousness," nestles in the generative contradictory plains of Vodou, thus, disrupting the logics of Western thought and allowing imaginative and creative narratives to blossom. Expanding the archival possibilities of the Haitian Revolution, I posit that the ritual space of Vodou practices, mythologies and ceremonies constitutes an archival repository with the potential to re-narrate Black liberation. Similar to the way in which Aisha Finch deploys her rich methodological approach of "comb[ing] the narrative underside" of Afro-diasporic spiritual traditions, ritual spaces and performances "to imagine the psychic geographies of freedom," I use sensuous marronage to create more expansive archival possibilities to recount the story of the Haitian Revolution.[68] Also inspired by Diana Taylor's notion of the "repertoire,"

[66] *Konesans* is a Creole term that, in the context of Vodou means knowledge, intuition, and insight into human and spiritual affairs. A type of knowledge harnessed mostly by *mambo*s and *hougans*. See Karen McCarthy Brown, "Afro-Caribbean Spirituality: A Haitian Case Study," in *Vodou in Haitian Life and Culture: Invisible Powers*, eds. Claudine Michel and Patrick Bellegarde-Smith (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 25.

[67] Vèvè A. Clark, "Developing Diaspora Literacy and *Marasa* Consciousness," *African and Afro-Caribbean Performance* 50, no. 1 (May 2009): 9-18.

[68] Aisha K. Finch, "Cécile Fatiman and Petra Carabalí, Late Eighteenth-Century Haiti and Mid-Nineteenth-Century Cuba," in *As If She Were Free: A Collective Biography of Women and Emancipation in the Americas*, eds. Erica L. Ball, Tatiana Seijas, Terri L. Snyder (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 298-299.

the performative aspects of Haitian Vodou become, in turn, "coterminous with memory and history."[69] In queering temporal structures, Joan Dayan also reminds us, that Vodou practices should be understood as a historical source, and as a ritualistic simulation of Haiti's colonial past.[70]

As I interact with, navigate through, and deconstruct the diasporic relationship between texts, I also examine Vodou's narrative schemas alongside poetry, spiritual cosmograms called *vévés,* aesthetics, literature and colonial archival materials. Intimidated by the authoritative archives – perhaps because of the violences and excess – I join Saidiya Hartman in using her methodological approach of "critical fabulation," as I critically read along and against the grain to attend to the figurative dimensions of history.[71] Indeed, I understand Hartman's "critical fabulation" and the methodological aspect of sensuous marronage as kindred concepts, as they both seek to queer, shift and disrupt the boundaries of dominant discourses found in the archives, to in turn, re-assemble and re-imagine what could have been, what could be, and what has yet to come. Furthermore, in assessing the aesthetic texts of my dissertation, I follow Sylvia Wynter's "deciphering practice" to assess "not what the texts and their signifying practices can be

[69] Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 5.

[70] Dayan, *Haiti, History, and the Gods*, xvii

[71] Saidiya Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," *Small Axe* 12, no. 2 (2008): 1-14. The methodological framework of reading "along the grain" is brought forward by Ann Laura Stoler. In her analysis, she centers the power-laden structure of the archives, as well as the uncovering of the sensorial aspects of historical documentations. She states, "Reading along the archival grain draws our sensibilities to the archive's granular rather than seamless texture, to the rough surface that mottles its hue and shapes its form. Working along the grain is not to follow frictionless course but to enter a field of force and will to power, to attend to both the sound and sense therein and their rival and reciprocal energies. It calls on us to understand how unintelligibilities are sustained and why empires remain so uneasily invested in them." See, Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 53.

interpreted to *mean* but what they can be deciphered to *do*."[72] This active purview lends itself perfectly to the creation of narratives of freedom that are simultaneously Black, feminist and queer, albeit this time, through visual art. I would like to pause momentarily on the term "visual" here, as I understand part of the method of a "deciphering practice," also includes what Tina Campt refers to as "expand[ing] the sensorial register of the image," which in my work, translates into a sensuous marronage analysis.[73] Indeed, my rich and multiscalar methodological approach is interrelated with the theoretical framings of sensuous marronage, putting in relation, at times, undecipherable epistemes to bestow an alternative vision of Black liberation unconstrained by rigid conceptions of being and knowing.

Chapter Breakdown

In chapter one, "The Beating Heart of Freedom: The Sensuous Actors of the Revolution," I utilize the Bois-Caïman ceremony as a spiritual and sensuous grounding space to articulate an alternate feminist and queer reading of the Haitian Revolution, challenging common tropes and epistemological breaks that often describe the unfolding of events in colonial Saint-Domingue. Through my capacious reading of heart symbolism, I examine patriotic poetics alongside the grammars of the Vodou *lwa* Ezili, to distinguish between the different embodied and gendered narratives of the famous Afro-spiritual gathering. Moreover, through sensuous marronage I unravel Ezili's sensuous assemblages to reveal the productive relations between her incarnation as Ezili Freda and the historical figure of the *mulâtresse* concubine, and between her embodiment of Ezili Dantò and the *mambo,* notably Cécile Fatiman. Through an exploration of

[72] Sylvia Wynter, "Rethinking 'Aesthetics': Notes towards a Deciphering Practice," in *Ex-Iles: Essays on Caribbean Cinema,* ed. Mbye Cham (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1992), 266. Emphasis in original.

[73] Campt, *Listening to Images*, 41.

poetry, literature, Vodou mythology and embodiments, archival documents and artistic rendering of the faithful Bois-Caïman gathering, I uncover Black feminist and queer geographies, histories and possibilities of Black liberation. Ultimately, as sensuous actors of the Haitian Revolution, I highlight how Ezili and her sensuous assemblages, espouse a Black feminist ontology of resistance that resonates mnemonically throughout a "rhizomed land" and queer temporal frame.

In chapter two, "Marooned and Opaque: Alternative Masculinities and Genders of the Haitian Revolution," I examine how the liminal and turbulent period between the August 1791 insurrection and the implementation of the emancipation laws of June 1793 creates an opening to sense the various ways sensuous actors of the Haitian Revolution defined themselves and defined notions of liberation along and against the constructs of modernity. Exploring different gendered modalities, this chapter is dedicated to uncovering embodied alternative masculinities and creative genders through sensuous marronage. Through the "critical fabulation" of a fugitive slave advertisement, I read along and against the grain to contextualize the sensorial and corporeal aspect of the slave's mutilated sexual body and to put it in relation to the generative trope of the Rabelaisian and Vodou trickster. Moreover, via a historical, literary and aesthetic analysis, I trace a larger queer genealogy of "gender indefiniteness" that proposes unique Black ways of being and knowing through the figure of *Romaine la Prophètesse*.

In chapter three, "Your women grumble…": Labor, Resistance and Gendered Poetics," through an examination of the 1793-1794 emancipation decrees, colonial legislation and post-Independence poetry, I assess the gendered and sexual (im)possibilities of republican Saint-Domingue and Haiti. Through colonial emancipation, freedom became a compensation for military duty, implementing gendered modalities of citizenship, labor and belonging. On plantation grounds, emancipation involved coerced labor, unequal wages, and precarious family

arrangements, causing women laborers to protest and resist this new regime, as these stipulations were a far cry from their definition of liberty. Thinking through the conceptual approach of sensuous marronage that is intrinsically connected to Black feminist and queer formulations of liberation, I demonstrate how labor politics also embody the capacities to produce new modes of being that are disruptive to colonial and national structures. Less focused on spiritual Vodou mythologies than in previous chapters, sensuous marronage emphasizes an embodied awareness of labor, reproduction and sexuality, amounting to transformative instances of Black radical consciousness and action. Furthermore, through an analysis of post-Independence poetry, I highlight how the appeal to a heteropatriarchal construction of masculinity linked to the ideals of family and patriotic values, laid a strong foundation for the gender ideologies of Independent Haiti.

Finally, in the Coda, "The Future of Sensuous Marronage," through a queer intergenerational reading practice, I explore how sensuous marronage persists as an ontological and epistemological deployment of freedom in current day Haiti. In resisting the "afterlives of slavery" and the erasure of freedom-making practices and dreams, I showcase how Black feminists and queer communities are still fighting in a Haitian Revolution of their own.

Ultimately, the erotic openings offered in this doctoral project are of significance as they expand the analytics of the Black Radical Tradition, transforming epistemologies, methodologies and ontologies of Black liberation. Countering colonial and heteropatriarchal narratives of the Haitian Revolution, sensuous marronage's innovative methodological framework re-assesses Vodou grammars, rituals and mythos, literature and visual arts, and colonial archives, to

illuminate what Jenny Sharpe calls the "crevices of power."[74] Indeed, these archival sites reveal embodied knowledges that are not comprehensible through the Western dictates of modernity, but are essential to a Black feminist and queer liberatory consciousness. Through my re-narration of the Haitian Revolution, it becomes apparent that Black liberation requires a Black feminist and queer democratic ethos, that values sensuous, affective, spiritual, sensorial and sensual ways of being, knowing, loving and fighting.

[74] Jenny Sharpe, *Ghosts of Slavery: A Literary Archaeology of Black Women's Lives* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

CHAPTER ONE

The Beating Heart of Freedom: The Sensuous Actors of the Revolution

Bondié qui fait soleil, qui clairé nous en haut,
Qui soulevé la mer, qui fait grondé l'orage,
Bon dié la, zot tandé? Caché dans youn nuage,
Et la li gadé nous, li vouai tout ça blancs faits!
Bon dié blancs mandé crime, et part nous vlé bienfets
Mais dié lá qui si bon, ordonnin nous vengeance;
Li va conduit bras nous, la ba nous assistance,
Jetté portrait dié blancs qui soif dlo dans gié nous,
Couté la liberté li pale cœurs nous toùs.

- Hérald Dumesle, *Voyage dans le Nord d'Haïti*, 88.

God who makes the sun that lights us from above,
[God] Who raises up the seas, who makes the storm rage,
God is there, do you hear? Hidden in a cloud,
And there he watches us, he sees everything the whites are doing!
The God of the whites orders crime, and wants nothing good For us,
But the god there who is so good orders our vengeance;
He will guide our arms, he gives us assistance;
Throw down the portrait of the god of the whites who is Thirsty for the tears in our eyes,
Listen to liberty, it speaks in all of our hearts.

- Hérald Dumesle.[75]

The plantation regime of the French colony of Saint-Domingue was considered one of the most brutal and ruthless plantocracies of the Atlantic world. From the back-breaking labor under an unbearable tropical climate, to the sadistic and violent treatment by plantation owners, the

[75] Hérald Dumesle, "Oath of the Cayman Woods," in *Poetry of Haitian Independence*, trans. by Norman Shapiro, eds. Doris Y. Kadish and Deborah Jenson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 225-226. Hérald Dumesle's 1824 "Oath of the Cayman Woods," (Serment du Bois Caïman) is a well-know interpretation and the earliest-known transcription of the speech Boukman said at the Bois-Caïman ceremony.

enslaved peoples of the Caribbean island were acutely aware of the high stakes of freedom. Following the massacre of the indigenous Taino peoples of *Ayiti*, the African-born and creole population resisted their enslavement and abjection through the formidable events of the Haitian Revolution. In many historical accounts of the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804), the Bois-Caïman ceremony – also known as *Bwa Kayiman* in Haitian *Kreyòl* – has been remembered as the driving catalyst that spurred the fight for freedom and eventually, independence. The best-known narratives recount that over two-hundred enslaved people met in the woods where Cécile Fatiman, a *mambo,* and Boukman Dutty, a warrior, leader of insurrections and *hougan,* headed a mystical ceremony that also acted as a call to arms. Indeed, on the night of August 21 of 1791, a congregation of enslaved men and women came together at a clearing in a forest dubbed the Bois-Caïman,[76] to materially and spiritually conspire against the colonial apparatus of slavery.

The tale of the influential ceremony centers the role and impact of the Afro-diasporic spiritual practices of Vodou in galvanizing a plan to fight back against enslavement and its dehumanizing conditions. However, considering the sparse documentation on the event, the historiography of the Bois-Caïman ceremony oscillates between the liminal space of actual fact and legend. Indeed, while many historians of the Haitian Revolution, such as C.L.R. James and Eugene Genovese, acknowledge that the spiritual event took place and recognize the huge impact Vodou had in the deployment of the rebellion, they mostly pay attention to the warrior role of Boukman in inciting the subsequent insurgent attacks.[77] The scholars who focus more closely on

[76] There are many debates about the actual location of the Bois-Caïman ceremony. Following Antoine Dalmas's 1814 account, Laurent Dubois and David Geggus place the ceremony on the Choiseul plantation, while Carolyn Fick locates the event not far from the Lenormand de Mézy plantation. Finally, the location of the present-day Vodou temple Lakou Nan Campêche, in North Acul Parish, is also believed to be the site of the famous ceremony according to Haitian professor J. B. Emmanuel Francius Julien. See, Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, 81-92; Dubois, *Avengers of the New World.*, 99-102; Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, 93-94.

[77] See, James, *The Black Jacobins*; Genovese, *From Rebellion to Revolution.*

the Bois-Caïman ceremony are more so divided, debating the veracity of the sources, the indoctrination of myth into history and the impact the mythology of the event on the historicity of the Haitian Revolution itself. French historian Léon-Francois Hoffman wholly denies that the spiritual ceremony took place, associating its mythos with the fabrications by Antoine Dalmas, the first person to write about the event. David Geggus follows Hoffman's skepticism, casting doubt on the historical records of the Bois-Caïman ceremony.[78] Although Geggus acquiesces that the Bois-Caïman gathering did take place, he rigorously questions the gaps and inconsistencies in the archival accounts of the event.

Offering a much more generative account of the ceremonial event are Carolyn Fick and Laurent Dubois, who highlight the political dimension of the Vodou religion, and its role in the unfolding of insurgent freedom tactics that lead to the Haitian Revolution. While they both recognize the limits of the sparse archives of the ceremony, Fick emphasizes that such a spiritual and political gathering would have been kept secret by enslaved attendees, explaining the scarcity and contradictions in the historical documentation.[79] As previously mentioned, Dubois also attests that the presence of Vodou at the Bois-Caïman ceremony is an indication of the importance of the Afro-diasporic religion in galvanizing the slave rebellion of Saint-Domingue.[80] Taking heed from their assessments, I believe that the aesthetics, mythologies, iconographies, and ritual performances of Vodou not only re-member the past, but also widen the imagination and possibilities of Black liberation. Taking further Joan Dayan's assertion that "Vodou practices

[78] Léon-Francois Hoffman, "Un Mythe National: La Cérémonie du Bois Caïman," in *La République Haïtienne: État des Lieux et Perspectives*, eds. Gérard Barthélemy and Christian A. Girault (Paris: Karthala, 1993), 434-448; Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies,* 81-92.

[79] Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, 93

[80] Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, 101.

must be viewed as ritual reenactments of Haiti's colonial past,"[81] and utilizing Vèvè Clark's methodological framework of "diaspora literacy," this chapter will illuminate how the creole spiritual practice also encompasses an arsenal of possibilities for Black diasporic freedoms through Black woman's sexual, sensuous and queer "freedom dreams."

This chapter builds on the celebrated invocation by Boukman during the Bois-Caïman ceremony to "Listen to liberty, it speaks in all of our hearts." I begin my analysis by closely examining the poetics of Boukman's Bois-Caïman speech alongside poetry from the post-Independence period to explore their patriotic renderings of heart metonyms. Utilizing the Bois-Caïman ceremony as a spiritual and sensuous grounding space, I expand the possibilities lodged in metaphors of the heart to articulate a feminist and queer reading of the Haitian Revolution. Indeed, through my capacious reading of heart symbolism, I take up Dayan and Clark's provocative methodological invitations to read Vodou as a text of the Haitian Revolution, thus revealing wider sensual and spiritual possibilities of Black liberation through sensuous marronage. This alternate heart symbolism offers a different register in which to read the Haitian Revolution and early Haitian nationhood, as its affective and feminized resonances challenge the masculinized and heteronormative scripts of rebellion and nation-making that dominate the period. Additionally expanding the liberational grammars of the heart, I turn to the Vodou spiritual figure of Ezili[82] – the lwa of love – to examine the iconography most closely associated with the famous spirit, the heart *vévés*. The "heart" represented by Ezili gives us a tangible way in to think about sensuous marronage, and a clear alternative to the patriarchal invocations of "heart." I also reveal the generative relationship between her incarnation as Ezili Freda and the

[81] Dayan, *Haiti, History, and the Gods*, xvii.

[82] I prefer using the Haitian Kreyòl traditional spelling for the lwas I refer to in this work. Ezili is the traditional spelling. She is also known as Erzulie when referred to in French, English and Spanish.

historical figure of the *mulâtresse* concubine, and between her embodiment of Ezili Dantò and the notable *mambo,* thus introducing new sensuous actors to the Haitian Revolution narratives.

Through my conceptual framework of sensuous marronage, I will explore poetry, literature, Vodou mythology, archival documents and artistic renderings of the Bois-Caïman gathering to uncover Black feminist and queer geographies, histories and possibilities of Black liberation during the Haitian Revolution. Countering Western cartographies, linear timeframes, and masculinist historical narratives, sensuous marronage queers the colonial boundaries of being, and re-frames liberation through embodied freedom-making practices and desires, residing outside of the structures of law, nation and empire. Through the contextual framework of the Haitian Revolution, sensuous marronage also denotes a mystical, sensual and embodied proclivity to Black liberation that resonates throughout the Black diaspora, past, present and future.

Erotic Invocations of Freedom: Sensuous Marronage

Complimenting the erotic nature of sensuous epistemes is the conceptual framework of marronage, which I use multivalently. Encompassing not only the commonly definition of marronage as flight, I also comprehend the concept through a lens of community-building that parallels to Neil Roberts' view of marronage as a "societal transformation resulting from the struggle to institute a distinct concept of freedom".[83] In line with Max Hantel's analysis of translation through Edouard Glissant's "poetics of landscapes," I draw from the Anglo-usage of the Francophone term "marronage" as a word that defines a subversive tactic against the French empire, and evokes a diasporic rhizomatic network of mobility and resistance that is "expressed

[83] Roberts, *Freedom as Marronage*, 7.

through the specificity of a creolizing landscape yet not reducible to a bounded spatiality."[84] Bringing in this linguistic geography with the meaning of the word "marronage" – which itself conjures notions of mobility and movement of people between and through spaces – I open up new ways to think about the broader spatial and temporal possibilities of freedom. Thus, the sensuous articulation of this process of liberation is tied to the re-formulation of time and space, the agency in constructing one's own subject-position, and thus one's history.

The tethering of my framework of the sensuous to that of marronage articulates in part, an embodied praxis of liberation that goes beyond Western and heteropatriarchal notions of space, time, and personhood. In conversation with Lyndon Gill's expansion of Lorde's idea of the erotic as a "perspectival trinity that holds together the political-sensual-spiritual,"[85] I suggest that emphasizing the sensual, the sensorial, and the spiritual as epistemologies, engenders political effects that shift larger power dynamics. In this dissertation, this shift translates into a methodological approach that re-assesses historical narratives and definitions of Black liberation.

In her book *Citizenship from Below*, Mimi Sheller similarly deploys a range of concepts – such as embodied freedom, erotic agency, citizenship from below and sexual citizenship – which all speak to Lordean erotic formulations, and to sensuous marronage.[86] Centering the racialized, gendered and sexual knowledges found in the body that trouble the structures of racial and gendered capitalism, colonialism and white supremacy, Sheller highlights how erotic self-possession can be a political tool of resistance altering constructs of citizenship, sovereignty and

[84] Max Hantel, "Rhizomes and the Space of Translation: On Edouard Glissant's Spiral Retelling," *Small Axe* 42 (Nov. 2012): 100.

[85] Gill, *Erotic Islands*, 10.

[86] Sheller, *Citizenship from Below*; See also, Gill, "In the Realm of Our Lorde," 182-183.

power. Sensuous marronage also engages with Jacqui Alexander's ideas of erotic autonomy and spiritual embodiment, as disruptions of the heteropatriarchal status quo, and thus of colonial and national formations. My work builds on Alexander's work to explore the sexual and sacred bodily praxes that reverberate through the counter-archives of Vodou and other forms of diasporic literacy.[87]

Nonetheless, I do want to be clear about the limits and (im)possibilities of this framework. My deployment of sensuous marronage is not meant to indicate a universal, or all-encompassing notion of freedom. Indeed, Rinaldo Walcott highlights how the terms "fugitivity" and "marronage" "only make sense in the space of unfreedom and thus cannot be constituted as freedom," as they simply "mark the interstices of black desires for freedom."[88] This is exactly where I believe my intervention to be. Sensuous marronage brings into focus Black queer and feminist freedom dreams and desires that push against the unfreedoms of colonialism and enslavement, the structural political apparatus of post-independence Haiti, and the ensuing discourses of the Haitian Revolution. Building on Christina Sharpe's formulation of the "wake" and Saidiya Hartman's conception of the "afterlives of slavery" that name the persistence of anti-Black violence within contemporary life, my framing highlights how structures of Black resistance and refusal also reach into alternate temporal spaces.[89] What I am wrestling with is the recognition that the Haitian Revolution is not over. It is not over in Haiti, and it is not over across

[87] Alexander, *Pedagogies of Crossing.*

[88] Rinaldo Walcott, "Freedom Now Suite: Black Feminist Turns of Voice," *Small Axe* 57, 22, no.3 (November 2018): 155.

[89] Thank you to my supervisor Aisha Finch, for identifying that I was speaking directly to these authors' interventions. See, Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016); Hartman, *Lose Your Mother.*

the Black diaspora. Historically speaking, the Haitian Revolution was a liminal time of uncertainty and disruption, but also of (un)imaginable possibilities, where the promise of, and potential for Black liberation seemed more attainable than ever. Notions of freedom were constantly being defined, refined, tested and enacted to combat the unfreedoms bred from imperialist exploitations. These processes of Black self-determination, self-naming, and creating revolutionary ways of being have never ceased, and continue to counter the lingering effects of the "afterlives of slavery" that manifest today through anti-blackness, heteropatriarchy, colonialism and capitalism. Keeping in mind this temporal and diasporic recognition of an ongoing battle that constantly requires an adaptable, yet robust arsenal of liberatory ontologies, epistemologies and methodologies, sensuous marronage offers a Black feminist and queer formulation of resistance that engages with freedom-making tactics and dreams that manifest through spiritual, sensual, sensorial and affective registers. I believe that these often-forgotten sensuous repositories of knowledges are imperative to engage with in order to fulfill the unmet promises of the Haitian Revolution.

Reading time and space as queerly Black and diasporic opens up the possibility to think about sensuous freedom dreams, and embodied knowledges and practices, as always having been integral to Black liberation, even though they are rarely integrated within larger narratives, politics, or legislative apparatuses of freedom. As mentioned in the introduction, scholars of slavery in the Atlantic world who uncover the roles and voices of enslaved women, attest that formulating gendered and sexual analyses of slave resistance is not merely a summation of gendered identity markers.[90] Rather, the deep examinations conducted by these historians

[90] See, Beckles, *Natural Rebels*; Bush, *Slave Women in Caribbean Society;* Moitt, *Women and Slavery in the French Antilles, 1635-1848*; Camp, *Closer to Freedom*; Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage Plantation Household*; Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives*; Johnson, *Wicked Flesh.*

showcase how gender and sexuality completely reshape the entire scope of history by shifting how it is told, effectively creating transformative epistemologies and methodologies. My goal is to show how sensuous marronage, as an epistemology and methodology that is always already marooned from heteropatriarchal narratives of the Haitian Revolution, needs to be central to the ways in which we study the Revolution, in order to draw attention to the "refusal of freedom's violence of a settlement with unfreedom."[91]

Poetics of the Heart

As noted earlier, while some historians have tried to piece together the meager and contradictory archival mentions of the Bois-Caïman congregation, others have doubted its historical significance and questioned the unifying representation of Vodou as a revolutionary force.[92] However, the symbolic meaning and the collective Haitian identity that is created and maintained through the memory of the Bois-Caïman ceremony suggest that its mythology serves national, international, and of course, Black diasporic purposes. In the present-day, the Bois-Caïman ceremony still influences the collective memory of the abolition of slavery as an emblem of national pride,[93] as an international symbol of progress,[94] and as an emblem of Black

[91] Walcott, "Freedom Now Suite," 156.

[92] David Geggus, "The Bois Caïman Ceremony," *The Journal of Caribbean History* 25, no. 1 (Jan. 1, 1991): 41- 57.

[93] In Haiti, the bicentenary of the ceremony was publicly celebrated in 1991, as well as its hundredth anniversary in 1891. See Geggus, "The Bois Caïman Ceremony," 42. Also, the physical site of the Bois-Caïman, which spans from three historical spaces – the Lenormand de Mezy habitation in Morne Rouge, the Caïman clearing, and the *Lakou Nan Campêche* in North Acul – has become a national heritage site, as well as a Vodou pilgrimage spiritual destination. See, Elisma Joanem, "Bois Caïman," *Inventaire du Patrimoine Immatériel d'Haïti*, http://www.ipimh.org//fiche-bois-caiman-30.html

[94] In 1997, the international organization UNESCO dubbed August 23rd the "International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and of its Abolition" based on the events of the Bois-Caïman ceremony. See, "International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition," UNESCO, https://en.unesco.org/commemorations/slavetraderemembranceday

liberation throughout the diaspora.[95] Although the emphasis on the Afro-spiritual elements of the historic event varies across Vodou mythos, oral traditions, historical accounts, national celebrations and elementary school education,[96] one of the common denominators is the presence of Boukman's speech/prayer, which essentially acted as a mystical call to arms. While many iterations of the *houngan*'s militant appeal exist within the archives, they all indicate a distancing from Western religiosity, a call for revenge against the white planters, and an invocation for liberty that is intrinsically located within the heart. Hérald Dumesle's version of the Bois-Caïman's speech showcased in the epigraph, is considered the earliest written version of the proclamation, and while his adaptation encompasses a Greco-Roman poetic license, the sensorial metaphors of listening and speaking to and from the heart resonate with the rallying cries for freedom of the Haitian Revolution. Indeed, the creole refrain *Couté la liberté li pale coeurs nous toùs* is not only the constant idiom within the different articulations of the Bois-Caïman's liberation oath, it also enacts a "poetics of relation"[97] conjoining the notion of liberty as a voice that speaks within the hearts of Haitian peoples.

Through the allegory of the heart, notions of freedom are understood through an affective register, reflecting in part, the sensorial resonance of words. This grammar of freedom explicated via metaphors of the heart reverberates strongly in post-Haitian independence poetry, in turn, creating a collective historicity and a national identity. For instance, on August 1, 1804, the first

[95] See Genovese, *From Rebellion to Revolution*; Ferrer, *Freedom's Mirror*; Scott, *The Common* Wind; Brandon R. Byrd, *The Black Republic: African Americans and the Fate of Haiti* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019).

[96] See Joanem, "Bois Caïman."

[97] Edouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*.

year of an independent Haiti, a poem entitled "Nature, in wisdom infinite"[98] (*La nature infiniment sage*) by the anonymous pen name A Child of Haiti (*Un Enfant d'Haïti*) was feature in the *Gazette Politique et Commercial d'Haïti.*

C'est en vain qu'on nous fait la guerre,	In vain they flout, attack us ; for
*Nos **cœurs** sont pris des mêmes feux;*	Our **hearts** burn with that freedom fire!
Apprenez tyrans de la terre,	Learn, tyrants of the earth, once more:
Qu'un peuple est libre quand il veut.[99]	Free, they who freedom's boons desire![100]

Here, the excerpt highlights the ways in which the will and desire for freedom are understood, rather passionately, through the metaphor of a burning fire that resides in the heart of a people, heralding a collective Haitian identity. Fire, as a common poetic allegory, not only signals intense and unpredictable fervor, but in this case, also hints at the literal usage of fire as an instrument of war. In her analysis of weapons of insurgent battles in rural Cuba, Aisha Finch explains how fire was a massively effective weapon against the plantation economy, and part of a "deeper culture of insurgency particular to dispossessed rural rebels."[101] The ease and relatively simple access to spark a flame meant that most enslaved people, insurgent or not, male or female, could potentially start a blaze that could destroy the wealth of planters and provoke others to join in battle. In terms of the Saint-Domingue rebellions, from the organized incineration of the many plantations in the North of Saint-Domingue following the Bois-Caïman ceremony, to the burning of *Le Cap*, to the countless blazes throughout the battles of the Haitian

[98] The poem was originally called "Couplets chantés à la célébration de l'anniversaire de l'Independence d'Haïti." See, *Poetry of Haitian Independence*, 258-259.

[99] *Poetry of Haitian Independence*, 12. Emphasis mine.

[100] Ibid., 13. Emphasis mine.

[101] Finch, *Rethinking Slave Rebellion in Cuba*, 194-195.

Revolution, the quest for freedom and independence was indeed a fiery one. Moreover, associating the metaphorical and literal understandings of fire with a heart imagery within the celebratory context of post-independence poetry, strongly denotes the invocation of a patriotic heart. In fact, the excerpt above directly alludes to war (*guerre*) and "attacks" in relation to "that freedom fire" within "our hearts," positioning the heart as the central arsenal of emancipation, independence, and arguably "freedom dreams." In continuing to laud the exploits of the Haitian Revolution, the independent land, and the "war-inured" heroes,[102] the poem repeats the same chorus at the end of each stanza:

Chantons, chantons avec courage,	Sing we, sing we stout**heart**edly:
Vive, vive l'égalité!	Equality forevermore!
Chassons, chassons partout l'esclavage,	Banished, banished be cruel slavery:
Vive, vive l'égalité![103]	Equality forevermore![104]

The recurring and rhythmic chorus exalts the voice of liberty of the Haitian Revolution. Articulating equality and the banishment of slavery through the act of singing animates this collective voice of liberty with a sensorial affect harkened through a type of poetic, yet militant anthem. The English version of the poem uses the word "stoutheartedly" to indicate the fearlessness embodied in buoyantly singing the advent of equality, and is a term that quite literally encompasses textual residues of the heart. Correspondingly, inspired by Edouard Glissant's notion of the "poetics of landscapes" – a concept that relates imagination through the materiality of place – Hantel conceptualizes the process of translation as "intertwining the linguistic transition between languages with the spatial residue of its etymological meaning, to

[102] Ibid., 14-15. "Gaze on the independence of our land. / Sustain our heroes, war-inured!" (*Jette un regard sur l'indépendance, / Soutiens nos soldats aguerris!)*

[103] Ibid., 14.

[104] Ibid., 15.

carry across."[105] The translation of *courage* into "stoutheartedly," and the wider valorous context of the poem underline the etymological composition of *courage* – where the Latin suffix *cor-* translates into heart – nodding to the familiar metaphor linking the virtue of courage with imaginaries of the heart. The heart then, in this case, embodies *courage*. Altogether, the poem's invocation of the heart, the collective performance of singing and the allusions to battle and bravery, conveys the voice of freedom through a patriotic, nationalistic, and militarized lens. Nonetheless, a decidedly diasporic and united voice of liberty is also expressed beyond the borders of the newly formed Republic. The spatial indication of "*partout*" – meaning everywhere – suggests that the abolition of slavery, along with the subjugation of enslaved peoples, should be considered across notions of space, and beyond linear conceptions of time. Perhaps, under the fodder of national pride and imperial linguistics, there exists a different epistemology of freedom explicated through another rendering of the metaphor of the heart. Indeed, what other types of textual, spiritual, sensuous, and affective geographies lend themselves to alternate grammars of the heart and notions of freedom?

What the Bois-Caïman's speech and "Nature, in wisdom infinite" reveal is a sensorial resonance with liberty – expressed through listening, speaking, burning, and/or singing – via the imaginary of the heart. Through these poetic renderings of freedom – one more specifically attuned to the burgeoning events happening at the of the Bois-Caïman, and the other as a more generalized post-independence celebration – the heart encompasses warrior-like qualities, such as courage and bravery, that reverberate with the common militarized tropes surrounding the Haitian Revolution. Through this sensible narrative, the warrior, the soldier and even the

[105] Hantel, "Rhizomes and the Space of Translation," 100.

hougan[106] are romanticized as the main protagonists of freedom in Saint-Domingue. However, the figure of the heart in all its sensorial and sensuous manifestations, feels constrained within this narrow masculine frame, and demands an alternative set of readings. Indeed, the traditional associations of the heart with feeling and emotion – both sites of knowledge production and alternative politics in Black feminist and queer scholarship – must be considered alongside these militarized invocations of *courage* and stoutheartedness. What other types of relation can imagine the heart heralding an alternate notion of freedom? Where does the sensorial attribution of the heart leads us? Indeed, what does the voice of liberty sounds like? How does it sing? Who does it sing through? Ultimately, how does the heart as an embodied metaphor for liberty, expand the epistemological tenets of freedom that are not overdetermined by the either masculine, militarized, Western, Romantic, and/or nationalistic narrative? How can Lorde's conception of the erotic alter these understandings of the heart? How does sensuous marronage bring about generative, Black, feminist and queer possibilities to re-interpret the heart? And finally, what revolutionary actors are then revealed from this enlarged heart imaginary?

The use of French Romantic poetic structures and allegories by Hérald Dumesle and the anonymous "Child of Haiti," suggest a somewhat elite and Western-inspired frame of understanding freedom and independence. Nineteenth-century romanticism underscored the link between the heart and emotions, as the "Romantic heart spoke essential truths about some universal human 'nature' as well as reflecting traditional beliefs about the relationship between

[106] Here, I am mostly thinking of Boukman, who according to some scholars, was the one who preached the Bois-Caïman's sermon. However, no such attribution is given to Boukman in Hérald Dumesle's version, which is considered the first mention of the speech. See Hérald Dumesle, *Voyage dans le Nord d'Hayti, ou, Révélations des Lieux et des Monuments Historiques*, 85-90; For translation see, Dumesle, *Poetry of Haitian Independence,* trans. Norman Shapiro, eds. Doris Y. Kadish and Deborah Jenson, 225-226; See also, Geggus, "The Bois Caïman Ceremony."

emotions and the divine."[107] While the divine of the Westerner is qualified mostly through the "sacred heart of Catholicism that had flourished in post-Reformation Europe,"[108] the Haitian revolutionary heart encompasses an alternate understanding of the sacred and the divine. In Dumesle's account, the "God of the whites" is not to be trusted, rather *Bondié*, in all his iterations, is the one that will lead the enslaved to salvation and liberation. In proclaiming an alternate deity through textual difference (*Bondié* being the God of the enslaved, and *Bon dié blancs*, being the God of the whites, a distinction highlighted by the separation of "*Bon dié*" into two syllables and the qualification of the adjective "*blancs*"), and through differing spatial orientation (*dié lá qui si bon*, positioning "the God **over there** who is so good" as the God of the enslaved),[109] denotes a spatial grammar that recognizes the oppositional but syncretic formation of Vodou. Together, the syncretic nature of Haitian *Kreyòl* and Vodou, reveal a "poetics of relation" between language, spirituality, and liberation discourses, that encourages a deeper look into the symbol, and the alternate meanings, of the heart. Although aspects of the Romantic/patriotic heart were absorbed into freedom-fighting narratives, Vodou as history, as epistemology, and essentially as poetry, unearths a related, yet sensorial and sensuous view of the Haitian Revolution. In the introduction to Glissant's *Poetics of Relation*, Betsy Wing nods to associative principles between Vodou and Glissant's textual approach, stating that "Vodou's rites of transformation project the world as it *should be*; Glissant projects language as it *should be*." [110]

[107] Fay Bound Alberti, *Matters of the Heart: History, Medicine and Emotion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 122.

[108] Ibid., 122.

[109] The "Oath of the Cayman Woods" is also where the term *Bondié* is originally introduced. See, *Poetry of the Haitian Independence*, 226.

[110] Although she references Martinican Vodou, the cosmological aspect of the Afro-Creole spiritual practice remains the same. See Betsy Wing, "Translator's Introduction," in *Poetics of Relation*, by Edouard Glissant (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, [1990] 2010), xix.

This assertion further demands that we examine the grammars of the heart through Vodou, revealing an embodied and symbolic linguistics of "freedom dreams" and futurity. Indeed, what is the Haitian Revolution as it *should be*?

Ezili's Grammar of the Heart

The burgeoning materialization of Vodou at the Bois-Caïman, and its continued spiritual and narrative growth, creates a different type of grammar that is not only embodied through ritual performances and disseminated through oral tradition, but is also calligraphed through the *vévé* or ritual cosmograms. Vodou as the poetry of the masses has not been archived like Western written work, underscoring the idea that enslaved people were "illiterate" and obscuring an alternate language-making formation. Taking seriously Haitian articulations of freedom during this period therefore requires searching beyond the Western definitions of poetry and language, and in this case, translating the *vévé*'s textual, yet embodied meaning. In the Vodou ceremonial tradition, *vévés* are elaborate geometric etchings drawn on the ground out of powder (for example, from cornmeal, wheat flour, red brick powder, face powder, or even gunpowder) and representing the "figures of the astral forces."[111] Cementing Vodou's relationship to the land, *vévés* are symbols of centering, a "concentration of Sacred energies"[112] that inaugurate Vodou ceremonies and invite the spirits onto the livings' plane. The reproduction of these various cosmograms conjure the *lwas* – who are themselves personifications of heavenly bodies, stars and planets– [113] to come down to earth to be served, and to 'mount' their *sèvitès*, dubbed

[111] Milo Rigaud, *Secrets of Voodoo* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1969), 79.

[112] M. Jacqui Alexander, "Pedagogies of the Sacred: Making the Invisible Tangible," in *Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory, and the Sacred* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 311.

[113] Rigaud, *Secrets of Voodoo*, 80.

chwals.[114] These ritual geometric diagrams become iconographic namesakes that represent the various *lwas* in the Vodou pantheon.

Correspondingly, the *vévés* that take the iconic shape of the heart are symbolic representations of the female spirit incarnations of Ezili. Within the vast mythos of Haitian Vodou, Ezili represents not only one *lwa*, but a whole pantheon of feminine spirits, aptly highlighting the complexity and nuances of Afro-spiritual cosmologies. Ezili and her multiple personas collectively – albeit in distinctive ways – embody the power of love, femininity, maternity, fertility, sexuality, creativity, desire and pleasure. Both Ezili Freda and Ezili Dantò[115] – arguably the most prominent emanations of Ezili in the Vodou spiritual tradition – are called upon through heart *vévés.* Freda's *vévé* (Figure 1) with an M-shaped line that whisks and curls inside and outside the boundaries of the heart, is meant to "invoke images of sensuality, luxury, and unrequited love."[116] Whereas, Dantò's *vévé* (Figure 2) is commonly represented with a grid-like or/and dotted motif and with sometimes, a knife piercing through the heart. The symbolism and the mythology these *vévés* come to represent enable the emblem of the heart to embody an alternate meaning that goes beyond the militaristic construct of freedom narratives giving way for a queer, feminist and sensuous interpretation of the Haitian Revolution. Indeed, what are the gendered and sexual implications of linking discourses of liberation to Afro-spiritual

[114] Vodou practioners do not use the term "possession," rather they use the idom "serving the spirits (*lwas*)" or "serving the "gods." "Most often, the experience of being entered, inhabited, and seized by a spirit is described as being mounted (as the horse is by the rider)." *Sèvitè* is the creole word for a servant or servitor who serves the *lwas*, and *chwal* means horse. See Dayan, *Haiti, History, and the Gods,* 56.

[115] Dantò is the traditional Haitian spelling. Dantor is used in French, English, and Spanish.

[116] Olmos and Paravisini-Gebert, *Creole Religions of the Caribbean,* 129.

understandings of the heart? What does the heart, which is commonly associated with notions of passion, love, betrayal and even lust, have to do with freedom?

Figure 1: *Vévé* of Ezili Freda[117]

Figure 2: *Vévé* of Ezili Dantò[118]

Considering the anemic representation of Black and enslaved women in the archives, the singular and plural manifestations of Ezili[119] offer a spiritual historiography, revealing a new set of revolutionary actors. As Joan Dayan states, "Gods were born in the memories of those who served and rebelled,"[120] and by extension, Ezili comes to embody the women of the land, and the women of the Haitian Revolution. However, Ezili is not one to be pinned down as she is considered the most contradictory spirit in Vodou. Although Ezili embodies the "divine forces of love, sexuality, pleasure, femininity, maternity, creativity, and fertility,"[121] she constantly

[117] Judith Pudden, "Vèvè for Erzulie," CC BY-NC-ND 2.0, https://www.flickr.com/photos/judyplum/6064060666/in/photostream/

[118] Sara Best, "Conjured Cardea," CC BY 3.0, http://conjuredcardea.blogspot.com/2011/12/lwa-erzulie.html

[119] Ezili is "not just one *lwa* but the name given to a pantheon of spirits." Tinsley, "Songs for Ezili," 420. The way I see it, the slippage between these single and simultaneously plural identities is in part, a form of resistance to Western and colonial epistemologies and categorizations of the Human.

[120] Dayan, *Haiti, History, and the Gods*, 30.

[121] Tinsley, "Songs for Ezili," 240.

redefines the meaning of these terms, "subvert[ing] the roles she affects."[122] Centering this sexual, gendered and African-descendant figure within the structural apparatus of colonization, the transatlantic slave trade, and plantation logics of Saint-Domingue reveals, as it simultaneously shapes and disrupts, modernity schemas. Indeed, Ezili as the elusive signifier of Black women in Saint-Domingue and Haiti, exemplifies and subverts the "ungendered" position borne out of the French colony. But what exactly is she embodying and challenging? What gendered, sexual, textual, geographic, and temporal orderings are manifested through her presence? How does it shape our understandings of the Haitian Revolution, and of Black liberation?

Thinking through Ezili as an archival source to retrieve histories of the Haitian Revolution, challenges us to contend with the many complexities, subtleties and paradoxes embodied by the women of Saint-Domingue.[123] Paying particular attention to Black women invites a deeper insight into the gendered and sexual logics of dispossession, bringing into the foreground Hortense Spillers's conceptions of the "flesh" and of the "ungendered." Indeed, in her influential essay "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe," Spillers highlights that Black enslaved people, are not conceptualized through the lens of the body, but through discourses of dispossessed flesh, representing a "prime commodity of exchange."[124] Spillers further emphasizes that Western and colonial processes of naming, language and discursive processes of identification of blackness often translate into practices that overdetermine and dehumanize

[122] Dayan, *Haiti, History, and the Gods,* 63.

[123] As mentioned previously, this methodological approach in indebted to Joan Dayan and Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley. See Tinsley, *Ezili's Mirrors*; Tinsley, "Songs for Ezili"; Dayan, *Haiti, History, and the Gods*; Dayan, "Erzulie."

[124] Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe," 75.

Black women. She also argues that the grammatical absences and silences stemming from the white supremacist and accumulative stratagems of slavery are embodied onto the flesh, rendering the Black female subject "ungendered." Thus, the category "Black woman," in its imbrication of race and gender, transmutes into the unintelligible linguistic site/sight that is simultaneously seen and unseen, invisible and hypervisible. Through this lens, Ezili can be understood to embody these liminal and oscillating discursive spaces, since through her many iterations, she comes to represent in part, women's colonial experiences. However, her spiritual and sensuous presence goes beyond Western conceptions of being, leaving room for different naming practices.

My theorization of Ezili brings Spillers's analysis together with the arguments of Katherine McKittrick in *Demonic Grounds*. As McKittrick shows, Black women's flesh – the simultaneously condemned and foundational site of Western modernity – also parallels with the "ungeographic"[125] ordering of space within the terrains of slavocracies like Saint-Domingue, and those of emancipated Haiti. Not only does the spatial organization of slavery in Saint-Domingue – whether on the rural plantations or the urban centers – mark various "geographies of containment" to quote Stephanie Camp,[126] the gendered and racialized political geography of the Haitian Revolution and of its post-Independence nation embodies the (im)possibility of Black female sexuality. However, as Ezili demonstrates, embodying the "ungeographic" is not the sole role of Black women; "the real and imaginary geographic processes […] are also about everyday contestations, philosophical demands, and the possibilities the production of space can engender

[125] Katherine McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

[126] Camp, *Closer to Freedom.*

for subaltern subjects."[127] Thus, the potential of Black women's geographies is connected to creative gendered, sexual, spiritual and sensuous notions of freedom.

In assessing the relation between grammar, land, spirituality, sensuousness and "freedom dreams," Ezili comes to represent the (im)possibilities of Black women produced from that "ungendered" position. I want to note that by naming the productive capacities of the "ungendering" of Black women through Ezili, I am in no way occluding the devastating effects that Spillers delineates regarding the loss of Black feminine sexuality, and its lexicon. Indeed, through the conditions of enslavement "the customary lexis of sexuality, including 'reproduction,' 'motherhood,' 'pleasure,' and 'desire' are thrown into unrelieved crisis,"[128] contributing to justifications of sexual violence and exploitation. Rather, I am suggesting that the grammatical and spatial norms beset by Western conceptions of racialized and gendered sexuality foreclose imagination and the possibilities of Black women's naming practices, geographies, and notions of freedom articulated through Ezili's sensuous ontologies, epistemologies and methodologies. Noticing the parallels between discursive practices, which Spillers articulates as grammar, and its spatial corollary, expressed by McKittrick through the geographical ordering of subjects, also resonates with the formulation of historical narratives. Through this lens, the grammar and geography of the archives also renders the Black woman "ungendered" and "ungeographic" within the discursive geographies of the Haitian Revolution. Thus, creating an alternate understanding of Black female sexuality through Ezili – one that is guided by sensuous modes of knowing and being – would also translate into differing linguistic

[127] McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds,* 121.

[128] Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe," 76.

formulations, relationships to land, and historiographic possibilities that do not reproduce colonial reasoning and structures.

While Spillers' conception of the "ungendered" presents a liminal dilemma, it simultaneously upholds the right to opacity, while searching for the trans-generational discursive sexual language that is transmitted to Black women. In her piece "Interstices: A Small Drama of Words," Spillers recognizes that a clearer and active sexual discourse is waiting to resurface, as Black women are "awaiting their verb."[129] She centers the discursive power of naming and asserts that we must be "willing to name the counter-power, the counter mythology" by rectifying the impoverishment of history.[130] Thus, I argue that the Black woman's "verb" is manifested through Ezili's many assemblages, which is activated through her *vévé,* through her heart. Indeed, the multiple visible and invisible incarnations of Ezili, which I will expand upon through my impending analysis, are grammatically marked through the heart *vévé,* which acts as the calligraphic corollary of a verb.

The active linguistic stronghold of this verb also manifests itself through spatial hearkening, as the *vévé* represents an invitation to the spirits to join the material plane. Etching Ezili's heart onto the ground marks a meeting place, a ritual space where people congregate to serve the *lwa* of Love. The relationship to the spiritual world and its possibilities is physically manifested with a relationship to land that does not necessarily correlate with the colonial and/or militant projects of nation building. Indeed, as Vodou is the spiritual tradition of the masses, the peasants, and thus the descendant of enslaved workers, a connection to land implies a complex

[129] Spillers, "Interstices," 74.

[130] Ibid., 84.

rapport to toil and servitude, as well as to life-giving resources, sites of libation offerings, and respect for the dead and their spirits. Since the tripartite roots of Vodou intimately links the ancestors, the land and the spirits,[131] invoking Ezili highlights Black women's geographies, unearthing conceptions of freedom that do not fit liberal and Enlightenment ideals of *liberté, égalité, fraternité*?[132] Contrary to a feminization of landscapes that likens women's sexuality to exploitation of resources, colonial conquest, the perpetuation of empire, and/or the naturalization of heterosexuality, Ezili and her heart attend to alternate narratives of freedom that centers Black women's sexuality through the sensuous and the spiritual.[133] Through this naming lens, what would it mean *to heart* the Haitian Revolution?

Ezili's Sensuous Assemblages

Having assessed the theoretical framework of sensuous marronage and applied it to a poetic, spiritual and gendered analysis of the heart through the *lwa* Ezili, the embodied terrain is set to reveal some of the sensuous actors of the Haitian Revolution. Although Ezili is considered the *lwa* of love, Dayan reminds us that she "demands that we reinvent the word."[134] The symbolism behind notions of love, romance and seduction has been commodified through colonial and heteropatriarchal machinations, obscuring the reality of sexual violation,

[131] Brown, *Mama Lola*, 371.

[132] This is the national maxim the French abided to after the French Revolution. It was also appropriated by Haitian generals, military men and political officials to assert the legitimacy of the Haitian nation-state, and eventually became one of the national mottoes. It translates as "liberty, equality, fraternity" in English. More on this in chapter three.

[133] Relatedly, Tinsley highlights the ways in which male Caribbean theorists use metaphors of mangroves and topographic sites that reinforce and naturalize the feminization of Caribbean topoi. She demonstrates how women's queer metaphors disrupts this relationship to land, and "reformulate Caribbeanness as a space that diffracts and recomposes both race and ethnicity as well as gender and sexuality." See, Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley, *Thiefing Sugar: Eroticism between Women in Caribbean Literature and Irresolution* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 24-25.

[134] Dayan, "Erzulie," 10.

dispossession, bondage, betrayal and forceful performativity. In *Scenes of Subjection,* Saidiya Hartman explores how enslaved women were deemed unrapable due to the tropes of savagery, sexual lasciviousness and hypersexuality that were etched onto their flesh, along with their status as property. She explains how the repression of rape narratives was integral to the displacement of white culpability, relegating criminality and blameworthiness onto the black female subject, under the grammatical guise of "seduction," "will" (agency)," "desire" and "complicity."[135] Indeed, the weight of colonialism and enslavement fell upon the bodies of women in physical, sexual and emotional ways. This burden of "love" also gets characterized by Western and/or nationalist interlocutors through sensuously restrictive metaphors of "the 'eternal feminine' or the 'maternal libido' on the soil of Haiti," while a more encompassing and generative approach can grasp the historiographical potential of regarding Ezili as a complex, yet creative historical archive of women's experiences during slavery.[136]

In order to absorb the potential nested within the complexities and contradictions of Ezili as an emblem of sensuous marronage, we must disrupt the rigid Western and moralistic boundaries of sexuality, gender and social arrangements, as well as the Catholic-informed Madonna/whore bifurcation of womanhood. Ezili's multiple manifestations imagine and create incalculable sexual and gendered possibilities that are integral to a fulfilled Black liberation project. Using "Ezili as archive,"[137] as Tinsley suggests, enables an alternate repository of knowledge that sheds light on such possibilities. However, building off this framework, I also propose that we look at Ezili as a compilation of sensuous assemblages; in lieu of being

---

[135] Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

[136] Dayan, "Erzulie," 11.

[137] Tinsley, *Ezili's Mirrors*, 4.

recognizable through Western means of identification serving a colonial purpose, these assemblages are powerful and infinite, while remaining opaque to dominant sexual and gendered ways of being. In conversation with Aisha M. Beliso-De Jesús, the use of the framework of assemblages moves away from representational analysis, "hold[ing] in tension how conceptions of being complicate the politics of race, gender, and sexuality in transnational religions." [138] Utilizing Vodou as a counter-archive, and Ezili as a set of assemblages, I wish to invoke the processes of relation, the interconnected mechanism that pushes and pulls against the limits of gender, race sexuality, while also unsettling notions of history, nation, belonging and freedom. While I am naming certain sensuous actors of the Haitian Revolution through Ezili's many personas, it is the slippages, the contradictions, and the errantries between these characters that create a discursive space to reconcile creative freedom narratives. Indeed, as Ezili in part, represents the sexual abuses suffered by women in Saint-Domingue and independent Haiti, she also threatens the structural apparatuses that led to this seemingly fixed "ungendered" status, through creative deployments of sensuous marronage.

As highlighted earlier, Ezili the goddess of love bears many faces, embodying a multitude of divine female personas. Her many manifestations – as well as those of other Vodou spirits – can be somewhat categorized through two main spiritual traditions: the *Rada* line and the *Petwo* line. The creolized and syncretic nature of Vodou reveals the spatial and temporal formation of the religious rituals, as the *Rada* rite can be traced back to the kingdom of Dahomey and the *Petwo* rite is derived from the condition of the enslaved subjects of Saint-Domingue, and from central and southwest African groups such as Kongo and Angola.[139] One of her most

[138] Aisha M. Beliso-De Jesús, *Electric Santería: Racial and Sexual Assemblages of Transnational Religion* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), xiv.

[139] Olmos and Paravisini-Gebert, *Creole Religions of the Caribbean,* 125.

popular incarnations is Ezili Freda, one of the *dous* (soft or sweet) *lwas* of the *Rada* line, who is described as having "all the characteristics of a pretty mulatto: she is coquettish, sensual, pleasure-loving, and extravagant."[140] Often likened to the "mulatta" creole class of Saint-Domingue who were mistresses, concubines, courtesans and sexual properties of influential white men, Ezili Freda evokes the figure of the "tropical temptress"[141] and the "mulatta prostitute." Freda, in fact, is considered the "matron of prostitutes,"[142] who to this day is prayed to by sex workers, queer folks, and ironically, virgins alike. Here, my use of the term "ironically" is quite tongue-in-cheek, as Freda's conception of sexuality is precisely meant to disrupt moralistic rigid Christian, colonial and Western taxonomies of proper female expression. Although some anthropologists and scholars view Ezili Freda as a "fiercely heterosexual femme"[143] and as a sexual emblem for men,[144] Joan Dayan and Omise'eke Tinsley uncover the queer potential of the *lwa*'s multifarious and fluid sexuality. While Dayan touches on Ezili's indefinite sexual orientation asserting that she "vacillates between her attraction for the two sexes,"[145] Tinsley remarks on her genderfluid alignment with "male femmes, with *masisi* and transwomen," as well as with *madivin* and particularly butch lesbians.[146] What is apparent from

[140] Alfred Métraux, *Voodoo in Haiti* (New York: Schocken Books, 1972), 110. In contrast, the *lwas* of the *Petwo* line, such as Ezili Dantò, are considered more aggressive and violent. I will expand more on this when I discuss Dantò later in the text.

[141] See, Daut, *Tropics of Haiti*. She analyzes the figure of the "tropical temptress" in literary works of the Haitian Revolution, which I build upon.

[142] Dayan, *Haiti, History and the Gods*, 63.

[143] Elizabeth McAlister, "Love, Sex and Gender Embodied: The Spirits of Haitian Vodou," in *Love, Sex, and Gender in the World Religions*, vol. 2, eds. Joseph Runzo and Nancy M. Martin (Oxford: One World, 2000), 132.

[144] See Brown, *Mama Lola*; Deren, *Divine* Horsemen; Hurston, *Tell My Horse.*

[145] Dayan, "Erzulie," 6.

[146] Tinsley, *Ezili's Mirrors*, 40.

these accounts of Ezili Freda is that the binary constructs of femininity/masculinity, heterosexual/homosexual "[fall] short of capturing the complexity of how Freda and other lwa express pleasures and desires."[147] Revealing these flexible and imaginative sexual and gendered ontologies, questions and disrupts the tropes that devalue feminine sexual practices, and that reduce femininity to a performed deference to male and colonial authority, or to a form of coerced gendered performance. In opposition to these heteropatriarchal logics, Freda's feminine queerness transmutes into what Tinsley calls "Black fem(me)ininity,"[148] turning "ungendered" racial constructs onto their heads and creating alternate gendered possibilities. Reading Freda through the lens of queerness complicates and reimagines the duplicitous and treacherous formulations of the *mulâtresse*, not necessarily as an individual insatiable and lustful *femme fatale*, but rather as disruptive of the sexual, gendered and racialized ordering of the colonial state. Here, the *mulâtresse'*s desire is not articulated through the longing for white planters, rather the desire is for an unrestrained and ingenious sensuous freedom that disrupts heteropatriarchal constructs of empire and domination.

The sensuous women of color of the Haitian Revolution in their already liminal racialized state are often highlighted in the colonial archives in hypersexualized ways, a lens to contend with in order to avoid the invasive prurience from the West that plagues the Caribbean terrain. However, sensuous marronage as a methodology demands a different purview of gender and sexuality that does not necessarily coalesce with the punitive and hierarchal constructs of sex, sensuality and desire. It also requires an inquiry into the ways in which this reformulated sensuous awareness constitutes a threat to the colonial order. In her book *Tropics of Haiti*,

[147] Ibid., 40.

[148] Ibid., 32.

Marlene Daut intervenes into the contentious archival debate that on one hand, views the depictions of women of color as erotic sexual beings, and as colonial inventions meant to contain "miscegenation,'' and on the other hand, understands these characteristics as historical facts that perhaps, need further analysis and deciphering.[149] Daut, however, questions the polarity of these stances, and invites us to pay more attention to "interpretation and experience," rather than "veracity or distortion."[150] Indeed, using Ann Laura Stoler's methodological approach of reading "along the archival grain," Daut urges us to de-center the fragments of the colonial archives from the purview of the men who wrote them, and to produce analyses that provide an alternate picture of these women of color as "obstinate, influential, radical, and even revolutionary."[151] Although tropes of the treacherous *mulâtresse* often act as a signifier for women of color's moralistic sexual failings of proper womanhood – a standing always already established by an ungendered position and a "miscegenated" status – they also constitute discourses negating the colonial sexual and gendered ordering, and thus embody a revolutionary impetus that simultaneously registers as a "negation of western civilisation."[152]

Ezili's Feminine Revolutionary Acumen

[149] Daut, *Tropics of Haiti*, 204. Daut attributes the former methodology to John Garrigus and the latter to Phillipe Girard. See, John Garrigus, "Race, Gender and Virtue in Haiti's Failed Foundational Fiction: *La Mulâtre comme il y a beaucoup de blanches*," *The Color of Liberty: Histories of Race in France*, eds. Tyler Stovall and Sue Peabody (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003): 73-94; Philippe Girard, "*Rebelles* with a Cause: Women in the Haitian War of Independence, 1802-04*," Gender & History* 21, no.1 (April 2009): 60-85.

[150] Daut, *Tropics of Haiti*, 204.

[151] Daut, *Tropics of Haiti*, 204.

[152] Cedric Robinson, "Coming to Terms: The Third World and the Dialectic of Imperialism," *Race & Class* XXII, no. 4 (1981): 369.

The literary scope of the Haitian Revolution includes a vast array of semi-fictional travel narratives illuminating, in fragments, the presence of sensuous actors. In *Ossolinski, ou Marseille et Saint-Domingue, après 1794 et en 1815,* Étienne-Michel Masse recounts the life and experiences of a Polish nobleman called Ossolinski prior to and during the Revolution of Saint-Domingue and in France.[153] In his chapter "Trahison d'une mulâtresse," Ossolinski recounts the story of a woman of color courtesan whose house was often frequented by French and white officials, a place where his friend Urbanski had taken him a few times. Although Ossolinski was suspicious that the courtesan might be having clandestine relationships with insurgents, Urbanski insisted that she was "une bonne personne [qui] ne songeait qu'à s'amuser,"[154] reinforcing the *filles de joie* stereotype assigned to women of color. One day, the two men decided to visit the courtesan a little earlier than usual and noticed a young Black boy outside in her garden doing chores while crooning observations of his surroundings, a common forewarning tactic. The two noblemen then noticed two Black men dressed in refined garbs leaving the house, jumping the garden fence, and escaping towards *Les Mornes*. Upon their entrance, they noticed the *mulâtresse*'s behavior to be suspiciously too earnest, leading to speculations that the two Black men might be insurgent leaders with whom she might be sharing information. Nonetheless, they decided not to report her, as they did not want their mere doubts to translate into military convictions, especially since she had always taken *good care of them*. The next day, the two men went swimming and upon their return, not too far from the *mulâtresse*'s home, they were ambushed by four Black armed men. While Ossolinski managed to escape the attack, the

[153] Étienne-Michel Masse, *Ossolinski, ou Marseille et Saint-Domingue, après 1794 et en 1815 : Mémoires Contemporains recueillis et publiés par E.-M. Masse* (Paris: Jules Lefebvre et Ce., libraires- éditeurs, rue des Grands-Augustins, no.18, 1830), http://archive.org/details/ossolinskioumars01mass.

[154] Masse, *Ossolinski*, 240. Translates into, "she is a good person who just wants to have fun."

insurgents killed Urbanski. Though he believed that the *mulâtresse* was the instigator of his friend's murder, he did not name her in his official report for fear that his confession might further stimulate the ire of the whites and the military officials. But why would he protect a woman he barely knew, who conspired to kill him and his friend? Why would he care about her well-being at all? The mere fact that he did not seek retribution suggests that the figure of the sensuous *mulâtresse* could embody more influence, and possibilities than originally thought.

In the latter part of the Haitian Revolution, during the War of Independence (1802-1804), names of Black women and women of color started to appear more prominently within the archives. Unlike the anonymous *mulâtresse,* Henriette de Saint-Marc's was a freed woman of color who courted French soldiers, in the hopes of obtaining munitions to give to insurgents.[155] Her transgressive actions were punished, and she was publicly executed for sending gunpowder to the revolutionaries of Arcahaie.[156] Holding such a public hanging for a woman – a rarity according to Thomas Madiou – and qualifying that she walked up the scaffolding leading to her execution "avec courage," highlights how much Henriette de Saint-Marc was considered a threat to the colonial order.[157] In contradistinction to the trope of "feminized betrayal" in narratives of Black rebellion where enslaved women who had sexual relationships with white men were viewed as having a penchant for "passivity, accommodations, and betrayal when collective resistance loomed on the horizon," the women of color depicted in these stories were part of a

[155] David P. Geggus, "Slave and Free Colored Women in Saint Domingue," in *Black Women and Slavery in the Americas: More than Chattel*, eds. David Barry Gaspar and Darlene Clark Hine (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996), 273.

[156] Thomas Madiou, *Histoire d'Haïti,* Tome Deuxième (Port-au-Prince : Impr. De J. Courtois, 1847), 320, http://archive.org/details/histoiredhaiti02madigoog.

[157] Madiou, *Histoire d'Haïti,*320-321. "Avec courage" translates into "with courage"

sophisticated and collective revolutionary network, promulgating Black liberation.[158] Their sexual roles as women of color were not reduced to the reproductive mandate to bear children for enslavement, to bear sons for estate inheritance, or to bear sons for post-independence Haiti. These women were able to leverage their social position, their feminine aesthetics and their sensuous skills to advance the cause of the Haitian Revolution. Although authors of the colonial era have emphasized the beauty, femininity, passion and allure of these courtesans and other sex workers of color, their stories clearly trouble this surface narrative. Tapping into the affective register of sensuous marronage, encourages us to look deeper into the work that these courtesans performed. The ways in which Ossolinski and his friend for example, trusted the *mulâtresse* amidst growing suspicions, in the middle of revolutionary battle no less – in addition to the fact that Ossolinski did not report her even after Urbanski was ambushed and killed – suggests that the courtesan's appeal had to do with more than sexual prowess. Indeed, her *filles de joie* persona cleverly obscured her astute and cunning emotional and social skills, that on one hand, fostered trust, and on the other, maneuvered insurgent attacks. Similarly, Henriette de Saint-Marc's "courageous" death was incredibly public and was most likely meant to send a message, especially since General de Rochambeau arranged for a ball the night of Henriette's execution, where he invited almost exclusively women of color.[159] Although this can be interpreted "as adding salt to the wound," this also clearly reads as a warning, suggesting that women of color

[158] Finch, *Rethinking Slave Rebellion in Cuba,* 142-143. See Finch's chapter five "And the Women Also Knew" for more on the tropes of "treacherous *mulâtresse,*" the feminization of deceit and links between betrayal and secrecy. See also, Daut's Part Two: "Transgressing the Trope of the "Tropical Temptress": Representation and Resistance in Colonial Saint-Domingue," which also encompasses chapter four, five and six, in her book The *Tropics of Haiti*.

[159] Beaubrun Ardouin, *Études sur l'Histoire d'Haïti; Suivies de la Vie du Général J.-M. Borgella*, Tome Cinquieme (Paris: Dezobry et E. Magdeleine, Lib.-Éditeurs, 1854), 274, https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k82876j.

and their sensuous capacities were understood as a great danger to French colonial power. Such a reading inverts the narrative of racialized women's betrayal to freedom movements.

The treacherous nature and sensuous liminality of the *mulâtresse* character is precisely why she is aptly represented by Ezili Freda. Using Vodou as an unsettled archival space and Ezili Freda as a deviant harbinger of "love" allows for the figure of the lascivious *mulâtresse* to be seen through a revolutionary lens. Such a lens reframes libidinous sexuality as not only a form of adaptation to colonial rule, but also as a means of resistance that seeks to re-order sexual and gendered norms beyond heteropatriarchal arrangements of belonging. Individually, these archival fragments highlight the courageous organizing of a few women of color courtesans, who mobilized their racial and class privilege and feminine, sensual traits to contribute to the Saint-Domingue rebellion. Yet, through the divine figure of Ezili Freda, their actions can be read through a collective prism of feminine erotic possibilities that harness not only "freedom dreams," but freedom *desires*. Akin to Audre Lorde's episteme-shifting conception of the "erotic," the character of Freda embodies the "source of power and information" that lies in a "deeply female and spiritual plane."[160] On the stage of the Haitian Revolution, Freda's "erotic" is representative of the "lifeforce of women,"[161] which, although sexually were commodified through the apparatus of colonial plantocracy, still embodied sensual, sensuous, affective and spiritual desires of freedom.

Ezili's Debut on the Bois-Caïman Stage

[160] Lorde, "Uses of the Erotic," 53.

[161] Ibid., 55.

Commonly represented as a dark-skinned, independent, hardworking peasant woman and single mother, some have described Ezili Dantò, one of the *amne* (bitter) *lwas* of the *Petwo* line, as the "opposite" of Ezili Freda.[162] Countering this facile depiction that reproduces binary-based epistemes, Dantò's mythological characteristics coalesce through the unification of Ezili's assemblages that foster the perpetual redefinitions of love. One of the main iterations of Dantò's love exalts itself through motherly love, as she is often portrayed holding a child, especially via representations of her syncretic personas Our Lady of Czetochowa and/or Mater Salvatoris. Centering maternal bonds over romance and marriage, she is understood as a warrior who fights for her children, as well as a fierce advocate for women's independence, as she is called upon to protect women from domestic and sexual abuse.[163] Ezili Dantò is essentially the Black feminist icon of the Vodou *lwas*. She is also described as being "pro-homosexual," as many queer folks, *masisis* in particular, see themselves as Dantò's children, but also because she herself is sometimes identified as a woman who loves women, a *madivin*.[164] Although she is at times associated with male spirits lovers such as Ogou, the *lwa* of war, she remains unmarried to any of the *lwas* she has sexual relationships with. She does, however, participate in marriages with her living human *sèvitès* of all genders and sexualities.

Ezili Dantò's embodied juxtaposition of independence, motherhood and queerness counters the very edicts of heteropatriarchal colonial and familial arrangements. She disrupts the kinlessness supposition of enslavement that Spillers describes as being concomitant with the

[162] McAlister, "Love, Sex and Gender Embodied," 134.
[163] Ibid., 135.

[164] See McAlister, "Love, Sex and Gender Embodied," 135; Tinsley, *Ezili's Mirrors*, 11, 69; Brown, *Mama Lola*, 222. Although the creole definitions do not directly coincide with Western sexual identities, *masisi* can *very loosely* being similar to a homosexual or gay man, and/or a feminine presenting man, and *madivin* can be somewhat associated to the lesbian. See the Coda for more on those distinctions.

framework of the enslaved as property, and that forecloses the motherhood relationship between enslaved mother and child.[165] Taking inspiration from Keguro Macharia's book *Frottage,* where he calls out the reliance on kinship and genealogy to describe "intra-racial collectivity," as it "generate[s] social and cultural legibility [that] privileges reproductive heteronormativity,"[166] I see Dantò's approach to motherhood as part of a queer erotic praxis of affiliation, desire and freedom; indeed, a different kind of kinship. Similarly, Alexis Pauline Gumbs re-articulates motherhood through June Jordan's generative notion of the "creative spirit," which she defines as "a spirit existing within each of us and yet persisting infinitely greater than the ultimate capacities of any one of us."[167] Indeed, thought alongside motherhood, the "creative spirit" embodies the most capacious definition of love, disentangling ideas of mothering from heteropatriarchal and property-based kinship affiliations, and encouraging queer and collective affinities, all ideal characteristics of Dantò.

In relation to Lorde's generating articulation of the erotic as "the nurturer or nursemaid of all our deepest knowledge,"[168] Dantò's erotic proclivities nurture queer familial ties through matrilineal bonds whether through her daughter Anaïse – who is syncretized with Jesus Christ in Black Madonna chromolithographs – or through her chosen *masisi* and *madivin* children. Although Dantò is also praised for her fertility, the presence of Anaïse and her spiritual relationship to the most important figure of the Catholic faith, is indicative of an alternate kinship

[165] Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe," 74.

[166] Keguro Macharia, *Frottage: Frictions of Intimacy Across the Black Diaspora* (New York: New York University Press, 2019), 9.

[167] June Jordan, "The Creative Spirit: Children's Literature," in *Revolutionary Mothering: Love on the Front Lines*, eds. Alexis Pauline Gumbs, China Martens, and Mai'a Williams (Toronto: Between the Lines Press, 2016), 11.

[168] Lorde, "The Uses of the Erotic," 56.

network that does not necessarily replicate colonial, patriarchal and/or nationalistic demands of reproduction. Ezili Dantò and Anaïse's relationship centers the mother-daughter bond, which remains obscured within the boundaries of kinlessness discourses, offering a non-patriarchal affiliation and salvation beyond masculinist narratives. Anaïse is a representation for Haitian women of the potential daughter that will stick by them, "who will extend [their] life and expand [their] world,"[169] a type of feminine and spiritual futurity. Moreover, Dantò's own queer and fluid sexuality is revolutionary as it privileges desire over heteropatriarchal nationalistic duty, while still fostering alternate kinship affiliations. In line once more with Gumbs, Dantò's revolutionary role as a mother unfolds a matrix of possibilities to read "mothering as a queer collaboration with the future."[170] Indeed, Dantò's queer motherhood, an oxymoronic association within colonial and nationalist epistemes, exalts alternative ways of being in relation with one another, with the land, with the ancestors, with the spirits, and with future generations, presenting erotic dimensions of freedom.

Although she is not considered a main heroine within the traditional archives of the Haitian Revolution, Ezili Dantò is quite the pivotal and multivalent character. Returning to the fateful night of the Bois-Caïman ceremony, we find the main protagonists Boukman, *hougan* and warrior, and Cécile Fatiman, the *mambo*[171] who presided over the Vodou procession. While the accounts of the spiritual and revolutionary meeting are sparse and mythical, the main narrative

[169] Brown, *Mama Lola*, 246.

[170] Alexis Pauline Gumbs, "M/other Ourselves: A Black Queer Feminist Genealogy for Radical Mothering," in *Revolutionary Mothering: Love on the Front Lines*, eds. Alexis Pauline Gumbs, China Martens, and Mai'a Williams (Toronto: Between the Lines Press, 2016), 29.

[171]The first mention of Cécile Fatiman by name was in Etienne Charlier, *Aperçu sur la Formation Historique de la Nation Haïtienne* (Port-au-Prince: Presses Libres, 1954), 49.

suggests that the *lwas* were invoked to bolster the spirit of revolution and that Fatiman embodied that rebellious aura through "serving the spirits."

Within the spiritual event's historiography, Antoine Dalmas is credited with giving the earliest account of the Bois-Caïman ceremony, while Antoine Métral is the first to mention a young priestess who ceremoniously sacrificed a black pig with a knife, drank its blood, disseminated the rest to the other attendants, and sent them to battle.[172] Métral also mentions the spiritual gathering being punctuated by convulsive, yet sensuous dancing, that is full of ecstasy, highlighting the sensual nature of Vodou possession rituals.[173] Considering the convulsive and wild dancing, and the presence of blood and pig sacrifices, the scene underscores the aesthetics of the *Petwo* rite and most likely of a *Petwo lwa*, who is commonly associated with fire and violent behavior.[174] Although there is often slippages between the *Petwo lwas* Ezili Dantò, Ezili-je-wouj, and Marinette Bwa Chèch when referring to the identity of the *lwa* who mounted the *mambo* that historic night, Ezili's many assemblages and Vodou's defiant notions of the multiplicity of the self, allow for rich, complex and even sensuous accounts of women of the Haitian Revolution.[175]

---

[172] Dalmas and Wante, *Histoire de la Révolution de Saint-Domingue, Depuis le Commencement des Troubles, Jusqu'à la Prise de Jérémie et du Môle S. Nicolas par les Anglais,* 116-120; Métral, *Histoire de l'Insurrection des Esclaves dans le Nord de Saint-Domingue*, 15-20.

[173] Métral, *Histoire de l'Insurrection des Esclaves dans le Nord de Saint-Domingue,* 47.

[174] Deren, *Divine Horsemen*, 63.

[175] In addition to the various female *lwas* that are said to be at the Bois-Caïman ceremony, certain historical accounts of the event also name *mambo* Marinette as the *mambo* that presided over the spiritual gathering. I believe these historical errantries further highlight the queered temporality of Vodou mythos and practices. I will address this later in the chapter. See, "Bois Caiman," *Encyclopedia of African Religion*, Volume 1 (Sage, 2009), 131. Deren, *Divine Horsemen*, 63; Tinsley, *Ezili's Mirrors,* 11.

The fierce *Petwo lwa* Ezili Dantò manifests herself via many personas. While some split her warrior identity from her mother role by bifurcating Ezili-je-wouj and Dantò,[176] other experts understand her "red eyed" character as being an alter-ego or simply a different manifestation of Dantò.[177] Within the context of the Bois-Caïman ceremony, I find the reading of Dantò as an intense dagger-wielding fighter *and* a mother, even more compelling in ascertaining a feminine emblem of revolutionary struggle that counters the limits of gender and sexuality. Convoluting temporal, and thus historical frameworks of the Saint-Domingue rebellion, Dantò is said to have "fought fiercely beside her 'children' [enslaved people] in the Haitian slave revolution,"[178] but was betrayed by her own kin as they cut out her tongue for fear that she would reveal important secrets to the enemy. Considering that the Bois-Caïman ceremony was the event that spurred the Haitian Revolution, was her tongue severed at the ceremony or after? Stemming from these dogmatic events, it is said that the spirit of Ezili Dantò cannot speak while she mounts her *chwal* and can only make a repeated "ke-ke-ke" or "dey-dey-dey," which ironically is a sound of disapproval uttered by Haitian mothers till this day. But again, if the cutting of her tongue happened after the spiritual gathering, does that open up the possibility that she did speak while riding Fatiman at the Bois-Caïman ceremony? If so, what did she say? These oscillating spiritual and mythical timeframes constantly leave room for infinite possibilities for re-narrations of freedom discourses, that in this case ask us to question the alleged "voiceless" Dantò.

[176] See Alfred Métraux, *Voodou in Haiti*; Deren, *Divine Horsemen*; Dayan, *Haiti, History, and the Gods;* Dayan, "Erzulie"; Rigaud, *Secrets of Voodoo.*

[177] McAlister, "Love, Sex and Gender Embodied," 134; Tinsley, *Ezili's Mirrors*, 102; Brown, *Mama Lola*, 233.

[178] Brown, *Mama Lola*, 229.

Considering that Vodou spirits "mirror the full range of possibilities inherent in the particular slice of life over which they preside,"[179] perhaps the betrayal highlights the circumstances of women's lives during colonial Saint-Domingue, or throughout the Haitian Revolution, and maybe even in the contemporary era that is marred with poverty and natural disasters. Moreover, this multitemporal frame of making women speechless might also metaphysically represent the silencing of their exploits and experiences within the traditional archive, that has led to the very masculinist lens of the Haitian Revolution I am trying to disrupt! But to assume that a fierce deity such as Ezili Dantò would be voiceless, would be to underestimate the multisensorial, multitemporal and sensuous potential encompassed within her revolutionary spiritual history. Indeed, how does Dantò express the "voice of liberty" at the Bois-Caïman ceremony, and throughout the Haitian Revolution?

Although Dantò sonically chides her children while she rides her *sèvitès,* she also continues to fight for them fervently. As a mother figure, she might be angry at her kin, but she will always love them unconditionally. Though she might have a dagger lodged in her heart (as per Dantò's *vévé,* see figure 2), a visual symbol of betrayal, her heart still beats for her children's freedom. She also has her favorites to whom she bestows particular privileges. Indeed, Dantò is said to "only speak collaboratively," and channels her voice through her "greatest love," her daughter Anaïse.[180] This multi-generational dialogue is often manifested during possession rites, where Anaïse relays all message to and from Dantò, with *sèvitès* addressing one to reach the other. In fact, Tinsley ascertains that Dantò disrupts what Linda Alcoff calls the "metaphysical illusion" that women's voices are their individual property and that they "can ever be

[179] Ibid., 6.

[180] Tinsley, *Ezili's Mirrors*, 86.

disconnected from other women's conditions, experiences, and messages."[181] Thus, this mother-daughter bond, offers a powerful counterpoint to colonial and heteropatriarchal structures of affiliation, proposing that women's speeches are connected, especially when sharing a collective "voice of liberty." In effect, that is exactly what the pantheon of Ezili represents: an embodied assemblage of women's voices, that perhaps cannot be contained or understood under colonial, individualist and masculinist epistemologies. Furthermore, analyzing Ezili via a framework of sensuous assemblages resists having to pin her down to knowable definitions and epistemes, making room for opacity, for the voices that do not want to be heard and that are kept secret through embodied ritual practices on a spiritual plane.

As archival documents and Vodou mythos and practices enable a sensuous storytelling of the Haitian Revolution, so do artistic representations. The remembrance that is immortalized through art and Vodou aesthetics unveils an alternative rendition of liberation narratives – especially of the events with such scant documentation, such as the Bois-Caïman gathering – that engages not only through an affective register, but also through a spiritual, sensorial and sensual one. In turn, demystifying these ethereal sensorial manifestations reveals the methodological intervention of sensuous marronage. The depictions of the Bois-Caïman ceremony by Haitian artists Jean Richard Coachy and Jean-Pierre Ulrick (figures 3 and 4, respectively) allow critical insight to this methodology. Their work constitutes another archive of sensuous marronage, capturing the sound and feel of freedom reverberating through Ezili Dantò's voice and the women she inhabits.

[181] Ibid.

Figure 3: Jean Richard Coachy, *Cérémonie au Bois Caïman*, 1980. Oil on Canvas, 24x36 in. Part of the Collection of Marcus Rediker.

As one of most unique artistic rendering of the Bois-Caïman ceremony, Jean Richard Coachy's "Cérémonie au Bois Caïman" mesmerizes the senses, embodying many of the tenets of sensuous marronage. Different than many depictions of this historic episode, the color palette is soft and muted with pink and purple pastels, rather than representative of a stormy night where a pig was bled out. No lighting and no red. The landscape of the painting is also oriented from an aerial view, where the viewer appears to be looking at the subjects of the image, from above, as if seeing this scene through divine eyes. Although we cannot determine which of the women present is supposed to represent Cécile Fatiman, it is clear that there are a lot more women than men at this gathering, and that two of the women are being ridden by *lwas*. Indeed, the two women that are staring up with their mouths wide open are seemingly bewitched by what they

see above. Enmeshing features of the sensorial and the spiritual, these Vodou aesthetic representations highlight these two women, potentially mambos, and the sacrificial pig with "ears, mouths, nostrils, and eyes [that] assume a scale that is larger than life, so that they might convey a heightened grounding of the senses."[182]

This sensuous image also resonates loudly through an auditory register. In line with Tina Campt's Black feminist methodological approach that seeks to listen to images as she attends to the "lower frequencies" of archival photographs, I aim to "expand the sensorial register of the image"[183] to uncover instances of sensuous marronage at the Bois-Caïman ceremony. Here, I deploy sensuous marronage on two levels: as a theory of resistance exercised by mambos and read through Ezili Dantò's mythos, and as a methodological approach that breaks away from a facile visual study of images, and rather analyzes the "ensemble of seeing, feeling, being affected, contacted, and moved beyond the distance sight and observer."[184] Through this painting, the "voice of liberty" screams out of the two women's mouths, and the very fact that we cannot ascertain which of the two is the leading *mambo* highlights the connection and collective voice that is shared between these "muted" women of the Revolution. Understanding Dantò as a surrogate for the *mambo* figure enables us to think of motherhood and queerness as modes of filiations that thread a collective remembering not only highlighting the important role of women in the fight for Black liberation, but also insisting that these modes of relation are essential to Black liberation, in lieu of a solely heteropatriarchal system.

[182] Alexander, *Pedagogies of Crossing*, 308.

[183] Tina M. Campt, *Listening to Images* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 41.

[184] Campt, *Listening to Images*, 42.

A significant characteristic of the painting is the juxtaposition of the earth vis-à-vis the spiritual proceeding of the Bois-Caïman ceremony. Although the mythical mapou tree often depicted in representations of the revolutionary event – with its sturdy trunk and majestic foliage – is not visible here, its roots permeate the whole terrain. Through its roots, the mapou tree comes to represent a "powerful symbol of the resistance of the Haitian people to foreign domination, slavery, and exploitation, marking the continuity of African traditions and ancestral spirits."[185]

Following Glissant's conception of the rhizome that maintains "the idea of rootedness but challenges that of the totalitarian root,"[186] I read Jean Richard Coachy's representation of the tree roots as a emblem of spiritual continuity and as a Black diasporic and feminist formulation of Black liberation. To start, the sensuous and spiritual practices that are taking place at the Bois-Caïman clearing are entangled with the roots that lie below, emphasizing the deep connection Vodou practices have with the land; a connection that is not tied to notions of nation or territory, but with a notion of a "rhizomed land."[187] In turn, the spiritual map that sinuously paves the soil of the Bois-Caïman clearing also traces relations beyond the boundaries of place and time, linking these sensuous practices of resistance of the Haitian Revolution to the continuous and ongoing Black diasporic fight for freedom. Lastly, the rhizomes that are etched onto the ground are also visible on the women's white bonnets, emphasizing that the relation between women not only exalts a collective voice, but also symbolizes a connection and lineage between women and liberation that is materially and spiritually grounded through the earth and the body. Read in this

[185] Sheller, *Citizenship from Below,* 201.

[186] Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 11.

[187] Ibid., 146.

rhizomatic fashion, Coachy's piece offers a depiction of Black feminist geographies, linking bodily geographies with place, whilst recognizing Black women's *konesans*.[188] This embodied knowledge is depicted not only through the possession ritual and the rhizomatic link, but also through the dancing by some of the women at the procession. Ultimately, this illustration of the revolutionary ceremony showcases the ways in which Black feminist and diasporic practices of sensuous marronage are entangled through the collective link between land, body and spirit.

The sensorial manifestation of Coachy's presentation of the Bois-Caïman ceremony also resonates through the rhizomatic vibrations of the ground. If one "listens" to this image, one can hear and feel the sound of feet stomping onto the ground as the women dance to the beating of the drums, with the roots reverberating and depicting sinuous seismic lines. The tremors that are felt and seen through these roots resonate loudly through a rhizomatic spatial register that can be traced throughout the Black diaspora, but also through a temporal network that links the past, to the present, and to the future. Through the events of the Bois-Caïman ceremony, the land becomes a space of spiritual connection and of resilience. But through the colonial apparatus of plantation economy, the overexploitation of the Haitian terrain, and the unfettered extractive machination of capitalism, it is also a space of dispossession and struggle.

As a site of struggle, the tremorous vibrations represented through these roots can also be understood as literal earthshattering fault lines, that are plaguing the terrain of Haiti till this day. Turning spaces of turmoil into spatial reprieves of resistance therefore requires a spiritual understanding that unearths the power from the land itself. Indeed, as Harold Courlander asserts "Vodou permeates the land, and, in a sense, it springs from the land. It is not a system imposed

[188] McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds*, 53.

from above, but one which pushes out from below."[189] From the aerial view of the painting, the audience is drawn immediately to the commanding presence of the ground, and particularly enticed by the luminous center of the landscape occupied by the sacred pig and *Petwo vévé.* The scene depicted in the painting showcases the moment where the pig "seeps down an invisible funnel"[190] as the *lwa* takes hold of its gifted sacrifice. This ground altar that creates a doorway between the living and spirit world, is an iconographic rallying point that stresses Vodou's queer temporal framework, connective spatial rootedness, and ultimately, a rich and multifaceted view of the self as connected to the land, the ancestors and the *lwas*.

As another grounded manifestation of Black women's geographies, the illuminated design in the painting closely resembles a *Petwo vévé,* depicted with the crossed lines that are orientated towards the four cardinal points, and more particularly seems to be associated with the *lwa* Marinette Bwa Chèch (Dry Wood). As mentioned earlier, Marinette Bwa Chèch is another female *lwa* that is often thought to have been summoned at the Bois-Caïman ceremony, further highlighting the many slippages between Ezili's assemblages. Although throughout this chapter I mostly explore the more well-known interpretation of the Bois-Caïman ceremony – featuring Cécile Fatiman being ridden by Ezili Dantò – I believe engaging with an alternative Black feminist narrative of the same historical event can deepen the importance of a queered temporal framework when assessing instances of sensuous marronage. Breaking time into fragments and disrupting linear temporal frameworks invites us to explore different timeframes, similar to the way in which ritual possession rites do. Relying on embodied and sensuous notions of time,

[189] Harold Courlander quoted from Claudine Michel, "Vodou in Haiti: Way of Life and Mode of Survival," in *Vodou in Haitian Life and Culture: Invisible Powers,* eds Claudine Michel and Patrick Bellegarde-Smith (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 30.

[190] Deren, *Divine Horsemen*, 205.

enables us to experience the ways in which historical realities are malleable, multiple, simultaneous, and in turn offer new and alternative possibilities to read the past, present and future. By introducing new sensuous actors to the narrative of the Bois-Caïman ceremony, I am attempting to display the Black feminist and queer discursive structures that guide the methodologies of sensuous marronage.

In this version of events, Ezili's figurative appearance reveals an alternate identification for the high priestess that presided over the Bois-Caïman ceremony: *mambo* Marinette.[191] In a queered temporal frame, *mambo* Marinette was elevated to the status of *lwa* after her death, immortalizing her revolutionary and sensuous exploits at the Bois-Caïman. The time-based quagmire this narrative presents, centers the question of whether Marinette was riding herself at the revolutionary ceremony. The non-linear and inconsistent structure of time in this mystical remembrance invokes Time "with a capital T," where the "embodiment of the Sacred dislocates clock time."[192] Jacqui Alexander continues,

> Time becomes a moment, an instant, experienced in the now, but also a space crammed with moments of wisdom about an event or series of events already having inhabited different moments, or with the intention of inhabiting them, while all occurring simultaneously in this instant, in this space, as well as in other instants and spaces of which we are not immediately aware.[193]

This spiritual understanding of Time reveals that the most salient grounding sites of knowledge reside in the "rhizomed land" and in the body through the sensuous. Using Vodou as a repository

[191] See, "Bois Caiman," *Encyclopedia of African Religion*, Volume 1, eds. Molefi Kete Asante and Ama Mazama (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2009), 131. Deren, *Divine Horsemen,* 63; Tinsley, *Ezili's Mirrors,* 11.

[192] Alexander, *Pedagogies of Crossing*, 309.

[193]Alexander, *Pedagogies of Crossing*, 309. Tinsley also uses Alexander's notion of Time, calling it *spirit time*. See Tinsley, *Ezili's Mirrors,* 106.

of knowledge that is at once historic and geographic, while understanding the *lwas* as archivists, reformulates some of the gendered, sexual and spiritual modalities attributed to the Bois-Caïman ceremony in particular, and the Haitian Revolution in general. Moreover, rather than focusing on the elusive distinctions between the different *lwas* and *mambos* identified, I wish to emphasize how the multiplicity of the self within the edicts of Vodou could leave room for multiple "riders" and "ridees." Embracing the sexual connotation of the "riding" metaphor brings forward a queer birthing story borne out of the sensuously violent "riding" of *mambos* by female *lwas*. The induction of the *mambo* at the Bois-Caïman into the *lwa* Marinette Bwa Chèch is essentially a product of the laboring pains of the intimate Vodou possession ritual. Through the lens of Ezili Dantò as the queer mother, this interpretation lends itself perfectly to mythologies of birthing the Revolution. The affiliation with motherhood here is associated with a spiritual kinship that resides outside of heteropatriarchal norms, tracing a lineage between women, queer sexuality and Black liberation.

Figure 4: Jean-Pierre Ulrick, *Céremonie du Bois Caïman II (Revolution of Saint-Domingue, Haiti, 1791)*, 1995. Oil on canvas.

What a queer and erotic narrative of the renowned Vodou ceremony shows is that desire – whether it is sexual desire or desire for freedom – is entangled with a wholistic understanding of the self that does not bifurcate the body from the soul, and/or the material from the spiritual. Indeed, the dogma of Vodou perceives that the sexual and the spiritual come from the same source, and that sexuality is the "central animating force in all of life."[194] This close linkage between spirituality, sexuality, and sensuality not only defines Coachy's painting, but also emerges in Jean-Pierre Ulrick's rendition of the Bois-Caïman ceremony, "Cayman Woods Ceremony" (figure 4). In his realistically drawn representation of the Bois-Caïman ceremony, the leading *mambo* is front and center, emphasizing the importance of Cécile Fatiman, and by

[194] Brown, "Afro-Caribbean Spirituality," 10.

extension, all women, in the denouement of the famed beginning of the Haitian Revolution.[195] Her image is also highly erotic as she powerfully straddles the sacred pig with her toned body while bare-chested. Rather than associating naked breasts with certain Western discourses that automatically commodify the naked female body through tropes of objectification or moralistic failing, the Vodou principles shed light on the powerful role of Fatiman's sexualized body. Indeed, spirituality, sexuality, revolution and freedom are entwined in this rendition of the Bois-Caïman gathering. Furthermore, keeping in line with the aforementioned "riding" metaphor, I want to suggest that some of the sacred ritual practices – notably, sacrificing the pig and serving the spirits – also embody an understanding of sexual energy that foments revolutionary kinship. I read the straddling of the pig by the eroticized *mambo* – the human manifestation of Ezili Dantò, the queer mother/warrior – as a sensual representation of connection through desire. As legend has it, a black pig was sacrificed and all women and men present drank its blood, as part of the oath ritual for liberation. Considering that there is "no division within the Vodou view of person between drives or appetites that come from the body," thus linking desires such as hunger and sexuality,[196] the sexual portrayal of Fatiman riding the pig is less about a bestial relationship, and more about an embodied and collective desire for freedom.

Ulrick's piece also demonstrates this queered revolutionary kinship through the sensorial manifestation of a collective possession ritual at the Bois-Caïman. Many of the conspirators in the picture, including Fatiman and Boukman, seem to be in a trance-like state, indicated by their closed or whited-out eyes. This suggests a non-hierarchal framework of connectivity and

[195] This is also an observation that Marc A. Christophe makes about Ulrick's painting. See Marc A. Christophe, "Ulrick Jean-Pierre's 'Cayman Wood Ceremony'," *Bicentennial Issue* of *Journal of Haitian Studies* 10, no. 2 (Fall 2004): 54.

[196] Brown, "Afro-Caribbean Spirituality," 10.

community, since the *lwas* are not only being served by *mambos* and *hougans*, but by all those who want freedom. This rendition of the rebellious ceremony disrupts the charismatic (male) hero narrative by interrupting the idea that Boukman (or/and Fatiman) alone incited the attacks that started the Haitian Revolution. Rather, the display of many other attendants serving the spirits at the Bois-Caïman, highlights a collective effort from below in spurring the Revolution of Saint-Domingue. Furthermore, whether through a queer temporal framework or through a notion of multiplicity of self, the dynamic image suggests that there are numerous *sèvitès*, and perhaps many *lwas* riding or dancing in their *mèt tèts.*[197]

As mentioned above, Ezili Dantò, Ezili-je-wouj and Marinette Bwa Chèch are the spirits most commonly associated with the Bois-Caïman gathering, [198] and considering that the *lwas* can "ride" or "mount horses" (chwals) of any gender – as seen in Ulrick's painting – suggests that the collective call for freedom is also entangled with a resistance to normative heteropatriarchal affiliations. This cross-gender embodiment, which Roberto Strongman defines as an occurrence of "transcorporeality," emphasizes "the non-binary quality of Vodou [and] a multiplicity beyond the dualism of maleness and femaleness."[199] This collective trance of freedom accentuates not only a notion of Black liberation that negates the apparatuses of enslavement and colonialism, but also negates the gendered and sexual norms that reinforce systems of empire. Understanding

[197] *Mèt tèt* refers to the "master of the head," the main spirit served by that person. It is said that the "personality of the individual human being mirrors that of his or her *mèt tèt."* See, Brown, "Afro-Caribbean Spirituality," 10; Dayan, *Haiti, History and the Gods,* 68-74.

[198] Others have presented the possibilities of the presence of other *lwas* such as Legba, Danabla, Ogoun and Simbi. See, Gerdès Fleurant, "The Song of Freedom: Vodou, Conscientization, and Popular Culture in Haiti," in *Vodou in Haitian Life and Culture: Invisible Powers,* eds. Claudine Michel and Patrick Bellegarde-Smith (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 52. See also, Christophe, "Ulrick jean-Pierre's 'Cayman Wood Ceremony'," 54. The female *lwas* are still more prevalently mentioned, as seen in previous references.

[199] Roberto Strongman, "The Afro-Diasporic Body in Haitian Vodou and the Transcending of Gendered Cartesian Corporeality," *KUNAPIPI: Journal of Postcolonial Writing & Culture* XXX, no. 2 (2008): 27.

the shared and sensual tone of the Vodou possessions rituals at the Bois-Caïman ceremony gives credence to Frantz Fanon's articulation of the "accumulated libido" of colonized violence that results in the "collective ecstasy" of mass revolt.[200] Parallel to Lorde's theorizing, understanding erotics as a collective articulation and manifestation of Black liberation is precisely the type of analysis stimulated by sensuous marronage.

As the *lwas* "dance" or "ride" the many Black bodies at the famed Vodou procession, these revolutionary attendants not only engage with the sensual aspects of the spirit world, they also tap into the sensory register of sensuous freedom-making practices. Listening to Ulrick's image brings forward a "kind of 'sensorial' relief that juxtaposes the sonic, haptic, historical, and affective backgrounds and foregrounds"[201] that informs the interpretation of the mystical events at the Bois-Caïman. First, the sound and haptic feeling of the "dark and stormy night" resonates through the bursts of lighting in the sky, the accompanied sound of a roaring thunder and the powerful wind blowing the mapou and palm trees. The motion of the natural environment is replicated in the bodies of the congregates as they dance and sing, their fire torches and machetes swaying in the strong winds. As the rituals, dances, and chants "work together to create a kinesthetic medium for the *lwa* to manifest themselves in dance,"[202] the painting highlights the symbiotic flow between the living, the spirit world and the land/environment. These resonant and relational movements guide, but are also guided by the entrancing sound of Boukman's sacred

[200] See, Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, [1963] 2004), 83; Also see, Greg Thomas, "On Sex/Sexuality & Sylvia Wynter's 'Beyond...': Anti-Colonial Ideas in 'Black Radical Tradition'," in "Sylvia Wynter: A Transculturalist Rethinking Modernity," special issue, *Journal of West Indian Literature* 10, no.1-2 (November 2001): 107.

[201] Campt, *Listening to Images*, 8.

[202] See, Joseph M. Murphy in Olmos and Paravisini-Gebert, *Creole Religions of the Caribbean*, 137.

rattle held by Boukman, the blowing of the conch (*lambi*) shell, and of course the beating of the drums.

Sophisticated drumming schemas are imperative components of the spiritual creole tradition, contributing to the sensuous and embodied nature of the Vodou ceremony. Indeed, in *Divine Horsemen*, anthropologist Maya Deren heralds the collective embodied beat of the drumming that unites and paces the Vodou ritual. She presents an imaginary of a collective beating heart when she explains that, "It is upon these pulsations that, for the most part, the loa are brought forward; […] it is as if they were brought in on the stream of the blood, pulsed not by the individual personal heart, but by some older, deeper, cosmic heart – the drums."[203] This powerful metaphor speaks to the embodied knowledges manifested through the rhythm of the sacred drums, highlighting how the beat "serves as a floor below which the collective cannot drop."[204] With the drums making appearances in both paintings, I cannot help but hear the pulsating beat of the heart that sustains Black life and guides toward the pathway to freedom. Listening to this throbbing heart through the drums, the sensuous *chœur* (chorus) of sacred chants, the dancing, the serving of the spirits, the thunder and lightning, the "rhizomed land," the *vévés,* and the imperative presence of *mambos*, whom I see in part as stand-ins for Ezili Dantò, represent a sensuous, spiritual and affective manifestation of Black liberation steered by an embodied, queered and Black feminist mode of analysis. Considering the centrality of the heart within representations of female *lwas* alongside the collective heart of the enslaved subjects heralding freedom, necessarily attunes us to a strong feminine energy and to Black women's sensuousness within narratives of emancipation. This interdisciplinary inquiry into the Bois-

[203] Deren, *Divine Horsemen*, 238.

[204] Ibid., 228.

Caïman gathering does not displace the importance of a collective militarized response to slavery and colonialism, rather it reveals what else can be unearthed through sexual, sensual and sensorial expressions of the pulsing heart of freedom, and how a sensuous analysis can lead to a deeper understanding of the erotics of revolution.

Looking at the figure of the *mambo* as one of the essential sensuous actors of the Haitian Revolution is imaginable, in part, through Vodou's religious adaptability and its acceptance of women in prominent spiritual roles. Indeed, Patrick Bellegarde-Smith stresses that in Vodou "sex and gender are not prejudicial matters" since both men and women can be in positions of divine leadership, and since "homophobic prejudices and violence are absent."[205] The major role played by Cécile Fatiman and/or other possible *mambos* at the Bois-Caïman meeting highlights some of the ways Vodou and the sensuous rebellious practices during the Haitian Revolution are sources of "black female agency."[206] The power, autonomy and influence of the high priestess resonates through archival fragments, such as in Celigny Ardouin's narrative of the sacred ceremony, where the *mambo* orders Boukman to proclaim the aforementioned heartfelt Bois-Caïman oath.[207] As Aisha Finch mentions, although the meaning of Fatiman's status as *mambo* in colonial Saint-Domingue would be hard to ascertain, her high position within Vodou's spiritual lineage, would "consecrate[e] her as a revered elder at the Bois-Caïman ceremony."[208] Historical

[205] See Patrick Bellegarde-Smith in Carrol F. Coates, "Vodou in Haitian Literature," in *Vodou in Haitian Life and Culture: Invisible Powers*, eds. Claudine Michel and Patrick Bellegarde-Smith (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 182.

[206] Beliso-De Jesús, *Electric Santería*, 204-205.

[207] Celigny Ardouin in Beaubrun Ardouin, *Études sur l'Histoire d'Haïti; Suivies de la Vie du Général J.-M. Borgella*, Tome Premier (Paris: Dézobry et E. Magdeleine, Lib.-Éditeurs, 1853), 229, http://archive.org/details/tudessurlhisto01ardo.

[208] Finch, "Cécile Fatiman and Petra Carabalí, Late Eighteenth-Century Haiti and Mid-Nineteenth-Century Cuba," 302.

ancestry and spiritual remembrance coalesce within the mythologic tapestry of Vodou, further revealing the imperative role of not only Cécile Fatiman, but of other Vodou priestesses represented through infrequent archival fragments. These priestesses are nonetheless immortalized through embodied and sensuous ritual practices, and the *lwas'* liminal biographies.

Although these other *mambos* lurking within the annals of the traditional archives are not necessarily recorded as having a powerful spiritual impact, especially as their sacred practices and their gender are often derided by colonial officials, they are still understood as influential and informative agents of the slave rebellion. Many travel and military journals offer hints of sacred Vodou traditions, such as *Des Colonies, et Particulièrement de Celle de Saint-Domingue* by Colonel Malenfant, a notable French colonel who from 1801 to 1803 infamously led a brigade in Saint-Domingue to restore French colonial control of the colony. Indeed, in his memoirs he recounts the story of a *"grande prêtresse du Vaudou*" who was captured, and although he scoffs at the fact that she was not able to prevent his troops from finding the rebel camp, he also laments that his soldiers killed her brutally before obtaining valuable information from her.[209] Although African diasporic customs were not necessarily respected, Malenfant's account highlights that the authority, knowledge and skillset of Vodou priestesses was definitely recognized. While the leadership of women within sacred spaces is a vital aspect of determining "black female agency" within Vodou, the multivalent characteristics of Ezili that make "women's lives visible," giving them a "way of working realistically and creatively with the forces that define and confine them"[210] showcase an embodied Black feminist potential. Indeed,

[209] Colonel Malenfant, *Des Colonies, et Particulièrement de Celle de Saint-Domingue; Mémoire Historique et Politique* (Paris : Chez Audibert, lib., 1814), 218-219, http://archive.org/details/descoloniesetpar00male. "Grande prêtresse du Vaudou" translates into high Vodou priestess.

[210] Brown, *Mama Lola*, 221.

as Malenfant's colonial troops captured this anonymous *mambo,* they also detained two hundred Black women who "*dansaient en chantant avec sécurité,*" and whom the Colonel insists they did not harm in custody.[211] Paralleling the relation between women and the desire for freedom analyzed through the paintings above, this story depicts the fearlessness of sensuous practices performed by two hundred Black women, who may or may not have been *mambos* themselves, but nonetheless embodied "black feminine sacred power"[212] through dance and song. As the figure of the *mambo* is represented partly through Ezili Dantò's embodied memoir, the varied sensual, sexual, and sensorial freedom-making traditions – such as the ones exhibited by these dancing and singing women – are always already tied to related networks between land, spirits, ancestors, and non-normative filiations between women. Ultimately, as a sensuous actor of the Haitian Revolution, the *mambo* espouses a Black feminist ontology of resistance that resonates mnemonically through Ezili's personification of sensuous marronage, and throughout a "rhizomed land" and queer temporal frame.

Ezili as Black Queer Futurity

Paying close attention to the spiritual bedrock of the Bois-Caïman ceremony, emphasizes the ways in which Vodou structured some of the ideological and political influences of the enslaved population of Saint-Domingue in their struggle for freedom. However, much of the gendered, sexual and sensuous possibilities burgeoning from that catalytic event are obscured by colonial and masculinist discourses of the Haitian Revolution. Through an exploration of non-militaristic and sensuous interpretations of the grammars of the heart, and a multivalent

[211] Malenfant, *Des Colonies, et Particulièrement de Celle de Saint-Domingue,* 218. The phrase "*dansaient en chantant avec sécurité*" means danced while singing and feeling secure.

[212] Beliso-De Jesús, *Electric Santería,* 205.

conception of the many iterations of the Vodou *lwa* Ezili, this chapter highlighted Black feminist and queer possibilities that alter the scope of what Black liberation can, could and should mean. Put differently, denying the erotic, this "lifeforce of women,"[213] from having a major part in the historical retelling of events, simply tells an incomplete story. This removal engenders significant consequences when thinking of freedom discourses past, present and future. While many definitions of freedom reveal Western structural epistemes, such as emancipation and independence, or link Black resistance to manliness, the deployment of sensuous marronage fosters an engagement with embodied, erotic, sensual, sexual, sensorial and spiritual notions of liberation.

In this chapter, I have centered the courtesan/sex worker and the *mambo* as two of the main female archetypes of the Haitian Revolution. Through Vodou, and through the indefinite and mystical figure of the *lwa* Ezili, these archetypes reveal an ontology of Black women articulated beyond the limiting gendered and sexual boundaries prescribed by colonial, nationalist, and heteropatriarchal tropes. Ezili Freda re-configures the constructs of femininity and love, endowing the lascivious *mulâtresse* with revolutionary tactics and desires for freedom. Her feminine sexuality is not solely an adaptable feature to colonial rule or a heterosexual male fantasy, but a sensuous redefinition allowing "Black queer fem(me)ininity [to] unmake and remake constricted constructions of racialized gender in creative ways."[214] As a gendered construct, femininity is often understood as an oppressive heteropatriarchal characteristic, however, as Ezili Freda and her rebellious stand-ins show, it can also be an erotic source of possibilities, particularly through a Black, queer and diasporic prism. As for Ezili Dantò, her

[213] Lorde, "The Uses of the Erotic," 55.

[214] Tinsley, *Ezili's Mirrors,* 32.

multivalent personae of the warrior queer mother reimagines what birthing and fostering a revolution means. Queerness, blackness and motherhood are categories that do not align with the edicts of colonialization, enslavement, and imperialism, and yet Dantò and her representative *mambos* draw attention to the sensuous, sensorial and sexual possibilities of embodying these complex and redefined modalities. The reverberating *choeur* of Black queer reformulations of femininity and motherhood, sung along the events of the Haitian Revolution, not only unearths Black feminist historical narratives, but also translates sensuous marronage practices into the present and the future.

In her article "Erotic Autonomy as a Politics of Decolonization," Caribbean feminist Jacqui Alexander examines the continuity of colonial heteropatriarchy and its entrenchment in Black liberation.[215] She demonstrates how women's erotic autonomy and sexual agency are seen as troublesome for the state and as irresponsible citizenship in the Bahamas, because they de-stabilize the anchor of the nuclear family. In particular, Alexander showcases how under the guise of protection and paternalism against domestic violence, the 1991 Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Act was enacted to establish primogeniture, keeping property in the hands of men. Through her analysis, she highlights how the embedded (imperial and Black) heteropatriarchy of the state uses this rhetoric to further regulate, discipline and criminalize lesbians and sex workers.[216] As a mean of resistance, Alexander designates "erotic autonomy" as a politics of decolonization which refuses colonial and post-independence repression of

[215] M. Jacqui Alexander, "Erotic Autonomy as a Politics of Decolonization: Feminism, Tourism, and the State in the Bahamas," in *Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory, and the Sacred* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 21-65.

[216] This is also evident through everyday discourse in today's Haiti, where some of the worst insults bestowed onto women are *madivin* and *bouzen,* which correspondingly mean "lesbian" and "whore/slut." See, McAlister, "Love, Sex and Gender Embodied," 136.

Caribbean sexuality. I see many similarities with her conception of "erotic autonomy" and my notion of sensuous marronage, as they imagine something beyond the unintelligibility of Black women's sexuality, one that is simultaneously reviled, but also considered integral to Western nation building paradigms. Indeed, Alexander clearly demonstrates the transformative erotic power embedded within the queered figures of the lesbian and the sex worker. Linking Alexander's argument with my understanding of the sensuous potential of the Vodou priestess and the courtesan/concubine, it is clear that heteropatriarchy remains the antithesis of freedom yesterday, today and tomorrow, throughout the Black diaspora.

Today, many traditional notions of Black liberation remain tied to a "cultural-nationalist and state-sanctioned model of sex and family," informing not only historical memory, but contemporary and forthcoming visions of freedom.[217] Nonetheless, I argue that Black diasporic freedom discourses require an active engagement with "creative genders and femininities as resistance to slavery and its aftermath."[218] Indeed, primogenital and/or heteropatriarchal edicts would have us believe that that Dantò's queer motherhood is an impossible concept, and the future of a nation cannot be perpetuated through this queer mode of filiation. However, thinking through Vodou, and Ezili in particular, evokes a Black futurity that is decidedly queer, diasporic and feminist, as the ephemeral spirit exalts a sensuous "performance of a future that hasn't yet happened but must."[219] Ezili's abundant imaginative spectrum of desire is intrinsically linked to an understanding of Black liberation that disrupts the authority of the nation, of its borders, of its colonial links, of its capitalist ties. These desires seek to break the structural apparatus instituted

[217] Treva B. Lindsey and Jessica Marie Johnson, "Searching for Climax: Black Erotic Lives in Slavery and Freedom," in "Harriet Tubman: A Legacy of Resistance," special issue, *Meridians* 12, no.2 (2014): 176.

[218] Tinsley, *Ezili's Mirrors,* 24.

[219] Campt, *Listening to Images,* 17.

via sexual and gendered repression, thereby reassessing expansive queer kinship networks outside of the bounds of heteropatriarchy. Her sensuous interventions within the events of the Haitian Revolution illuminate "liberatory models from the past and project our imaginations forward to possible futures."[220] Ultimately, emanating from the heart of her sensuous actors, Ezili traces the Black, queer, diasporic and feminist path to freedom outlined long-ago, in the ongoing persistence for the possibility of a better world.

[220] Allen, "Black/Queer/Diaspora at the Current Conjuncture," 214.

CHAPTER TWO

Marooned and Opaque: Alternative Masculinities and Genders of the Haitian Revolution

> In the wake of the West's reinvention of its True Christian Self in the transumed terms of the Rational Self of Man1, however, it was to be the peoples of the militarily expropriated New World territories (i.e., Indians), as well as the enslaved peoples of Black Africa (i.e., Negroes), that were made to reoccupy the matrix slot of Otherness—to be made into the physical referent of the idea of the irrational/subrational Human Other, to this first degodded (if still hybridly religio-secular) "descriptive statement" of the human in history, as then descriptive statement that would be foundational to modernity.
>
> - Sylvia Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument," 266.

On the night of August 21, 1791, immediately following the Bois-Caïman ceremony – the sensuous catalyst of the Haitian Revolution – the slaves of the North Province of Saint-Domingue rose in revolt burning plantations and cane fields, looting and killing, and thus enacting revenge on planters. Freedom could not wait any longer. The August 1791 insurgency was like nothing that had ever been seen in American slave society, as the level of organization and coordination was unparallel by other rebel attacks. Spreading quickly across the plains and into the mountains, the rebellion gained traction. By the end of the year, the enslaved insurgents numbered in the tens of thousands, over a thousand sugar and coffee plantations were destroyed, and hundreds of white planters were killed. This ushered in a tumultuous time of rebellion, creating incredible economic, political and social instability on the island of Saint-Domingue. Spurring a multitude of attacks on plantations across the land, the sensuous possibilities that brought forward the revolutionary actors of Saint-Domingue were just beginning to open up. Whether stemming from the spiritual impetus of the Bois-Caïman ceremony, the need for vengeance and vindication, or rumors that the king of France had already granted them

emancipation, the slaves of Saint-Domingue took a huge leap towards taking freedom into their own hands.

Soon after these initial insurgent battles, Black martial leaders – such as Jean- François and Georges Biassou – started to emerge, commanding rebel battalions and controlling abandoned estates. Free people of color, who were simultaneously battling for their civil rights at the time, joined forces with the rebel slaves – albeit sometimes reluctantly – to fight against the white planters and French soldiers. Indeed, the early years of the Saint-Domingue civil war created an opening for Black masculine and militaristic subjects that eventually became concomitant with freedom narratives of the Haitian Revolution. However, as Sibylle Fischer highlights, the Haitian Revolution has been disavowed from Eurocentric conceptions of modernity.[221] Indeed, focusing on the period between the August 1791 revolt and the advent of French emancipation laws, sheds light on the "unthinkable" interpretation of the organized martial acts. During that period, the colonists – who saw with their own eyes their precious colony burn into flames – somehow refused to believe that the slaves planned these attacks on their own, believing "the idea of the irrational/subrational Human Other."[222] Nonetheless, through the militaristic actions of the rebel slaves, they soon realized that "the slaves were determined to decide their own fate."[223] Moreover, the chaotic nature of the time – with the many dissenting agendas, shifts in ideologies, opportunist alliances and acts of treason – along with the fluctuating geographies of rebellion and maronnage, also made it a generative moment to experiment with different modes of being and different practices of liberation. Indeed, amidst the

[221] Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed.*

[222] Sylvia Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument," *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3, no.3 (2003): 266.

[223] Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, 13

bloodshed and fire, were the insurgent warriors solely expressing liberty through their arms? In addition to the martial leaders and rebel soldiers, who else was expressing radical notions of freedom? If not through militaristic actions, how then were enslaved people advocating and fighting for freedom? During this momentous period of insurgency, I turn my attention to the other sensuous actors of the Haitian Revolution, to uncover how they opposed the abjection of slavery, and how they created alternative ontologies and freedom-making practices through sensuous marronage. Indeed, I believe that the formation of alternate constructs of Black masculinities that go beyond militaristic conceptions, can generate different Black ways of being and different Black freedom practices that circumvent Eurocentric and "unthinkable" understandings of modernity, humanness and history.

As I focus primarily on mostly women-centered sensuous freedom-making possibilities in chapter one and three, this chapter is dedicated to uncovering Black embodied alternative masculinities and non-binary genders through sensuous marronage. I argue that these imaginative and generative formulations of gendered subjectivities, encompass the possibilities of constructing Black ontologies, epistemologies and methodologies of freedom that not only disrupt Western-centric notions of modernity and humanity, but also unsettle overly masculinist and militaristic narratives of the Haitian Revolution. Indeed, I follow Mimi Sheller's contention that gendered analyses of slavery and post-emancipation histories of the Caribbean have not sufficiently given attention to "how alternative masculinities informed competing efforts to define and enact freedom."[224] In order to fill this gap, I propose from the outset that the conceptual framework of sensuous marronage queers and disrupts notions of modernity and

[224] Sheller, *Citizenship from Below*, 90.

humanness – as defined through Eurocentric models – creating an opening for creative Black masculinities and other alternative genders.

In addition to embracing the spiritual possibilities of sensuous marronage through Vodou counter-archives, the sensuous in this chapter, also encompasses the dreadful and violent sensorial and embodied experiences of sexual mutilation. This painful and provocative framework reveals a brutal instantiation of the "hieroglyphics of the flesh,"[225] and examines the potentiality for different translations of these etchings. In relation to the construction of alternative Black masculinities during the early insurgent wars of the Haitian Revolution, I analyze the sensuous interpretations of the "hieroglyphics of the flesh" through the practice of enslaved male emasculation. In doing so, I explore the profound violation of Black male dismemberment and its centrality to the sexual economies of slavery in Saint-Domingue. Yet I also suggest an alternative reading of castration that asks what new conceptions of freedom might be opened up by this moment of violation. Specifically, I argue that a severance from traditional embodiments and conceptions of Black masculinities can offer radical possibilities to rethink Black liberation.

Clearly invoking the sexual, a sensuous reading of this type of bodily mutilation also requires a sensorial methodological approach of observing the opaque and listening to the "black noise." Indeed, the impetus to respect the "right to opacity" impels me to resist simple and "overextended approximation of the agency of the dispossessed subject."[226] Moreover, I suggest

[225] Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe," 67.

[226] Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 85.

that the queering of the "dark side" of modernity[227] requires the imperative to respect what Saidiya Hartman dubs "black noise – the shrieks, the moans, the nonsense, and the opacity, which are always in excess of legibility and of the law and which hint at and embody aspirations that are wildly utopian, derelict to capitalism, and antithetical to its attendant discourse of Man."[228] Through this methodological approach, I showcase the various ways in which sensuous actors of the Haitian Revolution defined themselves and defined notions of liberation within and against the constructs of modernity, thus also disrupting constricting notions of humanness.

Illuminating the possibilities of alternative subjectivities and freedom-making strategies requires a wider, more capacious, even sensuous conception of modernity. Through this lens, I aim to trouble the "alleged purity of European modernity" to allows for a heterogenous reading of what modernity can encompass.[229] In order words, to attempt to uncover new freedom dreams and dreamers, the strict colonial, imperial and Western definitions of modernity need to be disassembled and reassessed. Indeed, as Sibylle Fischer explains in her book *Modernity Disavowed: Haiti and the Cultures of Slavery in the Age of Revolution*:

> Beliefs and attributed beliefs need to be read against the grain with an ear for improbable distortions, so that they might reveal the shadow of other futures, of projects not realized and ideas rarely remembered. If we do not take into account to what extent modernity is a product of the New World, to what extent the colonial experience *shaped* modernity – in Europe and elsewhere – politically, economically, and aesthetically, and to what extent modernity is a heterogeneous, internally diverse, even contradictory phenomenon that constituted and revolutionized itself in the process of transculturation, then, obviously, talk of modernity is just a reinstantiation of a Eurocentric particularism parading as universalism.[230]

[227] The dark side refers to the conception of modernity that encompasses "European expansionism, racial subordination, and genocide." Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed,* 34.

[228] Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," 12.

[229] Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, 22.

[230] Ibid., 23-24. Emphasis in original.

Part of revealing "the shadow of other futures," involves unearthing alternate narratives that are not quintessentially Eurocentric, and that may reside within the opening between the granular spaces of the archives, an opening that may sometimes remain opaque. In re-assessing the parameters of modernity, we must give an attentive ear to the "black noise" and silences of the archives, as they hold dynamic and embodied wisdoms that do not necessarily register with Western definitions, histories and epistemologies. Bringing in an alternative vision of modernity of Haiti and its famed rebellion based on revolutionary anti-slavery and alternative ontologies of blackness involves breaking down many of the terms, concepts, historiographies and narratives that seem "natural" and static, thereby funneling many historical actors away from the taxonomies of humanness.

Highlighting the constrictive conception of humanness that require dismantling, Sylvia Wynter's formulation of European understandings of modernity highlights the ways in which European conceptions of self are directly related to the "irrational/subrational Human Other." Considering the authority and power linked to those "human" discourses, such hierarchal notions are universalized, thereby relegating blackness at best, to abjection: an abject ontology that is necessary for the promulgation of Western modernity. Paradoxically, Wynter also offers the creative potential to undo and unsettle – as opposed to replace or occupy – "Western conceptions of what it means to be human."[231] Indeed, as I attempt to frame this re-articulation of modernity, I am presenting its contextual ground with the understanding that blackness is the "empirical-experiential-symbolic site through which modernity and all of its unmet promises are enabled

[231] Katherine McKittrick, "Yours in the Intellectual Struggle: Sylvia Wynter and the Realization of the Living," in *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 2.

and made plain."[232] Blackness – especially in the innovative space of the Caribbean – is integral to the spectrum of modernity that figures "between the modernity of European expansionism, racial subordination, and genocide, and modernity as emancipation and democratization."[233] Moreover, engaging with contemporary narratives of the Haitian Revolution as the latter figuration – the radical anti-slavery catalyst of modernity – reveals its re-conceptualized characterization of humanness through militant Black masculine ontologies. Indeed, as evidenced throughout the framing of my dissertation, the masculinist and militaristic personification of modernity's political agents are omnipresent throughout the contemporary historiography of the Haitian Revolution. However, the purview of modernity "from below," from the perception of the enslaved, not only offers a capacious terrain to recognize modernity through "what remains hidden from the master's view,"[234] but also makes room for generative, sensuous, as well as opaque and concealed conceptions of Black non-normative genders. Indeed, during the liminal and turbulent period between the August 1791 insurrection and the implementation of the emancipation laws of June 1793, many of the Black enslaved subjects were able to affirm, experiment, define, and dream of ways of being free through creative ontologies and methodologies, that revealed non-normative gendered conceptualizations of Black life. I suggest that the possibilities burrowed in this timeframe encompass instances of sensuous marronage, offering queer interpretations of the Haitian Revolution that rattle not only Eurocentric conceptions of modernity and blackness, but also unsettle heteronormative and militarist schemas of Black liberation.

[232] McKittrick, "Yours in the Intellectual Struggle," 2.

[233] Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed,* 34.

[234] Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed,* 35.

The exploration of sensuous marronage in this chapter, further engages with Lyndon Gill's theorization of Audre Lorde's erotic, as I attend to erotic possibilities of alternative Black masculinities and creative genders. Indeed, Gill re-interprets Lorde's contention that the erotic is meant for women exclusively, and surmises that we must take into consideration the context in which she first introduced "Uses of the Erotic" at the 1978 Berkshire Conference on the History of Women.[235] In fact, he proposes that the "eros as a principle [should] be allowed to retain the widest possible applicability – without losing its necessary attention to the ground of lived experience (of women, men, trans people, heterosexuals, queers, and people of color, etc.)."[236] This expansive provocation allows for the erotic to enters the battleground of the early insurgent years of the Haitian Revolution, to reveal not the martial aspect of the rebellion, but rather the epistemological struggle to create different modes of freedom. I read these different modes of freedom through the articulation of alternative Black masculinities, that disrupt normative and modern constructs of gender.

To attend to the liberatory possibilities of sensuous marronage, this chapter also highlights the material dimensions of marronage – encapsulated in the common definition of marronage as "fleeing the plantation" – by analyzing a fugitive slave notice in the archival records. Moreover, it becomes clear through the historical and literary narratives of my archival material – which I will delineate following this theoretical framework – how significant practices of marronage reflect insurgent planning and practices. Furthermore, considering the analytical deployment of brutal sensorial manifestations of the sensuous, the need to flee and re-create

[235] See Gill, "In the Realm of Our Lorde," 183-185; Gill, *Erotic Islands,* 6-8.

[236] Gill, "In the Realm of Our Lorde," 185. To me, this echoes Cathy Cohen's provocation that the term "queer" need not be an individual identity marker of sexual orientation, but rather that it should be read as an indicator of an affiliation to a collective political group. See Cathy Cohen, "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?" *GLQ* 3 (1997): 437-465.

takes on a material, as well as an ontological and epistemological meaning. Indeed, the sensuous deployment of marronage, becomes a process that moves through possibilities of being that is expressed, not solely from traversing and defining fugitive geographies, but also through ontological shifts of Black masculinity. Indeed, marronage enables us to expand Black masculinity beyond exclusively militaristic connotations, and into queer, gender non-confirming, and gender-bending possibilities.

Using what Saidiya Hartman calls a "critical fabulation" methodological approach, I will "labor[…] to paint as full as a picture"[237] of the live of Panurge, an enslaved boy who "went maroon" and whose archival life is relegated to a slave fugitive notice in a Saint-Domingue newspaper. Much of the sensuous possibilities encompassed in his story can only be read through the opacity of his mutilated sexual body, through what is concealed, and through the "black noise" of the archives. Writing with and against the archives allows for a reading of the varied, contradictory heterogeneous modes of modernity, which I interpret through the European and Vodou trope of the trickster. In part, these sensuous and queer re-narrations of Panurge through Rabelaisian French literature and through the Vodou mythos of Papa Gede[238] – the trickster *lwa* who represents the assemblages of the spirits of death – pulls at the common thread of the trickster figure and its vast, but yet distinct, interpellations of a new world era and of humanity. It is especially through the trickster figure of Papa Gede that Panurge emerges as a

[237] Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," 11.

[238] Also written as Guedé and Ghede. I see this analysis in a similar way to how chapter one of this doctoral manuscript, along with Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley's and Lisa Ze Winters' use the figure of the *lwa* Ezili to re-articulate notions of sexuality, gender, and freedom. See Tinsley, *Ezili's Mirrors*; Lisa Ze Winters, *The Mulatta Concubine: Terror, Intimacy, Freedom, and Desire in the Black Transatlantic* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2016).

counter-embodiment of normative constructs of Black masculinity that claims transformative modes of freedom.

Finally, in the latter section of this chapter, I will explore the ways in which sensuous marronage is linked to fluid expressions and embodiments of creative genders that re-narrates notions of freedom during the tumultuous early battles of the Haitian Revolution. I will contemplate the queered figure of *Romaine la Prophètesse* – the Black plantation owner of *Trou Coffy* who became an insurgent leader and female-presenting spiritual prophetess – to demonstrate how his/her[239] gender fluid ontologies embody the sensuous possibilities for Black, spiritual, sensuous and opaque liberatory epistemologies. Through an analysis of literature and aesthetics, I highlight the revolutionary potential burrowed in European literary tropes of the "monstrous hybrid" and in abstracted portrayals of *la Prophètesse*, thus uncovering how non-conforming Black gendered subjectivity embodies the freedom possibilities of the Haitian Revolution.

Sans Queue: Captive Flesh and Black Masculinity

In the December 7, 1792 issue of the *Moniteur Générale la Partie Francaise de Saint-Domingue*, one of the French colonial newspaper of the colony, a peculiar fugitive slave advertisement made its debut.[240] Nestled between various auctions and other fugitive slave ads,

[239] Although transgender designations and pronouns would be anachronistic to use, I chose to use the combined he/she title as I see the dash (/) as representing the opaque possibilities of Afro-gender figuration, or what Macharia calls, in reference to sexuality, "erotic diversity." Indeed, he states, "I use "erotic diversity" to suggest the limitations of using familiar identity categories – homosexual, heterosexual, bisexual – to apprehend imagined African pasts." See Macharia, *Frottage,* 62.

[240] D/XXV/115 AN, *Moniteur Général de la Partie Française de Saint-Domingue,* n. 21, vol. III, Vendredi, 7 Décembre 1792, 83.

this particular announcement presented a storyline that went beyond the common descriptive elements of such notices. The narrative begins with a dentist, Mr. Gignoux, alerting the *Moniteur Général's* readership that his young male slave, Panurge, has been missing since November 24, 1792, after following a desperate dental patient home. This frantic potential patient, who refused to leave his name and who urgently needed to have a tooth pulled, demanded that Panurge tail him back home, in order to give directions to Mr. Gignoux upon his return. Since this event, Panurge had not been seen. Following this vague and questionable story is Panurge's physical description, identifiers to aid securing his re-capture. Aside from common descriptors, such as the absence of a "stamp" – a type of branding meant to track blackness as property[241] – his age of sixteen, and height of five feet, the runaway advertisement encompassed some unusual labels. Indeed, Panurge is characterized as being *sans queue*, a colloquialism that directly translates to "without tail," but that metonymically would mean "without cock/penis." Moreover, directly after this strange castration revelation, the announcement proclaims that the enslaved runaway happens to have beautiful teeth. What can be made of this peculiar story? What is revealed and what must we hear through the "black noise"?

To begin, the corporeal descriptions of Panurge's body reveal the long tradition of branding enslaved people which served as corporeal punishment and a form of identification. That Panurge himself had not suffered *that* particular type of epidermal violence, suggests that he might have been Creole-born, as the branding was a common experience for Africans who lived through the transatlantic slave trade. Moreover, the assertion that he had beautiful teeth, which of course must be read through colonial standards of beauty, also hints at the possibility of

[241] Simone Browne, *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 91.

Panurge being Creole, as many African-born enslaved people had "filed and sharpened teeth."[242] Advancing the speculation that Panurge was Creole-born, suggests a different, and rather distinctive relationship to practices of marronage. Indeed, although marronage was a tactic of resistance used by many throughout the island, African-born non-Creole field slaves were overwhelmingly associated with the more openly aggressive and militant forms of marronage. On the other hand, Creole slaves often took advantage of their greater mobility and familiarity with Saint-Dominigue's urban landscape and social norms to escape and blend-in amongst the free Black people. As evidenced in this notice, Creole runaways also strategically used day-time errands to plan their escape. Considering the rapidly shifting landscape of the insurgent period, and the ingenuity used by mostly Creole slaves to hide in plain sight, it is likely that Panurge managed to remain in marronage undetected for a least a few years.[243]

Because marronage was such a widespread tactic of resistance, it was seen as a threat to the colonial order, and thus one that needed to be disciplined and punished. Under the rule of the *Code Noir* – the 1685 royal edict that instituted the law of slavery in the French Empire – the planter class of Saint-Domingue had to abide by a set of slave laws that utilized a language "that at once offered protection and normalized abuse."[244] Although there were many anti-torture provisions within the *Code Noir*, these simply served as "ideological figments" meant to obfuscate the fact that the actual meaning of slave laws was to "legitimate the sovereignty of

[242] Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, 42; also see, J.S. Handler, R.S. Corruccini and R.J. Mutaw, "Tooth Mutilation in the Caribbean: Evidence from a Slave Burial Population in Barbados," *Journal of Human Evolution* 11 (1982): 297-313.

[243] See Fick for more on distinction between African-born and Creole distinctions of marronage. Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, 53-56.

[244] Colin [Joan] Dayan, *The Story of Cruel and Unusual* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007), 10-11.

masters over slaves,"[245] and thus as a type of regulation of "utilitarian genocide."[246] Indeed, when it came to instances of slave marronage – one of the biggest fears of planters – the *Code Noir* codified particular staggered torturous punishments that included ear mutilation, fleur-de-lis marking, hamstring cutting, and eventually death.[247] A letter from the French colonial ministry dated May 27, 1705 refuted the proposed amendment by a steward of the French Isles to alter the *Code Noir* to "render eunuch the fugitive Negros" as their third strike punishment.[248] Given that the slave laws and their successful and unsuccessful amendments were part of a larger ideological brutality governing the colony, I am suggesting that the practice of male castration was probably more widespread than the meager archival and legislative evidence would have us believe. It is significant, for example, that this torturous procedure was mentioned explicitly by a colonial representative in 1705, who presumably would have had quite a large consensus by other enslavers to even suggest such a legal reform. Moreover, the slave advertisement examined in this chapter nonchalantly describes Panurge's missing masculine appendage as just another physical characteristic of the fugitive enslaved man. Both points suggest that castration was likely more common than the documents would suggest.

The association between tortuous practices of castration and marronage provides some insight into the ways in which Black masculinity was conceived and constructed through the

[245] Malick W Ghachem, "Prosecuting Torture: The Strategic Ethics of slavery in Pre-Revolutionary Saint-Domingue (Haiti)," *Law, Slavery, and Justice: A Special Issue in Law and History Review* 29, no. 4 (November 2011), 991.

[246] Louis Sala-Molins, *Le Code Noir, ou le Calvaire de Canaan* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1987), viii.

[247] *Le Code Noir ou Édit du Roy, Servant de Règlement pour le Gouvernement & l'Administration de Justice & la Police des Isles Françaises de l'Amérique, & pour la Discipline & le Commerce des Nègres & Esclaves dans ledit Pays* (Paris: Glaude Girard, [1685] 1735), 8, article 38, https://archive.org/details/lecodenoirouedi00fran/page/8/mode/2up

[248] F3/90/19 ANOM, Rendre Enuque pour Cause de Marronage, 27 Mai, 1705.

modern apparatus of slavery, and against the hegemonic structure of white masculinity. Considering that slavery is designed through the frameworks of racial hierarchies, property rights, and ownership of land and people – relegating the enslaved Black subject to thinghood – it is evident that the dehumanizing practices endemic to enslavement, influenced racialized gendered constructs and norms. Hilary Beckles highlights how Black enslaved men were "kept" and "kept down" by white men planters, consigning "enslaved black masculinity within white patriarchy as a subform starved of role nourishment, and ideologically 'feminized'."[249] The modern structures of slavery thus shaped Black manhood through an inverted gender model, simultaneously empowering white dominant masculinity through the dominant imperatives of white men's imperial projects. This racialized and gendered symbiosis was managed through the continuous discursive emasculation of Black men – that in part, rendered them timid, passive and submissive – while paradoxically utilizing a system of violent terror to suppress and punish Black male insubordination. Thus, the construction of Black masculinity rested precariously on the functioning and maintenance of slavery's system of domination, and vice versa. Indeed, violence, brutality and cruel punishments such as dismemberment, castration and lynching, "were conceived to offer the slave owner a functional degree of comfort in the assumption of success"[250] in maintaining a racialized hierarchy of masculinities.

Examining the sexual violations and punishments endured by enslaved Black men, Thomas A. Foster's *Rethinking Rufus* highlights the particular sexual vulnerabilities that shaped conceptual understandings of masculinity for enslaved people. Foster emphasizes the ways in

[249] Hilary Beckles, "Black Masculinity in Caribbean Slavery," in *Interrogating Caribbean Masculinities: Theoretical and Empirical Analyses*, ed. by Rhoda E. Reddock (Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2004), 230.

[250] Hilary Beckles, "Black Masculinity in Caribbean Slavery," 234.

which Black masculinity was understood through a lens of hypersexuality and virility, where the colonists and planters often projected "desire and jealousy upon an objectified and disembodied black phallus."[251] This type of sexual subjugation often took form through sexually charged punishments which ranged from being naked and exposed during whippings – and particular positionings of the body during various types of violations – rape and/or coercion to rape enslaved women, and mutilation of genitalia, including castration. The castration of Panurge in Saint-Domingue must therefore be situated within a broader spectrum of sexualized violation that enslaved men endured throughout the Americas.

Similar to the *Moniteur Général* fugitive notice, Foster also describes a 1744 Boston newspaper runaway ad where the enslaved man, Cuff, is identified as having "but one Testicle," a reference strongly hinting at the specter of sexual violation.[252] Although one can only speculate on the origins of Cuff's and Panurge's genital injuries, what remains clear and unambiguous is that the enslavers' knowledge of such personal wounds "underscore[d] [their] enslaved status."[253] This public scrutiny of Black men' fleshy sexual organs (or lack thereof), supposes not only a collective voyeuristic violation of Black manhood further reinforcing the status quo of plantocracies and the inverted status of enslaved men, but also suggests a noteworthy type of intimate homoerotic relation.[254]

[251] Thomas A. Foster, *Rethinking Rufus: Sexual Violations of Enslaved Men* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2019), 18.

[252] Foster, *Rethinking Rufus*, 26.

[253] Ibid., 27.

[254] Ibid.

In the Americas, the perverse punishment of castration was inflicted on Black enslaved men for marronage, but also for perceived or actual sexual infractions.[255] Here, the juxtaposition between marronage and sexual breaches highlights the ways in which these violations both constituted, not only a threat to colonial order, but also to the enslavers' masculine authority, and thus to the white patriarchal order of the colony. Just as the discursive and material domination of Black men was linked to notions of emasculation and literal practices of castration, the fear and sexual degradation of the "black phallus" similarly reflects deeper colonial anxieties. Through the sexual metaphor of the "erect [Black] phallus" – which alludes to the *uprising* of revolutionary struggle – resistance that actively challenges white colonial patriarchal authority, in turn, reveals the specter of an "unthinkable" self-defining Black masculinity.[256]

Contending first with the biased grain of the archives, it becomes evident that modernity weaponizes a hierarchical language of the human, upholding the logics of slavery and the construction of racialized gender norms. The idiom *sans queue* for example, highlights not only the common de-humanizing parlance of runaway advertisements, but also illuminates the larger modern discursive racial/human categorization. Indeed, why not directly indicate that the young

[255] Foster provides several examples from Boston, North Carolina and even Brazil, where Black men were castrated or threatened to be, for allegedly sexually assaulting white women, "underscore[ing] how punishments for perceived or actual sexual infractions in the hands of whites focused on black male bodies and in particular on maiming the genitalia of enslaved men." See, Foster, *Rethinking Rufus,* 26. Marisa Fuentes also mentions the testimony of Dr. Jackson, who in late eighteenth century Jamaica remembered, "Negroes having been castrated for trespass on the Black Mistress of the overseer." See, Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives*, 135.

[256] bell hooks demonstrates how Black antiracist, nationalist discourses utilize metaphors of the black phallus to explain the domination of Black men, but also to highlight how resistance to this subordination can be expressed through the masculine patriarchal embodied sexual metaphor of the Black "erect phallus". Although she understands the metaphor as a reinforcement of patriarchal norms, I reinterpret the sexual allusions to an erotic formulation of masculine subjectivity, that is not necessarily heteropatriarchal in nature. See, bell hooks in Keith Nurse, "Masculinities in Transition: Gender and the Global Problematique," in *Interrogating Caribbean Masculinities: Theoretical and Empirical Analyses*, ed. by Rhoda E. Reddock (Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2004), 13; See also, Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA), *Mirage: Enigmas of Race, Difference and Desire* (London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1995).

boy was *castré* [257] or rendered eunuch? Why use such animalistic terminology in a runaway slave advertisement? The insistence on using 'tail' as a simile for penis, not only suggests a direct comparison between Black people and animals, but also a general lack of Black people's evolutionary acumen and physiology. The gendered implications of this colonial nomenclature reinforced a racialized hierarchy of sexuality, reflecting Spillers's classic argument that chattel slavery's sexual technologies ungendered all Black people.[258] The metaphor of the disembodied Black phallus becomes a physical reality, one that further reinforces through its animalistic appellation, the enslaved ungendered, non-human flesh.

Correspondingly, in explaining the colonial construction of humanity, Sylvia Wynter asserts that, "While the 'Indians' were portrayed as the very acme of the savage, irrational Other, the 'Negroes' were assimilated to the former's category, represented as its most extreme form and as the ostensible missing link between rational humans and irrational animals."[259] Wynter effectively showcases the variant Western discourses of the human, clearly indicating who falls into the rational/irrational categories, and who has been "dysselected by Evolution,"[260] which in turn, illuminates the language found in the *Moniteur Générale* notice. However, in identifying the racist paradigms that construct the notion of the human, Wynter also invites us to "collectively undertake a rewriting of knowledge as we know it."[261] This invitation reveals the

[257] Translated into "castrated" in English.

[258] Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe."

[259] Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom," 266.

[260] Ibid., 316.

[261] Sylvia Wynter and Katherine McKittrick, "Unparalleled Catastrophe for our Species? Or, to Give Humanness a Different Future: Conversation," in *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis*, ed. Katherine McKittrick (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 18.

sociogenic possibilities embedded in interrogating the questionable premises that have assembled the "genres of the human" thus far. The slave advertisement simply reinforces the hierarchal narrative of the human.

However, even when reading along the bias grain, we cannot ignore the instance of marronage that led to this notice in the first place. Fleeing the space of enslavement also involves fleeing the fleshy ontologies that constricted Panurge's freedom and gendered subjectivity. Metaphorically, he is on the run from the legibility subsumed from within the flesh. Indeed, how does marronage – the freedom-making methodology that undermines white patriarchal authority and colonial order, and catalyzed the Bois-Caïman ceremony and the 1791 uprisings – alter constructions of racialized gender, and more specifically, Black masculinity?

To further explain how marronage renders Black flesh available to alternative notions of Black masculinity, I turn to Hortense Spillers's influential essay "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe." In this essay, Spillers frames how the socio-political order of the New World, based in part, on the white supremacist and accumulative stratagems of slavery, transformed Black bodies (and subjectivities) into "ungendered flesh." Indeed, Spillers states that:

> Under these conditions, we lose at least *gender* difference *in the outcome,* and the female body and male body become a territory of cultural and political maneuver, not at all gender-related, gender-specific. But this body, at least from the point of view of the captive community, focuses a private and particular space, at which point of convergence biological, sexual, social, cultural, linguistic, ritualistic, and psychological fortunes join.[262]

Although Spillers's analysis focuses more specifically on the ungendered taxonomy imposed on Black women, her Black feminist research also resonates within Black queer and trans

[262] Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe," 67.

theoretical frameworks. Bringing marronage into the framework of "captive flesh" and "captive community" spatially alters the conditions of containment and captivity from what Frantz Fanon calls, the "zone of nonbeing." Indeed, it expands the liminal "private and particular space" of being.[263] Put in another way, marronage illuminates the possibilities encompassed within fungible Black gendered ontologies. Indeed, as C. Riley Snorton attests, "flesh transorients sex and gender."[264] Fleshing out this generative interpretation, Marquis Bey understands the flesh as the "gendered-site-that-is-not-a-gendered-site which welcomes those who were expunged from traditional symbolics of gender [to] move toward and engage the sociality of the transgressive posture of fleshiness." [265] I argue that this process can happen through marronage. Indeed, escaping the space of enslavement also mirrors escaping and transforming Black gendered ontologies.

The hieroglyphics of the flesh, which in this case are apparent not only through blackness, but also through sexual mutilation, are at once a haunting of modernity *and also* constitute markings that condition modernity. Since, as mentioned earlier, blackness is the "empirical-experimental-symbolic site" through which modernity is made, I suggest that the hieroglyphics of the flesh can be decoded *through* blackness, as opposed to *as* blackness. Through this lens, marronage alters the violability of castration, transforming the markings of the flesh by creating an ontology where blackness is understood as movement, escape and refusal to be reduced to a single thing, and thus a refusal to be constrained by a violent Western and

[263] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, [1952]1967).

[264] C. Riley Snorton, *Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 48.

[265] Marquis Bey, "Black Fugitivity Un/Gendered," *The Black Scholar* 49, no. 1 (2019): 57.

colonial construct of Black masculinity. Echoing the link between blackness and epistemologies of gender, Snorton asserts that "captive flesh figures a critical genealogy for modern transness, as chattel persons gave rise to an understanding of gender as mutable and as an amendable form of being."[266] In this lens, Panurge's marronage act also engendered an escape from what Spillers termed "high crimes against the flesh" into unknown Black gendered possibilities.[267] Indeed, Snorton suggests that "gender indefiniteness […] become[s] a critical modality of political and cultural maneuvering within figurations of blackness, illustrated, for example, by the frequency with which narratives of fugitivity included cross-gendered modes of escape."[268] Snorton's claim is productive to think of the conceptual ground the absence of the Black phallus represents within the landscape of modernity, and alongside notions of freedom and unfreedom. Marronage and castration propose a manifestation of the "displacement of the genitalia,"[269] which in turn informs the fleshy transversality of enslavement. Thus, the opaque genital space as a "zone of nonbeing," can reveal alternative Black masculine ontologies that can embody the revolutionary potential of the aforementioned metaphorical "erect Black phallus." Put another way, through ontologies of sensuous marronage, the fungibility of slavery constitutes a site of freedom-making for Panurge, opening a space of flight from the normative strictures of gender that marked the colonial plantation world.

Here, I do not want to suggest that Black sexual mutilation inherently translates into revolutionary potential, nor am I suggesting that a castrated penis can easily cohere into today's

[266] Snorton, *Black on Both Sides*, 57.

[267] Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe," 67.

[268] Snorton, *Black on Both Sides*, 56. I allude to literary "cross-gendered modes of escape," a bit later in the chapter.

[269] Ibid., 73.

conception of trans identities; rather, I am trying to think through and beyond the ungendered paradoxical linguistic site/sight that is simultaneously seen and unseen, opaque and hypervisible. Indeed, I am trying to think though the ways in which these liminal discursive spaces can open up new Black gendered possibilities. Considering on one hand, the "black man's role as the biological, the genital, the penis, and uneducated sexual instinct within colonial modernity,"[270] and on the other hand, the enslaved flesh's loss of genitalia, the Black phallus therefore becomes a dynamic site of transformation that remains in obscurity, and can perhaps lead to an alternate Black queer futurity. Returning to Spillers, she attests that one of the consequences of enfleshment is this "displacement of the genitalia, [and thus] the female's and the male's desire that engenders future."[271] However, I contend that the opacity that in part defines the flesh, and thus the displacement of genitalia, leaves room for an unknown futurity. In a similar manner, Carolyn Fick highlights the unknowns of marronage, attesting that "when the slaves left the plantations, they left with no knowledge of what their future would be, nor did they know how long their marronage would last."[272] Her assertion further underscores the ways in which fugitive practices of Black gendered ontologies left room for alternative futures.

Ultimately, Panurge took the leap towards futurity when he escaped, directly challenging the white patriarchal authority that attempted to constrain and erase not only his freedom, but his conception of masculinity. The question of where he escaped to is inextricably linked to how he viewed himself as a Black male subject. Although most of the answers will remain under the realm of opacity, I surmise that when he was fleeing the space of enslavement, he was also

[270] Macharia, *Frottage*, 44.

[271] Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe," 73.

[272] Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, 51.

fleeing the constraints of the flesh. While the concept of marronage historically foregrounds the act of escape, sensuous marronage can direct us toward an otherwise ontology, an ontology that refuses gender normativity, enslavement and other hegemonic regimes. Through the contradictions and ambiguities of modernity, the next section will use the conceptual framework of sensuous marronage to examine how the construction of alternative Black masculinities can reveal other kinds of sensuous actors that do not necessarily embody the tenets of militaristic masculinity. Indeed, the figure of the trickster offers a counter-hegemonic view of masculinity that may offer liminal and liberatory possibilities to understand Panurge's undefinable and sensuous gendered conception.

Panurge: The Modern Trickster

> Panurge semble par nature rebelle à toute classification, même à celle qui le définirait comme indéfinissable.[273]
>
> - Gérard Defaux, "De Pantagruel au Tiers Livre: Panurge et le Pouvoir, " 163.

This section encompasses two modern tales of the trickster meant to locate Panurge's disruption of colonial gender norms. One is constructed through the Western cultural script of modernity, which highlights the burgeoning of Enlightenment thought, alongside ideals of colonial expansion. The other encompasses the spiritual epistemologies of Vodou, which as demonstrated in the previous chapter, constitutes a sensuous counter-archive that in turn embodies liberatory promises. Highlighting the contradictions and ambiguities of modernity, demonstrates how the trickster in fact queers modernity and the constricted gendered and racialized roles it assigns. In particular, this chapter argues that Gede, the Vodou trickster,

[273] Translated into: Panurge seems by nature rebellious to any classification, even to those that define him as undefinable.

provides a compelling example of how the spiritual embodiment of blackness, always already alters modern structures, enabling alternative futures.

Considering the particular importance of naming practices underscored by scholars like Hortense Spillers, this analysis begins with contextualizing the name of this chapter's fugitive slave: Panurge. Although Panurge was a notorious name, it was not necessarily a common given name within the French empire. Popularized by the influential works of French Renaissance humanist writer François Rabelais – notably *Pantagruel* (1532), *Gargantua* (1534), *Le Tiers Livre* (1546) and *Le Quart Livre* (1552)[274] – Panurge was the archetypal European trickster and side-kick character of the books series. Within the canon the of European literature, Mikhail Bakhtin attests that Rabelais is considered one of the great writers of world literature and one of the originators of modern European writing. Rabelais is often regarded as the French master of satire, writer of the grotesque and robust folk humor. The famed author also impacted the ideological formulation of Renaissance humanism, centering classical Antiquity tropes alongside a belief in the classical reform of science and arts, and was thus an early proponent of European modernity. Although he was quite a polarizing figure in his time and throughout the Enlightenment, by the eighteenth century, leaders of the French Revolution lauded Rabelais as a "prophet of the revolution."[275] The societal impact of Rabelais's oeuvres reverberated strongly in the French colonies like Saint-Domingue, where colonists were largely familiar with Rabelais's classical tomes and derivative popular idioms. Moreover, other artistic producers influenced by

[274] There is also the posthumous book *Le Cinquième Livre* or *Quint Livre* (1564), which is often excluded from consideration as one of Rabelais's oeuvre because of its disputed authenticity. See Alison Williams, *Tricksters and Pranksters: Roguery in French and German Literature of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), 177.

[275] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 119.

the French writer created popular plays and operas that were enjoyed throughout the empire. In Saint-Domingue, French secular music had its distinct flavor and by the second half of the eighteenth century had burgeoned into a concert economy that could reach a larger public. The operas and lyrical comedies by French composer André Ernest Modeste Grétry were especially popular in the colony's cities, and his three acts lyrical comedy, *Panurge Dans l'Isle des Lanternes* (1785) was a particular hit in theatres across *Port-au-Prince* and *Le Cap* throughout the late 1700s.[276] This adaptation of Rabelais's infamous trickster, Panurge, caused quite a stir for Parisian audiences, who saw the comic and perverse character as a denigration of the opera artform.[277] Nonetheless, the comedy thrived, re-telling the story of Panurge's nautical quest for love and adventure. But who exactly was this controversial and infamous character? What significance did his name have within the French colonial imaginary? And why did the titular fugitive enslaved man bear his name?

Friend and valet of the main protagonist Pantagruel, Panurge is the quintessential European trickster, a persona derived from the fabliau tradition,[278] but also influenced by classical Greek personification of craftiness, trickery and mischief.[279] The Rabelaisian trickster, Panurge is often portrayed as the alter ego of the exemplary humanist hero Pantagruel,

---

[276] *Gazette Nationale* ou *Le Moniteur Universel*, Port-au-Prince, 1799 (Microfilmed in Haiti for the University of Florida Library https://www.dloc.com/AA00000839/00016/2); see also, John G Cale, "French Secular Music in Saint-Domingue (1750-1795) Viewed as a Factor in America's Musical Growth," (PhD diss., Louisiana State University, 1971).

[277] Joseph Bennett and André Grétry, "The Great Composers. No XXIII. Grétry (Continued)," *The Musical times and Singing Class and Circular* 28, no. 532 (1887): 337.

[278] The fabliau is a comic tale made popular in medieval France that often includes sexual and scatological tropes. Often, they decry the church or/and nobility. Many fabliaux have been reworked into tales/fables by authors such as Geoffrey Chaucer and Jean de la Fontaine.

[279] The name Panurge is a Greek derivation of *panourgos*, which translates into skillful, clever, crafty, cunning.

highlighting Panurge's oppositional relationship to humanity, righteousness and modernity. In fact, throughout *Pantagruel*, *Le Tiers Livre* and *Le Quart Livre,* Panurge shifts roles to mirror Pantagruel's experiences and development. In *Pantagruel*, Panurge makes his first appearance as a handsome man of sound stature, but in a tattered state, suggesting that he is "a man with a colourful history and a story to tell."[280] In this tome, Panurge is known to have dizzying verbal skills that often take a turn towards the obscene – and that enable him to dupe his victims – while also taking part in the occult arts. Like most tricksters, Panurge is notorious for adventurous sexual activity as he brags that he has had sex with four hundred and seventeen Parisian women in the nine days he has been in the city.[281] The use of costumes is also very telling in the representation of the characters' arc, where Panurge insists on wearing a three feet long and square *braguette*,[282] cementing the identity of a virile young man "always ready for sexual adventure."[283] Panurge's sexual bravado shifts drastically in the *Tiers Livre*, where the *braguette* disappears and he adorns a modest shapeless robe, as he explains that he now wishes to marry and that he is tired of war.[284] In order to ascertain if he should marry or not, Panurge, along with Pantagruel, embark in a sea voyage to seek advice from the oracle of the *Dive Bouteille.*[285]

[280] Alison Williams, *Tricksters and Pranksters*, 180.

[281] Timothy Hampton, "'Comment a nom': Humanism and Literary Knowledge in Auerbach and Rabelais," *Representations* 119, no. 1 (Summer 2012): 43.

[282] Translates into: Codpiece; part of the male dress in the Middle Ages and Renaissance to cover genitals; was meant to be somewhat protective but was mostly a fashionable symbol of virility. For more on the significance of codpieces in Renaissance literature; see Doris Barkin, "Cuckolds and Codpieces: Early Modern Anxieties in Male Potency," (PhD diss., City University of New York, 2015).

[283] Williams, *Tricksters and Pranksters*, 187.

[284] Ibid., 194.

[285] *Dive Bouteille* can refers simultaneously to the island they travel to, to the oracle and to a "divine" bottle of alcohol. See, Stanley G. Eskin, "Mythic Unity in Rabelais," *Modern Language Association* 79, no. 5 (Dec., 1964): 548-553.

Distinctively, throughout his nautical journey – that begins in the *Tiers Livre* and extends to the *Quart Livre* – he is occasionally referred to as looking like a cuckhold, a man whose wife is sexually unfaithful. The links between marriage, cuckoldry, emasculation and castration are well-established tropes in the text and in Renaissance literature.[286] It is important to note however, that in Panurge's story, he never actually marries, which loosens these rigid masculine taxonomies and indicates, yet again, a shift in gender roles.

Finally, in the *Quart Livre*, Panurge and his companions continue this unpredictable sea odyssey to seek wisdom from the oracle of the *Dive Bouteille*. Initially, in the third book, the voyage was meant to be a quest to elucidate the marriage question, seeking assurance that Panurge will not be cuckolded by his potential future wife. However, by the fourth tome, the sea voyage symbolizes a much larger impetus for discovery, a pilgrimage for knowledge and pioneering exploration. In fact, it is well documented that the journey at sea in this book is derived directly from the Atlantic crossings of Jacques Cartier, Rabelais's famous contemporary who colonized the Eastern shores of Canada in the name of France.[287] The link between contemporary political events and Rabelais's literary contemplation of humanity illustrates the centrality of settler colonial tropes in French literature expressed in colonial terms through land and property expansion and white patriarchal authority. This volume also contains a famous plotline, which has metamorphosed into one of the most famous French expressions: "mouton de Panurge." Today, the saying describes a person or persons who blindly and thoughtlessly follow others, and is often used in a derisive way, similarly to the English use of the term "sheeple." The French phrase arises from the story in which Panurge buys a sheep from the sea merchant

[286] See Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*; Williams, *Tricksters and Pranksters*; Barkin, "Cuckolds and Codpieces."

[287] A. Lacey, "Literature and the Arts: Rabelais and the Voyages of Jacques Cartier," *Canadian Modern Language Review* 1, no. 3 (1945): 5-10.

Dindenault, who on top of insulting him by calling him a cuckhold, greedily overcharges him, prompting the trickster to seek revenge. Panurge thus throws the sheep overboard triggering a stampede by the other sheep in the herd who follow suit and jump off the side of the ship. This action also prompts the desperate vendor to plunge to his death. The book continues to tell tales of trickery and pranks from Panurge that often stem from cowardice, fear of death at sea and self-interest. Although countless other sagas and stories accompany this notorious French trickster, the accounts presented above highlight the best-known representations, that can perhaps illuminate the naming of the Saint-Domingue enslaved boy.

So why the moniker Panurge? Why would Mr. Gignoux name the boy he enslaved after a legendary French trickster? Was this really his name, or was it the nickname the dentist chose to give the *Moniteur* slave advertisement to convey some type of cultural message? What connections can be made with the specter of a literary character, an individual act of marronage, and the Haitian Revolution itself? Considering the meager colonial archival material on Panurge, the enslaved boy, I am drawn to Saidiya Hartman's methodological exercise to "advanc[e] a series of speculative arguments and [to] exploit[…] the capacities of the subjunctive."[288] Treading carefully, I understand that I will not formulate a definitive answer for the reasons behind the enslaver's naming motivations, but this tentative and explorative process can help synthesize the documentation at hand and allow an interpretative opening. Perhaps the attribution of the Rabelaisian designation comes simply from the enslaved fugitive action, which was seen as an act of trickery and mischief, similar to the identifying characteristics of the literary

[288] Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," 11.

protagonist. Maybe the sheep anecdote and its accompanying popular idiom, aimed to derisively depict fugitive slaves as mere followers of a worthless cause.

However, considering the unmistakable trajectory of masculine anxieties projected by the fictional Panurge in relation to the enslaved boy's physical castration, there seems to be a deeper correlation between the two. On one hand, the literary trickster's sexual promiscuity and allusion to a large phallic member, followed by a plot reversal of cuckoldry in the *Quart Livre*, suggests that the enslaved young man might have been castrated as punishment for some type of sexual indiscretion. Indeed, as aforementioned, this type of genital mutilation served as a type of penance or "cure" for sexual deviancies,[289] and perhaps the name Panurge served to reflect this type of emasculation, albeit through a cruel and unbalanced analogy. On the other hand, Mr. Gignoux himself may have felt the anxieties of male potency in relation to the hypersexualized Black man, who under colonial modernity is reduced to the unrestrained phallus. Indeed, in addition to providing an analysis of male sexual anxieties in Rabelais's works, Doris Barkin also highlights the ways in which these themes of masculine potency are exaggerated by blackness through an examination of Shakespeare's *Othello*. Her study notes how Black men's perceived sexual power engendered fear of a monstrous sexuality displacing racial and gendered norms.[290] Correspondingly, the masculine angst represented through Panurge's fictional arc might represent less of a correlation with the fugitive boy's emasculation, and instead symbolize more of the enslaver's fear of Black sexuality as a threat to white patriarchy and sexual norms. This in

[289] See Foster, *Rethinking Rufus*, 26; Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives*, 135.

[290] Barkin, "Cuckolds and Codpieces," 169-170.

turn, may have led to the boy's castration. In other words, is the dentist telling on himself through the details of his slave advertisement?

One thing that stands out in the Rabelaisian texts, is the constant revelling of the rebirth of humanism, and the promise of colonial modernity. Rabelais was indeed a "convinced champion of humanism with its new methods and evaluations"[291] and lauded the expansion of European empires, embracing in his stories the discoveries of new territories and new bodies. In Sylvia Wynter's terms, Rabelais represents the "lay humanists of the Renaissance" who reinvented the "matrix identity Christian in terms of the new descriptive statement of Man as political subject, allied to the historical rise and expansion of the modern state."[292] As a founder of literary modernity, his narratives serve as an early blueprint of the "revalorized redescription of the human,"[293] where the "onset of modernity involves the turning of things about, the ability to *see* them […] in the 'multiplicity of their possible aspects' freed of the frames that had earlier constricted their meaning."[294] The futurity of these tropes transmutes into the landscape of unbridled accumulation by dispossession throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Under this formulation, the taxonomies of humanity authorized by slavery rendered Black people flesh, as Spillers once described it. One of the most productive methods to ensure this racial mechanism is through the "ruling episteme that releas[ed] the dynamics of *naming* and valuation."[295] We may never know the exact intent of Mr. Gignoux's choice to name the

[291] Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World,* 452.

[292] Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom," 280.

[293] Ibid., 313.

[294] Hampton, "'Comment a nom'," 39. Emphasis mine.

[295] Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe," 68. Emphasis mine.

enslaved boy Panurge, but we know that he had the power and authority to name him as such in the slave notice, and that he did so knowing the intimate details of Panurge's body. The enslaver's selection of an infamous moniker through whatever evaluative means, represents a microcosm of the powers of colonial modernity and the structures of plantocracy economy. Nonetheless, the name Gignoux chose is one of a trickster who – according to the sectional paragraph – is "rebellious to any classification, even to those that define him as undefinable." Indeed, the enslaved boy is paradoxically named Panurge in an era where classifications through rationalization and sight were integral to Enlightenment dogmas of humanness! I am not suggesting that the Rabelaisian Panurge character enacts a blueprint for Black liberation, but I am signaling that his indefinability offers an interdisciplinary, methodological and epistemological opening. A re-naming possibility.

The Possibilities of Papa Gede's Unruly *Konesans*

If one is seeking to reveal the inner workings of Black freedom practices of the Haitian Revolution, then one is bound to be misled by relying solely on Western ways of knowing. As an embodied practice of liberation, Vodou offers a counter-archive to elucidate an alternate ontological presence and an episteme of freedom, thus revealing *konesans*, an esoteric embodied knowledge[296] that tends to the interrelation of land, bodies, blackness, freedom dreams, spirituality and sensuousness. In this case, the conceptual framework of sensuous marronage links the previously mentioned analysis of mutilated enfleshed marronage to a larger spiritual and embodied Vodou narrative, offering a wider conception of alternative Black masculinities. These alternative racialized and gendered constructs imagine different ways of embodying Black

[296] Patrick Bellegarde-Smith, "The Gede: Vignettes of Life, Death, the Dead and Rebirth" *Journal of Haitian Studies, Bicentennial Issue* 10, no. 2 (Fall 2004): 164.

masculinity that are not necessarily tethered to warrior-like or militaristic norms, and therefore offer a broader view of the Haitian Revolution. Although much of the ensuing narration is speculative, the process of hinting at alternative and opaque tropes of unconventional gender embodiment is imperative to disrupting overdetermined historical renderings of Black liberation.

Considering Western modernity's over-reliance on sight and observation as the process of discovery that is indispensable to European epistemologies, the embodied *konesans* of Vodou reminds us that there exists a spirituality and a "sensorium that predates empires of knowledge."[297] As an Afro-diasporic spiritual practice that blossomed from West African religious traditions and syncretized through the colonial history of slavery and revolution, the tripartite roots of Vodou intimately links the ancestors, the land and the spirits.[298] Taking into account this deep connection to land highlights Edouard Glissant's "poetics of landscapes," where the Black subject is intimately connected to geography, both its material and spiritual structures.[299] This conceptual framework reclaims the power of naming of place, which Mckittrick argues is also a "process of self-assertion and humanization, a naming of inevitable black geographic presence," which in short relates naming a place to an act of naming the self and self-histories.[300] This methodological and epistemological break offers a way to re-narrate Panurge' story, through an embodied "diasporic literacy" that reads the vast textual terrain of Vodou. Departing from a reading of Panurge through his namesake in French Renaissance literary texts, I ask if there is an alternate rendition of an undefinable trickster figure that can

[297] Stallings, *Funk the Erotic*, 6.

[298] Brown, *Mama Lola*, 371.

[299] Edouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourses: Selected Essays*, trans. J. Michael Dash (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1989).

[300] McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds*, xxii.

inform discourses of Black liberation, in ways that evade the colonial gaze? Bearing in mind that the "trickster represents the cultural and social values of its producers,"[301] why would we simply rely on European trickster tropes to explain the narrative of a marooned enslaved boy, especially during the insurgent events of the Haitian Revolution?

Considering the scope of marronage – whether *petit* or *grand* marronage, whether executed by men or women, whether done by African-born or Creole slave, whether rural or urban – one could surmise that it was a tactic of resistance available to all enslaved peoples. Expanding the register of narrative possibilities through sensuous marronage, allows for the Vodou deity Gede to embody the collective fugitive actions of enslaved people through a spiritual and sensuous lens. Moreover, according to Haitian spiritual traditions, the assemblages of Gede are the "closest spiritual beings to humans," since they were believed to be the ancestors of enslaved people of Saint-Domingue.[302] Originating from West African cosmogonies, trickster deities specifically from the Yoruba and Fon traditions travelled through the Middle Passage and transformed into Caribbean spiritual guides of survival and resistance. Indeed, Emily Zobel Marshall argues that these "West African trickster figures were used by slaves as mediums through which colonial power could be both resisted and challenged."[303] Derived from the trickster African deities Eshu and Legba, Papa Gede emerged through the cultural and spiritual

[301] L.H. Stallings, *Mutha' Is Half a Word: Intersections of Folklore, Vernacular, Myth, and Queerness in Black Female Culture* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2007), 13.

[302] See McAlister, "Love, Sex and Gender Embodied," 139. Similar to how I described Ezili in chapter one, as a set of sensuous assemblages that encompasses the many female lwa iterations, Gede's assemblages also encompass a group of lwas. Many *lwas* such as Baron Samedi, Baron Piquant, Baron Cimitière are encompassed under the assemblages of Gede, where Papa Gede sit at the center. Neither Rada nor Petwo, the Gede are describes under the more intimate term *fanmi* (family). See Karen McCarthy Brown, *Mama Lola,* 330-331.

[303] Emily Zobel Marshall, "Anansi, Eshu, and Legba: Slave Resistance and the West African Trickster," in *Human Bondage in the Cultural Contact Zone: Transdisciplinary Perspectives on Slavery and Its Discourses*, eds Gesa Mackenthun and Raphael Hörmann (Münster: Waxmann, 2010), 177.

labor of enslaved Africans of Saint-Domingue. Papa Gede is celebrated as the trickster *lwa*, the master of the cemetery and God of the grave, the healer, the protector of small children, the humorous and sometimes obscene joker, the Lord of eroticism, and the phallic deity.[304] As a true trickster, his identifying characteristics oscillate as he often occupies a liminal space. Moreover, as the *lwa* of the dead and Lord of the Underworld he acts as an intermediary between the living and the dead.[305] In fact, he oversees the interaction between the two, showcasing the multiplicity within the cosmologies of Vodou.

In this light, the Vodou trickster transcends not only conceptual frameworks of time and space, but also traverses the otherworldly boundaries of life, death and rebirth, manifesting a type of embodied spirituality that is effectively absent from European divine structures, and beyond the grasp of the Western trickster. Re-articulating Panurge's subjectivity through the incarnation of the Vodou trickster "underscores relationality and interhuman narratives,"[306] thus linking diverse archival materials and practices to inform the possibilities of Black liberation. Given this mystical and queer temporality, the marronage narrative of the enslaved boy Panurge brings together the spiritual and the embodied through sensuous marronage, ascribing more meaning to his life (eventual death, and rebirth) as a fungible representation of alternative Black freedom ontologies that disrupt the common militaristic tropes of the Haitian Revolution.

A far cry from Christianity, Vodou embodies the diasporic congruence of spirituality, sexuality and freedom, with Papa Gede at the helm of sensuous terrain. As the most explicitly

[304] See, Hurston, *Tell My Horse*; Deren, *Divine Horsemen*; Brown, *Mama Lola*; McAlister, "Love, Sex and Gender Embodied"; Bellegarde-Smith, "The Gede"; Marshall, "Anansi, Eshu, and Legba."

[305] Marshall, "Anansi, Eshu, and Legba," 188.

[306] McKittrick, "Yours in the Intellectual Struggle," 2.

sexualized of the *lwas*, it is customary during *sevis* for the Gede to tell obscene and vulgar jokes, make sexual advances to attendants, dance lasciviously and uses sexuality as a language of knowledge and satire.[307] Although Karen McCarthy Brown contends that the Gede embody exclusively masculine and hetero-patriarchal traits, other theorists recognize an ambivalent, even defiant attitude to gender and sexuality norms.[308] In particular, Elizabeth McAlister's interpretations of the Gede denote queer, gendered and political potential that highlight a sensuous multiplicity of self, widening the possibilities of sexual and spiritual freedom. She attests that these spirits of sex are somewhat androgynous as "they perform an ambiguous gender scheme where both femininity and masculinity are parodied and ridiculed,"[309] and thus articulate alternative types of Black masculinities. Moreover, she recognizes the trickster divinity as an avid social critic of domestic and national politics, gender, even parodying heterosexuality and heteronormativity. Although the Gede *lwas* are typically male, they sometimes present themselves as ambiguously gendered or/and sexual, where they confound "sex with sex, dressing women as men and men as women."[310]

This flexibility of gender on the spiritual plane found literary resonance in the frequent use of cross-dressing – in fictional narratives of the Haitian Revolution – as a tactic by enslaved people to maroon under the radar, to avoid recognition.[311] For instance, in Marie Vieux-

[307] McAlister, "Love, Sex and Gender Embodied."

[308] See, Hurston, *Tell My Horse*; Deren, *Divine Horsemen*; Brown, *Mama Lola*; McAlister, "Love, Sex and Gender Embodied"; Bellegarde-Smith, "The Gede"; Marshall, "Anansi, Eshu, and Legba"; Strongman, *Queering Black Atlantic Religions.*

[309] McAlister, "Love, Sex and Gender Embodied," 138.

[310] Which leads to Deren's suggestion that Gede might be a "hermaphrodite" deity. See Deren, *Divine Horsemen,* 111.

[311] Particularly, I have noticed this trope in Marie Vieux-Chauvet's *Dance on the Volcano.* See, Marie Vieux-Chauvet, *Dance on the Volcano*, trans. Kaiama L. Glover (Brooklyn: Archipelago Books, [1957]2016). Snorton also

Chauvet's *Dance on the Volcano,* cross-dressing marronage is an imperative practice of survival, resistance, kinship and sociability performed by fugitive enslaved and free peoples.[312] This connection strengthens the sensuous ties of resistance between the lives of enslaved people in colonial Saint-Domingue and the mythologies of the *lwas.* Indeed, through Gede's spiritual fungibility, Snorton's conception of gender indefiniteness, reaches a wider sensuous, sensual and spiritual register, further linking the gendered ontologies of enslaved people through Vodou traditions and mythos. Indeed, gender indefiniteness is a generative ontology that is connected to embodied practices of sensuous marronage.

In a similar vein, the possession ritual reflects a particular kind of resistance to normative heteropatriarchy as the *lwas* can 'ride' or 'mount' and be represented by *chwals* of any gender. This cross-gender embodiment, which Roberto Strongman defines as an occurrence of transcorporeality, emphasizes "the non-binary quality of Vodou [and] a multiplicity beyond the dualism of maleness and femaleness."[313] These gender-bending and sexually fluid representations of Papa Gede (and the rest of his aggregation) offer a sensuous lens to analyze Panurge's castration. Indeed, during there cross-dressing possession rituals, including Carnival, Gede mounted women will "put on men's coats and prance about with a stick between their legs to imitate the male sex organs"[314] enabling a performative re-gendering, which bears the potential to retrieve subjectivity of the body from the enslaved's ungendered flesh. Through

recognizes the "frequency with which narratives of fugitivity included cross-gendered modes of escape." See, Snorton, *Black on Both Sides*, 56.

[312] Vieux-Chauvet, *Dance on the Volcano*.

[313] Strongman, "The Afro-Diasporic Body in Haitian Vodou and the Transcending of Gendered Cartesian Corporeality," 27.

[314] Hurston, *Tell My Horse*, 224.

Vodou, and more specifically, through the embodied spiritual practice of Gede, the Black phallus becomes a flexible appendage for gendered and sexual re-creation, self-creation, and even potentially procreation, as Maya Deren accounts for the presence of "seminal ejaculation from [a Gede] mounted mambo" during a procession.[315] The sensuous *lwa* also offers a "private and particular space," for male *chwals* to manifest the "female within" through men not only wearing female clothes, but also "thrust[ing] a calabash up their skirts to simulate pregnancy,"[316] providing a synecdoche for motherhood. Through the embodied connection between sexuality and spirituality, Gede transforms the enslaved's ungendered paradox into a possibility of Black liberation.

Ultimately, imagining alternate genders, bodies and fluid sexual norms through the spiritual embodiment of Gede through Vodou, offers a view of Panurge that attends to the interconnectedness of sensuousness, spirituality, marronage, rebellion, and Black masculinity. The queer embodiment that Gede provides, opens up the potential for fashioning a sensuous subjectivity beyond the boundaries of Western modernity and its historical and literary archives.

The Sensuous *Romaine la Prophètesse*

The tale of *Romaine la Prophètesse*, also known as Romaine Rivière, is one that briefly peppers the many historiographic works of the Haitian Revolution.[317] Said to be born on the Spanish side of the island of *Hispaniola* as a free Black person, he/she migrated to the French-

[315] Deren, *Divine Horsemen*, 114.

[316] Hurston, *Tell My Horse*, 224.

[317] See, Fick, *The Making of Haiti*; Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*; Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*; Terry Rey, *The Priest and the Prophetess: Abbé Ouvière, Romaine Rivière, and the Revolutionary Atlantic World* (Oxford University Press, 2017). Rey differs from the pack as most of his book is about Romaine-la-Prophètesse's life.

colonized side – Saint-Domingue – and acquired a small coffee plantation named *Trou Coffy*, in the Southern mountainous plains near Léogâne. He/She is often mentioned because of their emergence as a spiritual and martial leader in the Southern Province of colonial Saint-Domingue in the era of the late 1791 insurgent battles. Although at first glance, this figure seems to be incongruently included in this project – he/she was not only a slaveholder, but also an insurgent military leader – I am less interested in their success in battle, and more interested in the ways in which *la Prophètesse* fomented support through mystical, spiritual and gender-defiant ontologies. Indeed, while a male, Romaine chose feminine identification and dress, to bolster the spirit of liberty in his/her followers. Through a syncretic religiosity encompassing Catholicism, Marianism, and diverse Afro-spiritual traditions, Romaine as a prophetess congregated his/her followers in an abandoned church, with an upside cross, and claimed to be the Godchild of the Virgin Mary.[318] Through this spiritual authority, he/she then claimed that the king of France had already freed the enslaved people of Saint-Domingue, and proclaimed that God – who was Black – had urged the slaves to kill the planters who denied them their right to freedom. With approximately ten thousand followers, *la Prophètesse* was a charismatic and effective leader that successfully attacked the Tevet plantation, and besieged Jacmel and Léogâne by late 1791. However, the biggest feat of them all is the ways in which he/she was able to achieve all these insurgent exploits through spiritual impetus and through deviant gendered subjectivity, which were incredibly incongruent with the common gendered ontologies linked to the Haitian Revolution.

[318] Although, many hesitate to link Romaine's syncretic religious tradition directly to Vodou, Terry Rey views his/her spiritual practices as being part of the infancy of Vodou practices has there were no unified way to practices the religion at the time. Indeed, he states, "The question as to whether Romaine practiced some form of "Vodou" is also somewhat obviated by the fact that there was then no unified religion to which one could, strictly speaking, refer to by the term." See, Rey, *The Priest and the Prophetess,* 64-65.

Like many liminal figures of the Haitian Revolution, Romaine Rivière's revolutionary role vacillates between colonial archival account and legendary storytelling. Indeed, how does the lens of sensuous marronage offer up an alternative narration of his/her spiritual and gendered exploits through the landscape of the Haitian Revolution? Also, how does a gender-bending, and/or an indefinite gendered subjectivity imagine different Black ontologies of freedom? I believe that one way to elucidate these (im)possible queries, is through what Marlene Daut calls, the "rhetorical possibilities of 'monstrous hybridity'," which she explicates in part, through a racial analysis of Victor Hugo's *Bug-Jargal*.[319] She identifies "monstrous hybridity" as a repeated trope in transatlantic print culture of the Haitian Revolution that often represented people of "mixed race" as either "desiring of vengeance against the 'whites' to whom they were related by birth or by whom they had been enslaved, and as hateful of other people of color and, especially, 'negroes,' who supposedly reminded them of their degradation."[320] Meant to vilify and pathologize people of color and revolutionary agents alike,[321] this duplicitous characterization also inadvertently, highlighted the "anxieties about the righteousness of the Haitian Revolution."[322] Indeed, the "monstrous hybrid" was paradoxically portrayed as capable of horrendous crimes and vengeance, yet showcasing the most "daring displays of humanity," and embodying "the most moving rhetoric of revolution."[323] The figure of the "monstrous

[319] Daut, *Tropics of Haiti*, 152.

[320] Ibid., 153.

[321] The fact of the matter is this trope was used for many revolutionary figures that were not necessarily "mixed race." For instance, Frances Hammond Pratt's *La Belle Zoa, or, The Insurrection of Hayti* (1854), identifies Toussaint Louverture as a mulatto while highlighting his duplicitous nature. See, Ibid., 155.

[322] Ibid., 158.

[323] Ibid.

hybrid" in a sense personifies the ambivalence and the incongruities of the projects of modernity. More specifically in this context, it highlights the uncertainties and unintelligibility of the Haitian Revolution. Taking Daut's analysis further, I believe that the potential embodied in the "monstrous hybrid" characterization of *la Prophètesse* in Hugo's *Bug-Jargal* highlights not only racial incongruities, but most importantly, ambiguous, unintelligible, anti-colonial and alternative gendered possibilities of Black being.

As an exemplary model of the "monstrous hybrid" literary trope, Victor Hugo's 1826 novel *Bug-Jargal* is largely considered "anti-mulatto,"[324] and more generally an "anti-Haitian diatribe" that reflects the author's "negrophobia."[325] Indeed, the French royalist's account of the early days of the Haitian Revolution reflects an argument against republican ideology, the "misguided" principle of racial equality, and the "cynical ambition of bloodthirsty native leaders."[326] The novel narrates the story of Léopold D'Auverney – a young French military captain – who led a brigade of soldiers in the early days of the Saint-Domingue insurrection. Throughout his adventures, he meets and interacts with various revolutionary actors – some fictional and some historical, albeit portrayed with some creative license.[327] While *Romaine la Prophètesse* is not an integral character of the novel – as he/she is only mentioned in a few pages

[324] Particularly, it was the language used to describe the "mixed race" characters in the novel that really highlighted the "anti-mulatto" sentiment. See, Roger Toumson, *La Transgression des Couleurs: Littérature et Langage des Antilles* (Paris: Editions Caribéennes, 1990), 79; Daut, *Tropics of Haiti*, 167.

[325] Rey, *The Priest and the Prophetess,* 209.

[326] Léon-François Hoffmann, "Representations of the Haitian Revolution in French Literature," in *The World of the Haitian Revolution,* ed. David Patrick Geggus and Norman Fiering (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 343. Although Hugo's beliefs did eventually evolve to embrace democratic principles, he never repudiated the reactionary *Bug-Jargal*.

[327] Georges Biassou becomes Jean Biassou. André Rigaud and Boukman are also represented, and of course, so is *Romaine la Prophètesse.* See, Victor Hugo, *Bug-Jargal*, trans., ed., Chris Bongie (Peterborough: Broadview Press, [1826]2004).

– *la Prophètesse* serves as one of the necessary stock personas of French melodrama that pits good versus evil, the hero in contradistinction to the villain(s).[328] Moreover, within the framework of "monstrous hybridity," Hugo underscores that "Romaine the Prophetess" is a "mulatto charlatan […] who is goading a band of blacks to the point of fanaticism,"[329] using "mixed race"/hybrid designations to signal unruliness, immorality, barbarism and thus monstrosity.[330]

In relation to how Black revolutionaries fell into the trope of "monstrous hybridity," Daut emphasizes that this literary personification was not solely contingent on the notion of miscegenation, but rather represented a stand-in for revolutionary tensions, loyalties/disloyalties, and the overarching ambivalence, incongruity, anxiety, and fear surrounding the events of the Haitian Revolution. In fact, in depictions of the Haitian Revolution, the term "mulatto" and/or the general notion of racial hybridity highlighted the relative difficulty of ascertaining whose side of the Revolution any given person – regardless of skin color (and I would add, gender) – belonged to.[331] Through this lens, the conceptual framework of "monstrous hybridity" also applies to the incongruities and unintelligibility of counter-colonial gender formation. Hugo's categorization of Romaine as "mulatto," and his indirect acknowledgment of gender non-conformity – signaled by the use of the moniker "Romaine the Prophetess" (as opposed to the

[328] Hoffmann, "Representations of the Haitian Revolution in French Literature," 344.

[329] Hugo, *Bug-Jargal*, 162.

[330] Although certain historical accounts of *Romaine la Prophètesse* designates him/her as a *griffe* – a liminal and questionable racial designation between mulatto and black – notarial and parish records show that he/she was legally identified as a "free black." See, Rey, *The Priest and the Prophetess,* 51. While Hugo's mention of Romaine was heavily inspired by Joseph-François Pamphile Lacroix's account, Daut's conceptual framework of "monstrous hybridity" is evoked through this untenable racial designation and negative characterization. See, Hugo, *Bug-Jargal*, 210 n95; Rey, *The Priest and the Prophetess*, 210.

[331] Daut, *Tropics of Haiti*, 67-68.

Prophet) – hints towards not only the colonial anxieties engendered by a "monstrous hybrid" figure, but also highlights Black alternative gender formations as a transformative response to slavery and colonialism. Put another way, the liminality surrounding the racial and gendered identity of *la Prophètesse* – a historical revolutionary figure that led his/her followers to "divine battle"[332] – highlights the sensuous Black self-making, and thus Black freedom-making possibilities of the Haitian Revolution.

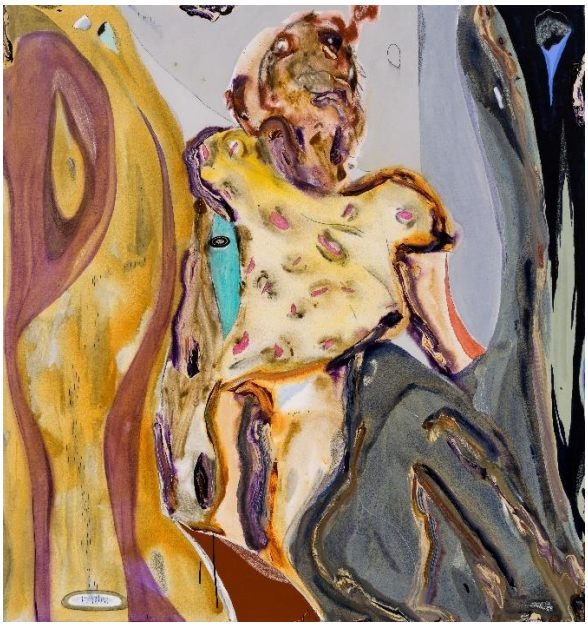

Figure 5: Manuel Mathieu,
The Prophetess 1, 2020.
Acrylic, chalk, charcoal, tape, 79x74 in.

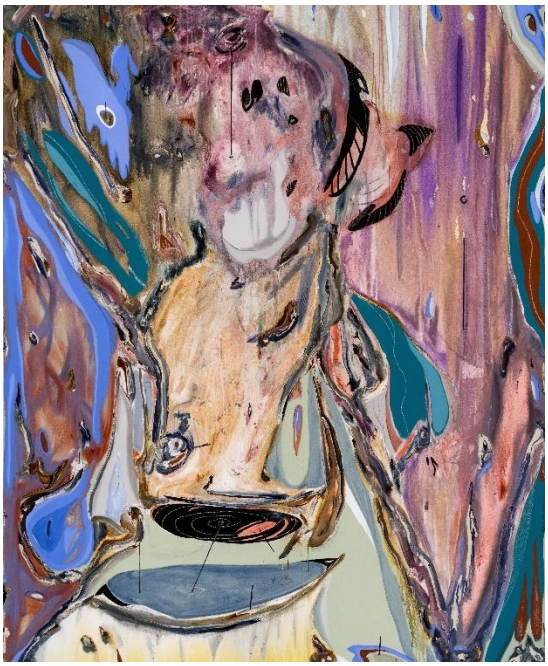

Figure 6: Manuel Mathieu,
The Prophetess 2, 2020.
Acrylic, chalk, charcoal, tape, 110x90 in.

Although Terry Rey's monograph *The Priest and the Prophetess* provides a much needed and detailed historical account of *Romaine la Prophètesse's* exploits, his/her past still remains

[332] Here I am echoing Tinsley statement that *la Prophètesse*'s "feminine identifications led him to do divine battle." See, Tinsley, *Ezili's Mirrors*, 11.

somewhat erased, muted, and obscured, in relation to other heroic Black figures of the Haitian Revolution. For instance, while Victor Hugo does briefly mention *la Prophètesse* in his novel *Bug-Jargal*, Rey argues that Hugo silenced Romaine, and thus violently muted "the human aspirations and spiritual forces behind the *Trou Coffy* insurgency and by extension the Haitian Revolution itself."[333] However, as the above analysis demonstrates, tending to the "black noise" of the "monstrous hybrid" within the literary archive of the Haitian Revolution, can uncover ambivalent ontologies, hinting at the voices and presences that are in "excess of legibility." Moreover, while colonial literature and archives may purposely conceal or malign Black revolutionaries to uphold imperial power, Rey highlights the notable absence of *la Prophètesse* in Haitian visual culture, an invisibility Rey cautiously attributes to his/her liminal classed, religious and gendered affinities.

Nevertheless, Haiti-born, Montreal-based multidisciplinary artist Manuel Mathieu recently broke that pattern through his vibrant and complex paintings "The Prophetess 1" and "The Prophetess 2" (See figure 5 and figure 6 above). Upholding the "right to opacity" and the possibilities embedded in Haiti's history, Mathieu depicts *la Prophètesse* in two differing pieces, merging abstraction with figuration. This mélange of artistic representations of *la Prophètesse* mirrors the ambiguity, unintelligibility and beautiful possibilities of the "monstrous hybrid." Indeed, the bridging of abstract and figurative techniques simultaneously reveals and obscures the figure of *la Prophètesse,* unveiling infinite ontological possibilities of Black being, feeling and knowing. The conceptual insistence of sensuous marronage on maintaining the "right to opacity," and thus the right to not have a revolutionary figure like Romaine be fully decipherable

[333] Rey, *The Priest and the Prophetess*, 210.

to Western and colonial ways of being and knowing, protects and allows Black liberatory ontologies, epistemologies and methodologies to flourish.

Further uplifting Sylvia Wynter's call to develop a "deciphering practice," my analysis of Mathieu's paintings represents not so much an attempt to understand what these artistic works "mean," and rather what they "do." Similarly, describing his own work from his 2020 Toronto exhibit *World Discovered Under Other Skies*[334] – where both of these images were displayed – Mathieu explains that he views his artistic practice as an exercise in "rub[bing] things next to each other, [and seeing them] work with each other [to] see what happens."[335] As opposed to trying to combine them – these "things," which encompass different themes, methods, techniques, ideas, colors, material, shapes, times, moments, spaces and art pieces – he is more interested in letting them exist, and co-exist, to see what doors they can open.[336] Clearly leaning into relational epistemologies and methodologies, his artistic approach also closely resembles Keguro Macharia's theoretical framework of *frottage*: "a relation of proximity" that "captures the aesthetic (as a term of artistic practice) and the libidinal (as a term of sex practice)."[337] Building on these creative and conceptual approaches, I would incorporate the modality of the sensuous – as a term that holds together the sensorial, the spiritual, the sensual and the queer – to highlight the imaginative ways in which the sexual and the sensuous can be used to imagine and create worlds and ways of being. Indeed, the ways in which the revolutionary actor *Romaine la*

[334] Manuel Mathieu, *World Discovered Under Other Skies*, Installation view (Toronto: The Power Plant, 2020).

[335] Manuel Mathieu, "The Power Plant: Interview with Manuel Mathieu," Harbourfront Centre, streamed live on November 10, 2021, YouTube video, 0:04:03, https://youtu.be/NvcfMVrDyrw.

[336] Ibid.

[337] Macharia, *Frottage*, 4.

Prophètesse is re-created through relational and sensuous frameworks reveal something in excess of traditional, heteronormative and colonial narratives of the Haitian Revolution.

Representative of sensuous marronage, these methodological deployments are also tied to L.H. Stallings's notion of "transaesthetics," which through a reorganization and reconceptualization of the senses, allows for "the survival of a posthuman imaginary over knowledge-power, the representation of black bodies, and the improvisational nature necessary for building black creative traditions."[338] Indeed, the representations of *la Prophètesse* through these multiple and undistinguishable "black bodies," overturn what we imagine a Black agent of the Revolution to *look* like, while also hinting at the Afro-spiritual principle of the multiplicity of the self.

Furthermore, unlike the common images of Toussaint Louverture or Jean-Jacques Dessalines – usually depicted in Haitian visual culture as wearing military uniforms – Romaine was said to be dressed in a robe covered in rosaries and ribbons, along with a turban topped by a plume.[339] Do we *see* that in Mathieu's renditions? Sort of. We *see* two different vibrant color schemas that are not indicative of militaristic and/or nationalist color palettes, such as red, royal blue and white. We *feel* these colors reaching an alternative affective register, along with the flowing nature of the strokes (especially in figure 5), suggesting a subtler, perhaps more feminine or/and gender non-conforming representation of freedom fighters. In the end, Mathieu's alternative interpretation of Romaine through abstracted opacity offers indefinite possibilities of being, while representing the Black queer freedoms dreams of the Haitian Revolution.

[338] Stallings, *Funk the Erotic*, 12.

[339] Rey, *The Priest and the Prophetess*, 208.

Understanding *Romaine la Prophètesse* through multiple and undefinable aesthetic representations not only subdues or/and re-assesses his/her militant exploits as the overdetermined masculine ethos of Black liberation, but also highlights other facets of the figure that are integral to understanding freedom-making practices of the Haitian Revolution. The indecipherable and illegible artistic portrayals of *la Prophètesse* echo his/her ambivalent, fluid and shifting gendered, spiritual and sensuous embodiment, as well as his/her liminal space in the zeitgeist of revolutionary Saint-Domingue narratives. Moreover, through sensuous marronage, *Romaine la Prophètesse* transforms and widens the potential of Black freedom discourses by presenting alternative gendered ways of being that are not subsumed by coloniality, but rather closely represent what Macharia calls "erotic diversity."[340] Indeed, as my use of the dashed pronoun(s) to express a creative gendered subjectivity that does not replicate anachronistic and/or Western-centered designations, Romaine's "monstrous hybridity," as well as his/her abstract artistic portrayals make room for sensuous, erotic and embodied "imagined African [and diasporic] pasts"[341] that embrace alternative Black gendered ontologies. In turn, these radical Black modes of being directly challenge the structural apparatus of imperialism, colonialism and plantocracy, representing an important, yet opaque, Black and queer freedom embodiment, practice and dream of the Haitian Revolution.

[340] Macharia, *Frottage*, 62.

[341] Ibid.

CHAPTER THREE

"Your women grumble…": Labor, Resistance and Gendered Poetics

Between 1791 and 1794, the countless insurgent battles, burnings of plantations and estates, and cases of marronage turned Saint-Domingue into a space of political and economic chaos. There was no denying or ignoring the extent of the slave rebellion. As the colonial army remained unable to defeat the persistent enslaved rebels, the National Assembly in France found itself at a crossroads. Indeed, how were they going to quells these attacks and protect their most profitable colony? In hopes of fortifying the allegiance of free people of color, French civil commissioner Léger Felicité Sonthonax implemented the law of April 4, 1792, which granted them the rights of citizenship and shifted the use of racial terminologies as class signifiers. In effect, the law decreed, "Henceforth we recognize only two classes of men …: free, without any distinction of color, and slaves."[342] Subsequently, after republican France declared war on Britain in 1793 on the island of Saint-Domingue, Spain sided with the British in fighting for control of the colony. Many former slaves turned revolutionary fighters – such as Toussaint Louverture and Georges Biassou – joined forces with the Spanish army, believing that the Crown, not the Republic, had their best interest at heart. In an effort to prove them wrong, and amidst the political turmoil on the island surrounding the burning of *Le Cap Français*, the law of June 21, 1793 was established. This law emancipated insurgent slaves who were willing to fight for the French Republic, thus linking militarism with citizenship and freedom. August 29, 1793 marked Sonthonax's decision to completely abolish slavery in the northern part of the island, a tactical command that French civil commissioner, Étienne Polverel, repeated shortly after in the West and South of the colony. Further legitimizing these bold undertakings was the February 4,

[342] Colwill, "'Fêtes de l'Hymen, Fêtes de la Liberté'," 127.

1794 *Act of 16 Pluviôse, An II* – which extended emancipation to all French colonies declaring that "all men, without distinction of color, domiciled in the colonies, are French citizens and enjoy all rights assured under the constitution."[343] Proclaimed by some as an act of republican benevolence, this drastic measure of national inclusion sought to obtain the support of insurgent slaves in the battle against British and Spanish enemies, Saint-Domingue colonists and royalist adversaries. Through this lens, freedom became a compensation for military duty, implementing gendered modalities of citizenship, labor and belonging. However, this limited and opportunistic deployment of emancipation writ large did not align with or translate to the freedom dreams of many of the island's colonial subjects.

Considering that these emancipation decrees were also in fact a type of codification of colonial heteropatriarchal ideals, it becomes evident that the freedom exalted from these laws halted women's liberation hopes, and disallowed creative and alternative genders and sexualities. Militarized masculinity and patriarchal kinships were prioritized, leaving the legislative freedom of Black women and women of color at the mercy of men and nation. The expansion of republican ideologies into the French colony of Saint-Domingue sought to rectify what the French perceived as family disintegration and sexual disorder, whilst upholding a type of plantocratic economy. Indeed, pathologizing the alternative kinships structures and sexual relationships of enslaved and freed communities – whether they were people of color or Black – many of the decrees extolled the influences of marriage and family as tools to "civilize" its racialized population. Formerly enslaved women were deeply attuned to this private and public assimilation of the reformed colony, and retained an unparalleled awareness of their laboring

[343] Jean Meyer, Jean Tarrade, Anne Rey-Goldzeiguer and Jacques Thobie, *Histoire de la France Coloniale T.1: Des Origines À 1914* (Malakoff: Arman Colin, 2016), 402.

bodies,[344] the enduring nature of colonial violence, and the potential of their Black radical consciousness. In particular, rural laboring Black women's refusal and rejection of the violence of this commodified "freedom" – its brutal work regime, poverty wages, gendered inequities, and reproductive violence – were central to the transformative possibilities that forged the Revolution's radical legacy. These glimpses of resistance offer an analysis of the Black Radical Tradition as it relates to gender and sexuality, bringing nuance to masculine-centered narratives of the Haitian Revolution, and slave rebellions in general.

Thinking through the conceptual approach to sensuous marronage that is intrinsically connected to Black feminist and queer formulations of liberation, I will demonstrate the ways in which labor politics also reflects the capacities to produce new modes of being that are disruptive to colonial and national structures. Less focused on spiritual Vodou mythologies than in previous chapters, the sensuous here comes to signify in part, an embodied awareness of labor, reproduction and sexuality, amounting to transformative instances of Black radical consciousness and action. Nonetheless, even though Vodou is not used extensively as a counter-narrative text, I want to stress the importance of "the dimensions of spiritual labor that make the sacred and the disembodied palpably tangible and, therefore, constitutive of […] lived experience."[345] In line with Jacqui Alexander's insistence, the spiritual, and thus also the sensuous, permeates and colors revolutionary practices in part by informing alternative gender, sexual and familial roles. In other words, Vodou cosmologies in their revolutionary iterations cannot be untethered from other rebellious and radical tactics of resistance.

[344] Here, I am invoking again the *double entendre* of the term labor as Jennifer Morgan does, to mean work and reproduction. See, Morgan, *Laboring Women.*

[345] Alexander, *Pedagogies of Crossing*, 22.

In relation to this Black feminist understanding of embodiment, sensuousness and consciousness, the conceptual framework of sensuous marronage also offers a counter-narrative to colonial and republican understandings of labor, geography, sexuality and "freedom," creating Black women's spaces of resistance. While marronage usually describes the movement between spaces, in this chapter, sensuous marronage is enacted through the transformation of space through Black women's geographies. Indeed, Black women's resistance and refusals to the "reformed" agricultural regime of emancipatory Saint-Domingue, not only re-map plantation geographies and re-conceptualize the labor performed in these spaces, but also creates an opening to articulate different sexual and reproductive possibilities. Sensuous marronage enables us to recognize the "insurgent ground[s]"[346] generated by Black women, and the ways in which these radical space-making tactics of resistance are intertwined with Black women's work, sexuality and kinships.

Possessing an embodied and spatial understanding of the radical possibilities of freedom, these Black women laborers were thus clearly aware of the incongruities of what colonial officials were peddling as "freedom." And history proved them right. Indeed, the Revolution continued well beyond the introduction of the emancipation decrees. The next four years became a period of almost constant warfare throughout Saint-Domingue. With the departure of commissioner Sonthonax in 1797, Toussaint Louverture – ex-slave, and now military and political leader – took charge of the French forces. By 1798, under martial pressure from Louverture and André Rigaud – one of the leading military men of color in the south of the island – the British gradually evacuated Saint-Domingue. Louverture had to now focus on

[346] Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe," 80.

stimulating the island's agricultural output by reviving the plantation regime, in order to restore Saint-Domingue's prosperity and to bankroll his French Revolutionary Army. In 1800, the Black general instituted a military state that sought to continue the wage-labor practices established by Sonthonax, albeit through a martial approach that relied on the army to impose forced labor and to use corporal punishment on non-complying workers.

This redux of the slavery regime went against Black laborers' views of freedom, which were in part linked to the rights to become independent smallholders.[347] Resistance against this labor system was prevalent but was eventually overshadowed by the arrival of Napoleon Bonaparte's French military expedition to Saint-Domingue, led by his brother-in-law General Charles Leclerc in the beginning of 1802. In an effort to restore a white colonial government, and ultimately to restore slavery in all French colonies, the French army captured, kidnapped and killed Louverture, while instigating a war on the island. Commonly known as the War of Independence (1802-1804), Black soldiers and those of color, joined forces as the "Indigenous" army," to defeat the colonial power. Led by Jean-Jacques Dessalines, André Rigaud, and other revolutionary martial heroes, soldiers united force against the invading troops from France. On November 18, 1803, at the Battle of Vertières on November 18, 1803, they prevailed against the French. Dessalines proclaimed Independence on January 1, 1804 and gave the country the Indigenous name "Haiti" derived from the Taino's term *Ayiti*, to symbolically mark the end of colonial control and exploitation. However, was this promise of Independence congruent with the masses' notions of freedom?

[347] Carolyn E. Fick, "The Saint-Domingue Slave Revolution and the Unfolding of Independence," in *The World of the Haitian Revolution*, eds. David Patrick Geggus and Norman Fiering, 177-195 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009).

Alas, the seduction of colonial heteropatriarchal hierarchies of power, the vicious economic gains from accumulation (through the dispossession of marginalized, enslaved and formerly enslaved subjects), the historical material distinctions of racial belonging, and the looming threat of imperial retribution left post-Independence Haiti replicating exploitative paradigms, and occluding gendered revolutionary features of Black liberation. Canonized in the literary oeuvres following Haitian Independence, it becomes evident, as Michael Dash interpreted from Jean Price-Mars, that most Haitian leaders and elites were "condemned to a blind and sterile imitation of European modernity."[348] Rather than engaging with discourses about authenticity of literary style, I argue that a literary investment in imperial gendered and sexual hierarchies has perpetuated the persistent devaluation of women's essential role in the creation of rebellious ideals and actions. Nonetheless, some exceptions hint at the differing strategies that women have used to sustain Black radical liberation practices.

Looking at various gendering processes during some of the legal upheavals of the Haitian Revolution and in post-Independence literature highlights the ways in which gender is produced through violence, imperial demands, and labor needs. Moreover, the mutually constitutive construction of gender and race, and the shifting class/racial power struggles of the Saint-Domingue rebellion underscore how various revolutionary actors resisted, but were also influenced and/or seduced, by colonial gendered and sexual scripts. There is no doubt that leveraging militarized Black masculinity was considered of utmost importance when constructing a Haitian national identity. However, how did this warrior-like masculine creation come to be considered the beacon of liberty, freedom and independence? As class and racial antagonisms and alliances shifted throughout the revolutionary era, colonial social paradigms

[348] Doris Y. Kadish and Deborah Jenson, "Introduction," in *Poetry of Haitian Independence*, xxvi.

suffused colonial legislation, in turn influencing gender roles, citizenship, labor politics, and historical memory. Indeed, the erasure of revolutionary women was coterminous with the lauding of brave and heroic military men, cementing heteropatriarchal ideals, and perpetuating racial capitalist modes of economic expansion.

By paying close attention to the formulation and implementation of emancipation decrees, as well as the resistance to their (very) intended consequences, one can trace the genealogy of French republican abolition legislation in the post-Independence Haitian national identity that relegated women to second-class citizenship. Although it would be impossible and misguided to suppose that all heteropatriarchal beliefs came from imperial powers, I highlight the ways in which ideals of hegemonic masculinity, the lack of reproductive sovereignty for women, the devaluation of women's labor and insurgent actions, and patriarchal understanding of sexuality and kinships have been heavily influenced by colonial discourses. This in turn, attenuated the revolutionary potential of the Black Radical Tradition to counter the further development of racial capitalism, a structural failing that I metaphorically link to the labor movement's pejorative term, "scab." Albeit anachronistically, I suggest that the analogy is helpful in personifying the concomitant functioning of racial and gendered capitalism, as it disrupts the individualistic suppositions often attributed to labor struggles. By attributing the term "scab" – which commonly refers to a strike breaker – to the larger apparatus of imperialist economic expansion and heteropatriarchy, I want to disrupt the idea that the failures of worker solidarity efforts are solely based on individualistic decisions. Similar to the ways in which capitalist structures shape the precarity that would lead someone to become a "scab" (in the original sense of the word), I trace a genealogy that reveals the innerworkings of colonialism,

plantocratic logics and heteropatriarchal constructs that in turn, molded the unequal and unfree socio-economic system of post-Independence Haiti.

Imperial Molding of the Heteropatriarchal Scab

During the early days of the Haitian Revolution, when slave insurgencies were starting to become more common, the initial aim of civil commissioners Léger Felicité Sonthonax and Étienne Polverel was to suppress the imminence of a slave revolution, in part by forging an alliance with free men, regardless of race. Aware of the lingering concerns of free men of color, the law of April 4, 1792 granted these *gens de couleur*, as well as Black free men, civil rights and liberties, obfuscating much of the racial civic boundaries of the royalist colonial past. Ruffling the feathers of the white population of Saint-Domingue, the commissioners relied increasingly on free men of color to uphold political and militaristic republican ideals. Following the political discord and conflict with Governor General Galbaud and other white colonists, which led to the burning of *Le Cap*, the republican commissioners proclaimed the rule of June 21, 1793, granting freedom to Black insurgent enslaved men contingent on their military service. Since many slave rebels sided with the French and Spanish monarchy, and with some of the royalists on the island, this decree sought to win the Black insurgents to the republican cause. Effectively making enslaved Black fighters into French citizens, the proclamation ensured an amelioration of conditions and promised a distribution of land adequate to support freedmen and their families.[349] Such legislation was interpreted as a "gift" from the Republic, as it gave birth to free *hommes nouveaux* (new men); but the law also acted as a civilizing and disciplining mechanism for colonial subjects in the public and private sphere. These new French ideals included the

[349] Colwill, "'Fêtes de l'Hymen, Fêtes de la Liberté'," 131.

construction of a masculine ethos built around the notions of martial fraternity, republican marriage, and the formation of a nuclear family. Linking the obligations of citizenship with manhood was seen as a civilizing effort. The new republican government linked militarism with colonial heteropatriarchal norms, insisting that these 'new men' "creat[e] 'legitimate' nuclear family units under masculine authority."[350]

This patriarchal, patrilineal and paternalistic articulation of citizenship and freedom, further codified by the July 11, 1793 *Proclamation des Regenerateurs de Saint-Domingue*, surmised that women could now be emancipated via their matrimonial relationship to men, thus "transfer[ing] women slaves from the hands of masters to those of their husbands through the intervention of the Republic."[351] Following republican ideologies of womanhood and family that relegated a woman's relationship to the state as solely mediated through her husband, this decree sought to transform "uncivilized" kinship ties and the unruly colony itself, into the domestic sphere of the nuclear family and the nation.[352] In fact, Sonthonax and Polverel stressed that a freedman who had no wife or children could only be a "savage" or a *brigand*, and that a freedman worthy of liberty should not have to suffer the indemnity of his wife and children decaying through enslavement.[353] Clearly, the hypothetical freedman husband would be the only

[350] Ibid., 131.

[351] Ibid., 132.

[352] Prominent Enlightenment philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau espoused notions of equality and freedom that were revered during the period of the French Revolution, but that did not extend to the rights of women. According to him and his followers, the main purpose in life for a woman is to be a wife and mother, for the sake of the family and the Republic. See, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile, or on Education*, trans. Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, [1792] 1979); Joan B. Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988). Also, these same republican and imperial ideals of womanhood, domesticity and family were prevalent in the United States. See, Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage*; Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002); Amy Greenberg, *Manifesting Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

[353] AD/xxa/604, AN, Léger Felicité Sonthonax and Étienne Polverel, "Proclamation des Regenerateurs de Saint-Domingue," Cap-Français, July 11, 1793 was published in many venues. The one I am referencing is from the

one suffering in this scenario. Continuing this sexist emancipation proclamation, the commissioners instructed these *nouveaux hommes* to purify their revolting customs, such as *libertinage* – which loosely describes sexual corruption and practices of living in excess of society's morals (especially of a sexual nature) and is mostly attributed to having promiscuous sexual arrangements with women of color – and to instead embody the values of filial piety, marital tenderness, and paternal love, essentially bolstering the notion of a family spirit that extended to all French republican citizens.[354] Here, the promulgation of patriarchy is unquestionably enmeshed with patriotism, leaving women as matrimonial pawns of the Republic, as well as symbols of a backwards and lustful colonial culture that is mostly attributed to the *mulâtresse*.

However, to the women who married under these stipulations, the masculinist decree still offered important legal protections that they needed badly, particularly for the sake of their families. Indeed, these included legitimacy for their children under the law, public recognition of marital status, and freedom papers for themselves and their children. Nonetheless, records show that – due to conscripted time limitations, forced military obligations for the new Black soldiers, and uncooperative notaries and officials – marriage did not confer freedom to enslaved women as initially promised by the commissioners.[355] Although this legislation provided significant advancements for a small number of women, the heteropatriarchal gendered ideals undergirding the decree were undoubtedly incongruent with many enslaved and formerly enslaved Black

counterrevolutionary Philapeldia newspaper *Le Radoteur* " […] Secrets sur la régénérations de la partie française de Saint-Domingue," August 9, 1793, 131. Translation mine.

[354] Ibid.

[355] Colwill, "'Fêtes de l'Hymen, Fêtes de la Liberté'," 144.

women's notions of self and of liberation. Indeed, the unintelligibility of Black women in Saint-Domingue, as well as the underlying racial capitalist ideologies upholding the empire's notion of freedom, made the progression to these republican ideologies quite thorny, to say the least.

This supposed benevolent gift of emancipation also came with a caveat bolstered by Western conceptions of property and ownership. Following these 1793 decrees, a number of other emancipation laws ensued, ultimately leading to the February 4, 1794 act that extended the abolition of slavery to all French colonies, save Martinique, which was under British control until 1802.[356] Still wanting to maintain colonial and economic control for the Republic, this wide-reaching formal emancipation decree still relied on Black bodily labor, whether through military service, agricultural needs, or for women, through reproduction. Considering that these emancipation pronouncements were enacted during a period of war, and that war was understood as a bastion of masculinity, opportunities for social advancement through military service – and thus a distancing from agricultural work – was an opening available only for formerly enslaved men. Moreover, following the many martial battles of the first years of the Haitian Revolution, which considerably reduced the Black male population, formerly enslaved women were driven disproportionally to head back to plantation labor, to toil the land by planting, weeding and harvesting. This enactment of emancipation was a way to maintain control in the colony and to sustain the flow of agricultural output for the Republic, in part, through the implementation of (restrictive) wage labor. Under this regime, former slaves, mostly female were legally bound to the plantation of their former masters, while ruled by the laws and directives of the government. Furthermore, it is important to note that the implementation of the various emancipation decrees spanning from 1792 to 1794 was clumsy, disorganized, delayed, inconsistent, at times

[356] Peabody, "Négresse, Mulâtresse, Citoyenne," 65.

retroactive, and at the mercy of both ongoing insurgent and martial conflict and widespread illness, creating much uncertainty in the lives of the inhabitants of Saint-Domingue. Painfully aware of the inequities linked to the new labor system, previously enslaved women – who now were demographically in equal numbers, if not surpassing the percentage of male laborers – took advantage of this colonial instability, and resisted the newly imposed oppressive semi-wage system, thus articulating their own view of freedom through collective action.

Understanding the shifting nature of gender demographics in Saint-Domingue not only centers a critical gendered analytic in the study of the Haitian Revolution, but also alters the canon of Black radicalism. Countering the masculine and militaristic ethos of Haitian revolutionary narratives, whilst simultaneously understanding its political construction opens a possibility to center the revolutionary actions of women. Thus, this gendered revision reshapes the ways in which we conceptualize and imagine the Black Radical Tradition. Indeed, as Mimi Sheller reminds us, gender and sexuality "were central to the practice of slavery, to antislavery movements, and to the reorganization of post-slavery societies."[357] Indeed, in fighting against the coercive labor regime, women *cultivateurs* were actively opposing the colonial structure that created slavery. In countering the structural edicts of enslavement, they were also challenging white supremacist ideals, the process of accumulation through dispossession, and of course heteropatriarchy, all systems that were still undergirding this "new" wage-labor establishment. Although heteropatriarchal orders, which in turn, codified kinship constructs, differed for free women of color and Black formerly enslaved women, this difference highlights the structural inequities built into the new "free" status. Formerly enslaved Black female workers

[357] Sheller, *Citizenship from Below*, 26.

demonstrated through their resistance how prevalent colonial gender norms and ideals were to the functioning of imperial exploitation.

Many of these new *cultivateurs*, male and female, were suspicious of the emancipation decrees, especially when they realized that this republican "freedom" came with work conditions and hours that resembled that of enslavement. As stipulations of this decree, the use of the whip and torture as punishment were banished, and Black workers were given a minimal monetary incentive to work. However, *cultivateurs* were still confined to their former plantations, they had little or no legal claims to their cultivation plots and home, and of particular importance for women, they could be moved and separated from their families at the whim of the planters or governmental officials.[358] To these workers, it was evident that they were still seen as capital, and essentially as property upholding a plantocratic economy. Indeed, the violability of the Black family reveals how unstable and pernicious these claims to citizenship were. As in post-emancipation societies throughout the Atlantic world, and under the guise of "freedom," emancipation in Saint-Domingue was often rendered a legal fiction.

Many understood the precarity of the new order and resisted it as they had resisted slavery by refusing to work, showing up late, challenging authority, slacking, and stealing, as well as through vagrancy, the new terminology for marronage. Although Black workers of all genders took part in these resistance strategies, women were particularly mentioned in the archives as threats to the new system.[359] Indeed, the space of the plantation, now a space of

[358] See Judith Kafka, "Action, Reaction and Interaction: Slave Women in Resistance in the South of Saint Domingue, 1793-94," *Slavery and Abolition* 18, no.2 (1997): 49-53; Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, 169. I specify that family separation was particularly stringent for women, not because it was not for men, because it surely was, but because of the politics of sexuality, reproduction and maternity borne out of slavery. This is something I will touch on a bit later in this section.

[359] See, Kafka, "Action, Reaction and Interaction," 48-50; Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, 169-170.

"reformed" unfreedoms, was slowly transforming – demographically and ideologically – into a feminine space relegating agricultural labor (as well as petty commerce) to the realm of women. This spatial and gendered configuration remained embedded in the construction of post-Independence Haiti.[360] Thinking through the impact of geographical spaces reminds us that although, as Katherine McKittrick maintains, the plantation was (and is) a space that "regulated and normalized violence," it also "instigated resistance."[361] Taking her point further, the shifting gendered configuration of the plantation provides an opportunity to reconceptualize this space through Black women's geographical possibilities, and Black feminist spatial freedoms (or refusals), rather than through a trope that McKittrick identified as "ungeographic" – a colonial fiction of Black unbelonging to modern geographies.[362] Indeed, understanding the spaces of agricultural labor in emancipated Saint-Domingue through "the relationship between Black women and geography opens up a conceptual arena through which more humanly workable geographies can be and are imagined."[363] Re-spatializing the plantation and re-conceptualizing the work performed in this space via Black women's geographies offers a glimpse into the imagining and actioning of freedom dreams of the Haitian Revolution.

Through reading colonial archives along the bias grain,[364] one can catch a glimpse of these gendered, sexual and spatial strategies of resistance, that are also indicative of the larger Black liberation project of the Black Radical Tradition. Indeed, the archives indicate that

[360] See, Hilary Beckles, "Black Masculinity in Caribbean Slavery," 240. This is important to keep in mind, as I will explore the constructions and continuities of gendered ideals in post 1804-Haiti, and their consequences.

[361] Katherine McKittrick, "Plantation Futures," *Small Axe* 17, no.3 (November 2013): 4.

[362] McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds,* 5.

[363] McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds*, xii.

[364] Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain*.

although female laborers were expected to do the same work as men, save under particular conditions pertaining to pregnancy and birthing – a type of reproductive labor that still served the needs of the French empire – they were compensated only two-thirds of the pay that men received and allotted less of the output designated to agricultural workers.[365] Well aware of their laboring worth, the women *cultivateurs* opposed and protested these unequal working practices. This in turn, made colonists and government officials apprehensive, fearing more problems in the colony. Indeed, on February 7, 1794, in the South of the island, civil commissioner Polverel disseminated his regulation decree on wage allocations, and on land and crop distribution between *cultivateurs* and planters, which he demanded to be read to all laborers and *conducteurs.*[366] Resembling a paternalistic reprimand, Polverel's decree addressed the Black men *cultivateurs* directly, laying out agricultural guidelines, while attempting to intimidate and quell the rebellious spirit of women laborers. He stated:

> Finally, your women grumble about the inequity of the sharecropping system I plan to establish, because the shares I plan to bestow upon them is less than the one accorded to men. Why give us less than men, they say? Do we go to work later than they do? Do we leave earlier? It is not against the landowners, but against you, against their men that they make these exaggerated claims. They do not want us to pay attention to the discrepancy of strength that nature has placed between women and men, to their frequent and periodic infirmities, to the rest they are obliged to take for their pregnancies, childbirth, and nursing. And the men whose advantageous shares of the revenues they covet, only work, collect and want gold [money] to lavish it on their women. Africans, if you want to make your women listen to reason, you need to listen to reason yourselves. Your happiness is at stake, and so is the freedom of your fathers, your brothers, your cousins, who are perhaps enslaved in the English, Dutch, Spanish, Portuguese colonies. The restful state of your home country is at stake, you hold the fate of all of Africa in your hands.[367]

[365] Kafka, "Action, Reaction and Interaction," 54; Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, 170.

[366] The new term for overseers during the new regime.

[367] D/XXV/114 AN, "Règlement sur les proportions" (7 Feb 1794), 6-7. Translation mine.

In this passage, rather than address the brazen rejection of conscripted poverty and gender inequity under the new regime, Polverel reframed the protests of these women as a threat to Black men's patriarchal privilege. Through this paternalistic tone designed to preserve the self-interest of colonial order, Polverel was clearly training these new citizens by bestowing heteropatriarchal values that, as mentioned above, were linked to patriotic love and duty. His arguments also seem to convey the French revolutionary ideology of fraternity, impelling the male *cultivateurs* to strengthen the idea of fraternal alliance with the other men of the African diaspora, as they "hold the fate of all of Africa in [their] hands." But of course, this brotherhood is only met to uphold patriarchal ideals towards their women counterparts, and other French imperial ideals. While signalling the virtue of the abolitionist French empire, this proclamation was no doubt, a discursive maneuver to fortify allegiance to the French Republic by framing and demonizing Black women laborers as imperial enemies. Although Polverel's speech derides and belittles the complaints of women *cultivateurs*, the fact that he is referencing their grievances and trying to rally the men against them, indicates that he views these rebellious women as a significant menace to the reconstruction of the republican colony. Carolyn Fick and Judith Kafka, who have both interpreted this archival document, agree that the "men raised no objections to [the women's] demands"[368] and that although the men *cultivateurs* sometimes seem to pay no mind to the women's complaints, "they often followed or participated in these [dissenting] acts."[369] Conversely, these women knew the stakes of complaining, resisting, striking and rebelling against these gendered inequities bestowed by this "new" labor system. In

[368] Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, 170.

[369] Kafka, "Action, Reaction and Interaction," 55.

valuing them as "individuals and equal workers,"[370] and in understanding the worth of what the poet Marlene NourbeSe Philip names as the "space between the legs"[371] these women were rebelling against the entirety of the new republican system, its geographies and its unfreedoms, essentially emphasizing how the true ideals of the Black Radical Tradition work in tandem with Black feminist principles and sexual autonomy and liberation.

Locating the radical possibilities of Black women's geographies onto the site of the plantation, while finding that same potential in the "space between the legs" illuminates the ways in which spaces deemed "ungeographic," and bodies thought of as "ungendered," can paradoxically produce different lexicons of resistance. Here, I find the use of Philip's concept of the "space between the legs" useful to highlight the recognition of Black women's sexuality as a structuring technology of slavery and its afterlives, and also as a tool of defiance and rebellion. Upholding a similar grammar to Spillers' notion of the flesh and "cultural vestibularity," the "space between the legs" can be categorized through colonial logics as "the productive site of racialized meaning wherein enslaved women's reproductive capacities are rendered as violent conduits of human commodification."[372] Furthermore, the ways in which the sexual Black female flesh is considered property that produces other commodities mirrors feminized geographic discourses of land possession, conquest, fertility, expansion, and territorialization,

[370] Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, 170.

[371] Marlene Nourbese Philip, "Dis Place – The Space Between," in *A Genealogy of Resistance and Other Essays* (Toronto: The Mercury Press, 1997), 74-112.

[372] Jennifer L. Morgan, "*Partus sequitur ventrem*: Law, Race, and Reproduction in Colonial Slavery," *Small Axe* 55 (March 2018): 7. Here, I am thinking of how Spillers analyses the Black female womb as a metaphorical vestibule, and the birth canal as a vestibular conduit for transmitting grammars of the flesh, the child is then relegated to a space of biological, social and cultural ambiguity. I see the processes happening between the "space between the legs," the womb and the vestibular as relational in producing the flesh, along with its paradoxical possibilities. See, Spillers, "Interstices,"; Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe."

thus linking land and body through colonial and capitalist accumulative processes. Indeed, the geographical history of Saint-Domingue is intertwined with the spatial analyses of the "space between the legs," as the process of racial inheritance is tied to geographical dispossession. However, this linkage can be interpreted differently than in this colonial racial-patriarchal way, by exploring the types of geographies Black women recognize, "disclose and reinvent."[373]

Considering the productive power of the "space between the legs," Polverel's negative and punitive take on the women workers' pregnancies seems even more of an affront to their gender, particularly since amelioration laws had passed a few years prior, stressing the importance of the reproductive efforts of women on plantations. In fact, Polverel himself issued a decree dated 31 March 1794, encouraging plantation owners to obtain as many women workers as possible, in order to increase the number of births.[374] Putting these laws in place, Polverel and other legislators were ensuring the health, longevity and prosperity of Saint-Domingues's plantation economy, something Black women recognized and leveraged for equal wages, crop shares and overall better work conditions.[375] After the implementation of these laws, the laboring women obviously noticed their work condition change while they were pregnant, and it is likely that they created community with the influx of women that moved to their plantation. They organized and planned, protested and resisted loud enough to be in the archives, because they were well aware of the strength of their critical bargaining chip: the "space between the legs." Similar to Jennifer Morgan's arguments in her book *Laboring Women*, these formerly enslaved

[373] McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds,* 46.

[374] Kafka, "Action, Reaction and Interaction," 58.

[375] See Sasha Turner, *Contested Bodies: Pregnancy, Childrearing, and Slavery in Jamaica* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017); Hillary Beckles, *Centering Woman: Gender Discourses in Caribbean Slave Society* (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 1999); Moitt, *Women and Slavery in the French Antilles, 1635-1848.*

laborers were well aware of their own economic value, and therefore understood – albeit not necessarily in these terms – the "speculative value of a reproducing labor force."[376] This document suggests the women's collective cognizance of not only colonial sexual scripts, but of how to subvert, influence and transform them into liberation that centered Black women's embodied awareness of labor, reproduction and sexuality, reflects a manifestation of sensuous marronage. Indeed, the recognition of these Black women's sensual leverage was linked to collective resistance against the colonial regime. Although these female *cultivateurs*' ongoing battles were levied against the whole colonial and economic system, what resonates in the specificity of their complaints and protests is that the Black Radical Tradition's resistance framework is intertwined not only with analyses of racial capitalism, but also with gendered capitalism.

During this period of ambiguous freedom in the colony, through an acute understanding of their unfreedoms, Black laboring women were redefining how they saw their rights, thus re-structuring the contours of the plantation. This particular spatial analysis of freedom dreams and resistance links the now feminized space of agricultural labor with the Black female body, providing conceptual openings for Black women's geographies. Moreover, these geographies become perfect conduits to explore the ways in which Black women's sexual terrain can map various conceptions of liberation and radicalism.[377] As McKittrick theorizes, the construction and uses of Black women's "space between the legs," unsettles normalized gender categories

[376] Morgan, *Laboring Women,* 3.

[377] Beckles highlights various geographical sites of resistance between the rural and the urban locations of Barbados, while demonstrating the varied ways women rebelled, which differ from male-centered analyses. See, Beckles, *Natural Rebels.*

that are grounded in whiteness.[378] One specific way in which scholars such as Spillers, have documented this gendered disruption is through the rendering of Black people, and Black women in particular, as ungendered flesh. In the context of enslavement where Black women's bodies are reduced to flesh and translated into property**,** what is not bestowed is the kinship bond of motherhood and family. As Spillers argues "slavery creates an economic and social agent whose virtue lies in being outside the kinship system," where the progeny of the female slave does not "belong" to the mother, and is not "related" (in the patronymic sense) to the slaveowner.[379] If the Black enslaved female's womb acts as a metaphorical vestibule, and the birth canal becomes a vestibular conduit for transmitting a lexical archive for the flesh, the child then is relegated to a space of biological, social and cultural ambiguity. Within the noteworthy setting of Saint-Domingue's emancipatory period, the "afterlives of slavery" are still defined by this enslaving vestibule. Indeed, even with the codification of "freedom" for all formerly enslaved people including their children, they could still be moved and separated from their families at the whim of the planters or governmental officials, severely impeding bonds of kinship. Thus, even under this new "emancipatory" wage-labor regime, Black women were being exploited not only through wage and crop-shares inequities, but also through the looming possibility of the loss of their children and family, highlighting the commodification of their agricultural and reproductive labor. Moreover, the children born out of this commodifying reproductive system, eventually become part of the agricultural working force themselves, continuing the exploitation of Black

[378] McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds,* 47.

[379] Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe," 74.

women's labor into future generations.[380] Viewed through this lens, Black women's sexuality and Black family structures are related to the unfree labor practices of slavery and its afterlives.

Resonating with these conceptual links between blackness, womanhood, labor, sexuality and resistance is Saidiya Hartman's "The Belly of the World." Albeit situated within the context of U.S. post-abolition era, Hartman argues that labor lingered as the main influence altering constructs of gender and sexuality for Black women. She delineates the ways in which Black women's labor underscored the "gender non-conformity of the black community" under the edicts of white capitalist patriarchy.[381] Notions of sexuality that are influenced by heteropatriarchal and accumulative stratagems obscure the ways in which Black women's sexuality contains the potential to counter dominative structures of power through "supple and extended modes of kinship, […] queer domesticity, promiscuous sociality and loose intimacy, and […] serial and fluid conjugal relationships."[382] In a parallel manner, the imbrication of lower wages and crop revenues in Saint-Domingue, along with the precarity of kinship bonds within an economy that increasingly relied on Black women's reproductive capacities, is a direct attack on their sexual autonomy and its liberatory possibilities.

Visible and audible in the archives are the loud protests of women *cultivateurs*, who are countering the republican labor system *and* the ongoing curtailing of their sexual sovereignty, demonstrating what they know to be true, that there cannot be Black liberation without Black

[380] Again, using the *double entendre* of the term "labor," similar to Morgan's usage. I want to stress that the plantation environment exploits the reproductive capacity of Black women, while its built-in racial capitalism mechanism born out of slavery, requires an unsustainable labor force that needs to be supplemented through exploitation (i.e. slave trade, reproduction untenable work conditions, etc.). See Morgan, *Laboring Women*.

[381] Saidiya Hartman, "The Belly of the World: A Note on Black Women's Labors," *Souls* 18, no. 1 (January-March 2016): 169.

[382] Hartman, "The Belly of the World," 169.

women's sexual freedom. Polverel's tactic of appealing to male dominance exposes the underbelly and the continuous subjugation of Black people through structural heteropatriarchy. Queered reformulations of Black women's sexuality that are in this case, tied to labor and resistance practices, highlight how structures outside of heteropatriarchy offer sensuous possibilities, disrupting the ordering of racial and gendered capitalism. Furthermore, the collective radical consciousness and resistance by the continuously growing number of Black women laborers in rural working spaces represents a manifestation and redefinition of the laboring and sexual body, as well as a re-mapping of plantation geographies. Also, considering this increasing demographic of Black women on plantations, the dwindling male population and the women-centered awareness of labor, body politics and resistance, this re-mapping leaves room for the possibilities of queer relationships and modes of being. Although, that story remains opaque, what we can surmise is that Black women's geographies reveal sensuous and collective reformulations of Black liberation.

This snippet of defiance within the history of the Haitian Revolution emphasizes the ways in which histories of Black liberation are deeply intertwined with not only spatial histories of labor and resistance, but also with radical re-framings of gender and sexuality. Although this archival fragment is not an excessive or complete representation of Black liberation, it nonetheless exposes expansive Black women's geographies, exposing sowed freedom dreams. Following Hartman's mediations, this analysis highlights how Black women's labor is central to discourses of Black women's sexuality, circumventing the deafening silence of the flesh and asserting a revolutionary potential within the archives of the Black Radical Tradition.[383]

[383] Also see, Sara Clarke Kaplan, "Love and Violence/Maternity and Death: Black Feminism and the Politics of Reading (Un)representability," *Black Women, Gender + Families* 1, no. 1, (2007): 94-124; Alys Eve Weinbaum, "The Afterlife of Slavery and the Problem of Reproduction Freedom," *Social Text* 115 31, no. 2 (2013): 49-68;

Furthermore, I am arguing that the relationship between sexuality and labor is part of a longer diasporic embodied legacy that is imperative to not only discussions of Black female sexuality, but to the unearthing of revolutionary power during the Haitian Revolution. Of course, this framing is not meant to erase or replace the masculine militaristic actions of the rebellion, or to suggest that these forms of gendered resistance are incongruent or mutually exclusive to one another. In fact, Haiti's revolutionary history is marked by the convergence of a range of resistance tactics that together, produced the insurgent rupture of the 1790s. For instance, Toussaint Louverture strategized in the Bonaparte era to monopolize the food supplies and crops while denying them to the French, in order to secure a rebel victory. As male soldiers burned down the French granaries, women cultivators grew provisions for their communities.[384] As an extension and continuation of the space-making practices on plantation sites, these militant revolutionary tactics operate as "social order[s] that [are] developed within the context of a dehumanizing system as it spatializes what would be considered impossible under slavery."[385] Moreover, the spatial analysis of the work of liberation can be mapped onto the plantation and onto the bodies of formerly enslaved women who actively engaged in the ongoing labor of refusing unfreedom, by asserting in the archives of the Revolution, "take courage: your loins will never bear slaves."[386]

Weinbaum, "Gendering the General Strike." These works also link discourses of the legibility and the legacies of Black women's sexual and reproductive labor to notions of freedom.

[384] Girard, "*Rebelles* with a Cause," 69.

[385] McKittrick, "Plantation Futures," 10.

[386] Girard, "*Rebelles* with a Cause," 69.

Nonetheless, the disturbance of structural gendered and sexual hierarchies is not palatable to many – especially when Black masculinity and Black humanity, more broadly, are under assault – thus resulting in Black women's admonishment in society and within their own communities. Within the context of emancipated Saint-Domingue, while Fick and Kafka suggest that the men *cultivateurs* were mostly in agreement with the protestations of their female counterparts, I suggest that the pernicious inner workings of heteropatriarchy were still at play. Indeed, Hilary Beckles argues that during the epoch of slavery, enslaved men shared particular patriarchal values with white men, mostly through assertions of masculine authority and power over women.[387] As one of the few forms of power that enslaved men could exercise, this type masculine authority often expressed itself in a sexual manner, mostly through sexual assault. For example, Bernard Moitt draws attention to the *Courir les filles* practice, where Saint-Domingue's white planters and overseers would "allow" Black men to exercise their male power, by giving them a leave from estates "to wander through the countryside in search for sex," resulting in increased violent sexual assault and kidnapping.[388] To be clear, I am not attempting to make the facile argument that all gendered and sexual inequalities within Black communities in the Atlantic World were solely influenced by the ethos and practices of white Western colonial patriarchy, as various and different types of patriarchal formations already existed in West African populations.[389] Rather, I am denoting a specific construction of hegemonic Black masculinity in Saint-Domingue that was greatly influenced by heteropatriarchy ideologies

[387] Beckles, "Black Masculinity in Caribbean Slavery," 238

[388] Ibid. See also, Bernard Moitt, "Women, Work and Resistance in the French Caribbean during Slavery, 1700-1848," in *Engendering History: Caribbean Women in Historical Perspective*, ed. Verene Shepherd, Bridget Brereton and Barbara Bailey (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 1995).

[389] See, Robin Law, *The Slave Coast of West Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); Anne Hilton, *The Kingdom of the Congo* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

imposed by white men through colonialism, plantocratic arrangements, emancipation decrees and retaliation against resistance practices. Specifically, Polverel's plea to Black workers to basically "check their women" – a plea hinging on a sense of male superiority – might not have translated into a quelling of revolutionary impulses on the agricultural front of the Haitian Revolution, however the appeal to a heteropatriarchal construction of masculinity linked to the ideals of family and patriotic values, laid a strong foundation for the gender ideologies of post-Independence Haiti.

This adherence to heteropatriarchal notions of masculine political and economic authority, and sexual and domestic dominance are part and parcel of the eroding of the Black Radical Tradition's liberatory values that were central to the Haitian Revolution. To clarify and specify the meaning of this section's title, "Imperial Molding of Heteropatriarchal Scabs," I am not insinuating that the men *cultivateurs* were literal "scabs" who opposed worker solidarity with each other or with women.[390] From the preceding discussion, there is ample evidence that male laborers often aligned with their female workfellows at the time. Rather, I am suggesting that the many colonial heteropatriarchal influences contributed to the construction of Black martial masculinity – which is heralded as the main catalyst of the Haitian Revolution – essentially eroding the full potential of the Black Radical Tradition. Rooted in labor history and labor political movements, the term "scab" – meaning a strike breaker – can be a generative metaphor for independent Haiti's surrendering of gender liberatory principles. Since Black women's labor

[390] Considering the racial violence endured by Black men workers (particularly in the U.S.) who were deemed scabs, who were prohibited from joining unions, who were used as cheaper labor to supplement striking white workers, or who, simply put, were burdened multivalently by racial capitalism, I want to stress that the Black men laborers of Saint-Domingue are not the ones I link to strike-breakers. Rather, by using such an identifier, I am attempting to personify the racial capitalist system to disentangle individualist notions of responsibility under precarity, that create divisions between laborers, preventing solidarity. In the context of the women *cultivateurs* of Saint-Domingue, I am emphasizing that heteropatriarchy and masculinist ideals are enmeshed in these distressing economic processes.

was so integral to the unfolding of the Haitian Revolution, and their resistance to the edicts of the new plantation regime upheld the ideologies of Black Radicalism, the ensuing chauvinistic formation of the Black Republic (and Kingdom) reflects as a betrayal of worker solidarity. Put another way, the scabs identified here are structural and embodied within the masculinist state apparatus, as they reveal the imbrication of racial capitalism with gendered capitalism.

Using the language of labor politics to describe this treachery also evokes the spatial imaginary of the picket line – which in today's reality defines the gathering of striking workers and allies outside a workplace – that perhaps, could be re-interpreted through sensuous marronage, as the congregation of Ezili's assemblages led by Dantò. Returning to the heroine of the Bois-Caïman ceremony discussed in chapter one, Ezili Dantò – who is often personified as a hard-working Black peasant woman – allows an opening to think through her relationship to labor and land, and to reflect on Vodou more broadly, as the spiritual tradition of the masses, the peasants, and thus the descendant of enslaved workers. In this context, crossing the picket line would refer to a breach with the ancestors and *lwas* whose cartography of the land and freedom-making possibilities, represents vastly different tenets than those of the postrevolutionary Haitian state. Furthermore, considering the limitations and eventual banning of Vodou practices in post-Independence Haiti, alongside the masculinist, militaristic and heteropatriarchal state ideologies, it becomes evident that Black women's liberatory possibilities engendered through resistance and through Ezili's assemblages are incongruent, and even deemed criminal in the Haitian state. Essentially, being able to re-map plantation geographies through the archival glimpse of women *cultivateurs'* resistance, traces a genealogy of Black feminist labor activism that is remembered and valued through Vodou's landscape.

Throughout this analysis, I have highlighted the ways in which Black women's labor, geographies and sexuality are intertwined, and require a symbiotic examination when deciphering sites of struggle, unfreedom, resistance, rebellion, freedom dreams and Black liberation. Hence, when paying attention to the gendered processes of emancipation, the racial politics of republicanism and the practices of "reformed" plantation economies, it becomes possible to see the intermingled structural inequities that remained after Haitian Independence. Indeed, the postrevolutionary second-class citizenship of Black women, along with the resurgence of Black masculine national identity, were intimately tied to unequal elitist governance that emerged after Independence, eschewing any kind of working-class solidarity. During the imperial slavery epoch, white supremacy and racial and gendered capitalism created hierarchal divisions through race, legal status and gender. Later this same ethos shaped cultural-nationalist, pronatalist and state-sanctioned model of sex and family in Haiti, erasing many of the radical epistemes of the Haitian Revolution. The formerly enslaved women who, along with men, fought and labored to achieve Haiti's freedom, were rewarded with a nation-state designed to suit solely masculine interest. Black women's resistance to exploitative labor practices, to restrictions of bodily and sexual agency, and to coerced heteropatriarchy, were in fact driving forces towards dismantling larger racial, classed and gendered structural inequalities fomented by colonialism and empire. Examining the quelling of these Black resistance efforts opens an arena to examine the unmet promises of the Haitian Revolution. These are made much clearer through an analysis of post-Independence literature, where the autopoiesis of French ideals dominate, but where glimpses of Black queer futurity begin to emerge.

Haitian Independence and Gendered Nation Building

The culmination of the Haitian Revolution and the representative beacon of Haiti's freedom was, and still is, the accomplishment of national Independence. Accompanied by a period of triumphant aesthetic and cultural production to match this political victory, the literature and other artistic endeavors following the 1804 proclamation of independence heralded the illustrious fight against enslavement and colonial tyranny, as well as the construction of a representative national identity. The creation of Haiti encompassed many symbolic nods to Indigeneity, African cultures, French republican ideals and of course, the dynamic creolization and hybridity of cultures of colonial Saint-Domingue and of the revolutionary era. Considering that the archival literary documents of the era were written by the most privileged member of society, much of the poetry and fictional accounts – like the pamphlets, legal mandates, proclamations, and national mottos of the time – embraced French revolutionary symbolism. Particularly, the French maxim of *liberté, egalité, fraternité* was subsumed by marginalized socio-racial groups that were, ironically, fighting against that same colony's oppressive plantocratic and racist system. Indeed, Carlo Célius explains how these revolutionary ideals gave meaning to the rebellious actions of the major players of the Haitian Revolution: the enslaved were fighting for liberty, the freed men of color for equality, and the concept of fraternity manifested when these, oftentimes, rival groups, came together to defeat a common threat.[391] While liberty and equality seemed more aspirational, fraternity represented more so the experiential part of the Haitian Revolution. Unfortunately, the masculine impetus of brotherhood obscures alternative kinds of solidarity and kinship structures that were integral to the fight for Black liberation, such as spiritual, sensuous, and queer filiations.

[391] Carlo Célius, "Neoclassicism and the Haitian Revolution," In *The World of the Haitian Revolution*, eds. David Patrick Geggus and Norman Fiering (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 360

This clever readaptation of revolutionary and universalist principles came to highlight humanist principles, which consisted of "emphasizing the humanity of all *men*, including those born in slavery."[392] Herein lies part of the problem. Although the ground-breaking slogan was reformulated to adjust to the realities of the Haitian Revolution, much of it was still based on events and decrees of the French Revolution, which reinforced a patriarchal order. For instance, the Reign of Terror saw a violent backlash against women's political action. Napolean Bonaparte later codified patriarchal law in his Civil Code, stripping French women of their political voice and civil autonomy.[393] Although not necessarily all-encompassing, these imperial influences, along with those discussed earlier during the emancipation days of Saint-Domingue, still resonate in the post-Haitian Independence era. It is also important to note that even before the Haitian Revolution, an enslaved woman's path to manumission and/or emancipation was usually marked by precarious sexual or familial relations with white men, while an enslaved man could be emancipated through military service.[394] The societal value ascribed to those gendered types of emancipation were stark as freed men's martial service "connoted respectability, citizenship and public service," while women's freedom "often came at the price of sexual vulnerability, non-citizenship, and dependence on private relationships."[395] Moreover, as citizenship became

[392] Célius, "Neoclassicism and the Haitian Revolution," 361. Emphasis mine.

[393] Peabody, "Négresse, Mulâtresse, Citoyenne," 66.

[394] To specify, women got manumitted a lot more often than men in the pre-revolutionary era. However, as Mimi Sheller states, "Throughout the Americas, there was a strong link between men's emancipation and military service; male slaves were manumitted in return for risking their lives by almost every colonial power during most outbreaks of major warfare in the Americas, including the freeing of slave soldiers during the Haitian Revolution, the U.S. Civil War, and the Cuban Ten Years' War." See, Sheller, *Citizenship from Below,* 153. See also, Bush, *Slave Women in Caribbean Society*; David Geggus, "Saint-Domingue on the Eve of the Haitian Revolution," In *The World of the Haitian Revolution,* eds. David Patrick Geggus and Norman Fiering (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009); Colwill, "'Fêtes de l'Hymen, Fêtes de la Liberté'"; Peabody, "Négresse, Mulâtresse, Citoyenne"; Jenson, *Beyond the Slave Narrative*.

[395] Sheller, *Citizenship from Below,* 153.

concomitant with military service for men, it also trickled down to political participation and land ownership. Concurrently, the economic and political impact of owning estates and former plantations went hand in hand with patriarchal ideals of ownership of women and their sexual agency.

As female bodily sovereignty was intimately connected to land sovereignty, paternalism and family were associated with a masculine and heroic national identity. Indeed, the writing of elite men at the time described Haiti as the "mother of African liberty," an island not only liberated by its martial heroes and leaders, but one that also needed the protection bestowed by its male citizens as fathers, husbands and sons.[396] This adoption of the motif of the feminization of land paradoxically reinforced colonial, imperial and patriarchal ideologies, likening women's bodies and sexuality to exploitation, conquest and accumulation. Also, under these logics, the image of the nuclear family and its heteropatriarchal underpinnings became the ideals of Haitian society, representing the hope for the future of the nation. Indeed, the implication of this connection to land was that liberty has been birthed by the mother. However, utilizing Edouard Glissant's generative notion of the "poetics of landscapes," and Max Hantel's meditations on translation – which he understands as bringing together the grammatical passages between languages through spatial analysis[397] – reveals a dichotomous symbolic representation of land and nation that reinforced the gendered hierarchal framework of post-Independence Haiti. In fact, many poets of the era referred to the Haitian terrain as *Patrie*, etymologically indicating paternal and national linkage, which appropriately translates into "fatherland" in English.

[396] Ibid., 13.

[397] Hantel, "Rhizomes and the Space of Translation."

At times, proclamations of the fatherland were juxtaposed with names of leaders and/or heroes of the Haitian Revolution, such as in the 1817 poem "Haitians all, come and rally round" (*Haytiens, rallions-nous*)[398] by the simple anonymous pen name A Haitian (*Un Haytien*). In this poem, the conclusion of each stanza repeats:

Chantons tous vive PÉTION!	"Long live PÉTION," sing everyone!
Vive! Vive notre PATRIE!	"Long live the FATHERLAND! All Hail!"[399]

Here, Alexandre Pétion, one of the founding fathers of Haiti, is directly linked to the nation, the fatherland, highlighting the masculine heroic nationalism embodied in understandings of Haitian national identity. Moreover, the French refrain presents a homophonous relationship between *PÉTION* and *PATRIE,* further strengthening the association between head of state and the state itself through aural and visual analogy.[400] Other poems, such as Antoine Dupré's "O you, ancestral lord! O Sun (Last Sigh of a Haitian)" (*Soleil, dieu de mes ancêtres [Dernier soupir d'un Haïtien]*),[401] juxtapose parental terrestrial metaphors to further signify the national ideologies that denotes passive/active gendered dichotomies and hierarchies. The last stanza of the poem asserts:

Haïti, mère chérie,	Haiti, dear mother, take my hand
Reçois mes derniers adieux,	And hear this last farewell of mine;
Que l'amour de la patrie	Let the love of our fatherland
Enflamme tous nos neveux;	Emblazon our progeny's line.
Si quelque jour sur tes rives	If once again upon our shore

[398] The poem was originally featured in on October 1, 1817, in *L'Abeille haytienne*. See, *Poetry of Haitian Independence*, 265.

[399] *Poetry of Haitian Independence*, 42-45.

[400] Ibid., 266. The prominent theme of heroic nationalism is also apparent in the 1817 anonymous poem "Join now our voices" (*Réunissons nos voix*), where the fatherland and the President are simultaneously lauded. See, Ibid., 46-49.

[401] The poem was published in Hérald Dumesle in *Voyage dans le Nord d'Haïti, ou révélations des lieux et des monuments historiques*, presumably in 1815. See, *Poetry of Haitian Independence,* 264.

Reparaissent nos tyrans,	The tyrants their foul faces show,
Que leurs hordes fugitives	Let their hordes' blood forevermore
Servent d'engrais à nos champs.	Make our fields still more fertile grow![402]

A celebration of freedom is at the core of this poem. However, the feminized land of Haiti is tasked with "hear[ing]" a "last farewell," to embrace the fatherland, and to ensure a masculine progeniture. This pseudo-sexual analogy reads as an order to obey the rules of the nation, rules of the fatherland, which in this case are heavily patriarchal, relegating the role of women as incubator of male warriors and as agricultural workers meant to sow the fertile land. Moreover, praising the potential future military prowess of this masculine lineage, the poem reveals that the blood of their national foes will, fertilize Haitian fields, ensuring once more the prosperity of the nation through martial violence-anointed manhood. These poetic analogies liken motherhood as a symbolic placeholder for Haitian liberty, while actually affording little to the women of the nation. They simultaneously cement the authority of the land under the property of paternal, heteropatriarchal and militaristic manhood.

These poetic assertions of heroic and militaristic nationalism, along with heteropatriarchal ideals of superiority and paternal control, were proclaimed not only through the aspirational domain of literature, but were also encompassed within legal national frameworks, legitimizing masculine martial power and familial ideologies. For instance, under the kingdom of Henri Christophe, reinforcement of a nuclear family life and structure was bolstered by the *Code Henri*. Strengthening paternalism, these laws dictated that proprietors abide by "paternal solicitude" vis-à-vis their laborers, and also established paternal power within marital and parental unions.[403] The *Code* also enacted legislation to police women's sexuality and childbirth,

[402] Ibid., 38-41.
[403] See, Sheller, *Citizenship from Below*, 154. In the *Code Henri* itself, paternal power is described as "*puissance paternelle*" and specifically describes that "La puissance paternelle résidé dans la seule personne du père durant le cours du mariage." See, Henri Christophe, *Code Henry* (Cap Henry: Chez P. Roux, Imprimeur du Roi, 1812), 41,

outlawing "female licentiousness," exempting pregnant women and nursing mothers from agricultural labor in order to encourage childbirth, and legislating harsh punishment for anyone who might have forced a pregnant woman to have an abortion. Interestingly, if a pregnant women committed a serious crime warranting execution, she would have to bring the child up to term before being executed, essentially serving a an incubator to the nation.[404] The focus on women's reproductive capacities under Christophe's monarchical rule, clearly establishes the molding for post-Independence gender relations, suiting the masculine interests of the state.[405] The state's efforts to restrict women's supposed lasciviousness, and thus to confine women's sexual lives to the limited boundaries of marriage and reproduction, reveals a pervasive attempt to mold the new nation through paternalistic, heteronormative, pronatalist and heteropatriarchal constructions of the family. The symbiosis between these legislated, state-sanctioned familial values and the poetic production of the time, reflects the ongoing attempt to construct a Black national identity that sought to equate the masculinization of power with egalitarian ideals.

From the inaugural years of post-Independence Haiti on, many oscillating relationships between political leaders, military generals, artists and writers, and other elites contributed to the formation of the state's values and ideologies. In particular, many of the literary and artistic players of the time fluctuated their allegiances according to the political turmoil and

---

http://archive.org/details/codehenry00hait/page/n41/mode/2up. In turn, "paternal solicitude" refers to paternal care, which suggests that proprietors were encouraged to mirror the family relationship with their workers. This fatherly love however, replicates the hierarchal structure of the family and of the state vis-à-vis its citizens.

[404] See, Sheller, *Citizenship from Below*, 154; Christophe, *Code Henry*, 527, 578.

[405] Although I am detailing the legislative structures of the Christophe monarchy, it is important to note that the adjacent and following political regimes also encompassed laws that relegated women to marginalized positions. For instance, during Alexandre Pétion's presidency, in the Republic of southern Haiti, women were "constitutionally disfranchised along with 'criminals, idiots, and menials'." Moreover, under his successor General Jean-Pierre Boyer, legal decrees instituted that Haitian women who married foreigners would lose their citizenship status, which was already limited since "women were excluded from military service, from voting and from holding political office." See, Sheller, *Citizenship from Below*, 154-155.

circumstances of the postcolonial era. One illustrious figure was Juste Chanlatte, a poet, newspaper editor, general and public servant whose career started during the Haitian Revolution as a secretary to Jean-Jacques Dessalines, and continued to expand during the reign of King Henri Christophe. After the collapse of the Christophe regime, Chanlatte joined Christophe's successor Jean-Pierre Boyer and served as a public figure for the Republic of Haiti. His fluctuating political partisanship and his corresponding poetry offer great insight into the various powerful influences that likely motivated the ideologies espoused in his literary works. Within the wider context of Haitian Independence poetry, his poem "What Sweet Chants, these, that Strike, Entrance my Ear? (Cantata: The City of Cap-Henry)" (*Quels accents tout à coup ont charmé mon oreille* [*Cantate : La Ville du Cap-Henry*]),[406] written under the tutelage of King Christophe, offers a plurality of chorus voices that are not solely masculine. Indeed, women and children's voices were included within the voice of *the people*, perhaps hinting at a desire for an all-encompassing national unity. However, "giving voice" and "providing agency" to marginalized segments of the populations does not always translate into actual advocacy, possibly obscuring other motives. Indeed, these "voices" articulate similar values to the aforementioned patriarchal, paternalistic and militaristic dictates as they assert:

Les Femmes	*The Women*
A l'état nos flancs généreux *Toujours se montreront propices.*	To the state, ever generous, Our wombs will prove what wombs are for!
Les Hommes	*The Men*
Avec quelle ardeur nos neveux *Jalouseront nos cicatrices!*	Ardent, the sons who follow us Will envy us our scars of war!

[406] This poem was one of many literary texts in Julien Prévost's 1814 *Relation des glorieux événements qui ont porté Leurs Majestés sur le trône d'Hayti.* It was also sung at the coronation of Henry Christophe on June 2, 1811. See, *Poetry of Haitian Independence*, 260-261.

Les Enfants	*The Children*
Aux coups que porteront nos bras plus aguerris, *Nos glorieux aïeux reconnaîtront leurs fils.*	By our arms, long inured against the foe, Our valorous forebears shall their offspring know.[407]

A quick overview of these stanzas reveals many familial and nationalist themes, that ascribe roles of national belonging through gendered modalities. The women's chorus begins by reinforcing the pronatalist ideologies reflected in some of the previously mentioned legislation, whilst gleefully relinquishing their reproductive capabilities to the state. This bold poetic reprise further buttresses the relation between the state and family, but without requiring the family to stand-in as a metonym for the state; these allegorical women are unapologetically praising the conceptual framework of birthing for the nation. To be clear, I am not suggesting that it would be somehow preposterous for women to espouse pride in the construction of a Haitian nation through reproduction. In fact, after the vicious wars of the Haitian Revolution, the need to re-populate a burgeoning state could definitely be seen as urgent and necessary. However, the eager surrendering of their wombs seems questionable given the fact that they just endured colonial and French republican regimes that also severely limited their reproductive agency and the authority over their offspring. In fact, the earlier analysis in this very chapter delineated how aware ex-enslaved women were of their multiple laboring faculties, and how they resisted the control of their bodies. In turn, the men's chorus lauds the exploits of martial masculinity reinforcing the importance of the iconography of the Black male warrior in creating a national identity. The scars enact a remembrance of struggle that evolved into the promise land of a Black independent nation. Finally, the children's chorus also acclaims the military feats of the past and establish the importance of a transgenerational remembrance of the heroic fight for liberation.

[407] *Poetry of Haitian Independence*, 22-31.

However, the fact that women were barred from entering military positions, and that the original French version of the poem refers to *fils* – to which the more accurate English translation would be "sons" instead of "offspring" – implies that the children referenced here, the ones that must embody the collective memory of the Haitian Revolution, are solely male. Therefore, the future of the Haitian nation, from civic to military duties, is ensured through the inheritance of manhood, relegating women as conduits for male citizens and warriors.

These allegorical ties between the nation and the family further highlight how the role of women as mothers was also symbolically tied to ideas of Haiti as the "mother of African liberty." Partly inspired by the French republican "Marianne" figure – the French revolutionary female personification of liberty[408] – this symbolic praising of womanhood and motherhood through the feminization of land and/or though the embodiment of revolutionary concepts of freedom, simultaneously reinforced the image of Black men as soldiers, liberators and protectors of the nation. Indeed, the type of praiseworthy womanhood that is exalted in these metaphors seems to consign women to passivity, which translates into sexual docility for the state. Adding insult to injury, these sexual national duties do not come with any other material gains, rights of citizenship, or private and/or public authority. Taking seriously the relationship between politics and poetics allows us to examine how paternalism, heteropatriarchy, hegemonic martial masculinity and national procreation can become normalized and potentially adopted by the populace.

Moreover, paying attention to the neoclassical styles and tropes utilized by Haitian intellectuals that mimic a certain French literary tradition can illuminate instances of what I

[408] Sheller, *Citizenship from Below,* 161.

understand to be colonial autopoiesis. McKittrick reformulates the cellular notion of autopoiesis to theorize how the "practice of being human is relational to and embedded in a living-system that replicates itself and, in this, replicates what it means to be human according to the *parameters of the existing social system*."[409] Furthermore, this process repeats "the conditions of our present mode of existence," to essentially replicate and "keep the living-system […] living."[410] Through this lens, I argue that heteropatriarchal values and the construction of a Black national masculinity represent modalities of a gendered status quo that has been influenced by hegemonic structures of colonial masculinity, encompassing property rights, public governance and dominion over women.[411] Along with the gender-based emancipation and labor decrees of Saint-Domingue that had already established a hierarchy of citizenship, post-Independence politics and poetics highlight these lingering and replicating manifestations of colonial autopoiesis. In other words, the work of repetition and replication discernable through Haitian Independence poetry abets the normalization of anti-egalitarian gendered systems, revealing that the story of the Haitian Revolution is not so much one of successful decolonization, as much as one of a complex modernity that appropriated (or reproduced) elements of colonialism's gendered logic.[412] However, this realization opens up possibilities to look beyond the normalization of these discourses, revealing Black women's poetic re-narrations, what Sheller's calls "embodied freedom," and what I understand as sensuous marronage.

---

[409] McKittrick, *Dear Science and Other Stories*, 133. Her emphasis.

[410] Ibid.

[411] For more on the influence of white colonial hegemonic masculinity on the ensuing construction of a Black national masculinity see, Beckles, "Black Masculinity in Caribbean Slavery," 227.

[412] For more insights on discourses on modernity and the Haitian Revolution see, Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity*; Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*; Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History.* Also see, chapter two.

Accordingly, Juste Chanlatte's "Why ply you your fickle ministry? (Ode to Independence)" (Dans ton variable contour [Ode à l'Indépendance])"[413] underscores the mechanisms of repetition and replication that create hegemonic narratives of belonging and construct the nation, while also intimating the counter-hegemonic "embodied femininities" that are always in opposition to state efforts to control, limit and discipline sexuality, gender, fertility, and labor relations.[414] Reprising the cantata form with multiple orchestral and singing roles, this Ode was written under Boyer's reign, thus showcasing a differing political allegiance and a strong reverence for the nation's Independence. Amongst the twenty-one stanzas of the poem, Chanlatte gives voice to a sub-lieutenant of the guard and to an allegorical female warrior-mother. Correspondingly, they assert:

Un Sous-Lieutenant de la Garde	*A Sublieutenant of the Guard*
Pour tes nourrissons attendris	With fire, O spirit limitless!
Que ton feu chaque jour renaisse	Inspire your progeny to come
Et que de nos autels chéris	As you – love-worthy priestess! – bless
Tu sois l'adorable prêtresse!	The altars of our glorydom!
Échauffe, épure nos esprits,	Make pure our souls in flame, and – yes! –
D'Haïti propice déesse	Goddess of Haiti, favorsome,
Éternise en ces lieux fleuris	Preserve in flowering loveliness
De tes trésors la douce ivresse.	Your treasures' sweet delirium
Doux fruit d'une male fierté,	**All hail, fair fruit of manly pride,**
Compagne de la Liberté,	**Freedom's mate, marching side by side,**
Je te salue, Indépendance!	**O Independence! Blest be you,**
Don précieux des Immortels,	**Immortals' precious gift! The fame**
De tes favoris la vaillance	**Of valiant champions' derring-do**
Ici, t'élève des autels.	**Builds altar-shrines unto your name.**[415]
Une Jeune Guerrière	*A Young Female Warrior*

[413] This poem was first published in *Le Télégraphe* on December 30, 1821. See, *Poetry of Haitian Independence,* 268.

[414] It is worth noting that alternative "embodied masculinities" are also in tension with this state apparatus as seen in chapter two. See also, Sheller, *Citizenship from Below*, 27.

[415] *Poetry of Haitian Independence,* 64-83. Emphasis mine.

Haitiens! soyez vainqueurs,	Haitian lads! Victors be! Thereby
Lavez nos antiques blessures;	You cleanse our long-wrought wounds. For lo!
Pour s'insinuer dans nos coeurs,	Such is the surest path to ply
Oui, c'est la route la plus sure.	If you would reach our hearts. For no
Ah! Qu'un amant est seducteur	Lover shall fail to satisfy,
Quand son sang devient sa parure.	When his blood beautifies the beau!
Eh! Comment rejeter l'ardeur	Can we a lover's zeal deny
De qui venge, ici, la nature?	When he avenges nature's woe?
Doux fruit d'une male fierté,	**All hail, fair fruit of manly pride,**
Compagne de la Liberté,	**Freedom's mate, marching side by side,**
Je te salue, Indépendance!	**O Independence! Blest be you,**
Don précieux des Immortels,	**Immortals' precious gift! The fame**
De tes favoris la vaillance	**Of valiant champions' derring-do**
Ici, t'élève des autels.	**Builds altar-shrines unto your name.**[416]

Firstly, a striking feature of the poem that is also apparent in these excerpts, is that every stanza finishes with the same six-line refrain. At first glance, this autopoiesis-like repetition seems to replicate the bombastic praising of masculine militarism in acquiring freedom, as all the characters hail the "fair fruit of manly pride." Nonetheless, this chorus also embodies spiritual components through references to the ancestors as "Immortals," embedding the dead within the collective memory of the nation. Also, such remembrance requires a spatial reference of "alter-shrines," insinuating a ritual practice, within a ritual space that heralds the spiritual plane of national pride. Some Black revolutionary fissures are further revealed in the sub-lieutenant's stanza, when he not only refers to the embodied Independence figure as a "love-worthy priestess," but Chanlatte also likens Haiti itself to a goddess. Here, the counter-archives of Vodou offer a different reading of the land of Haiti and of its female citizens, by particularly invoking a female spiritual leader and God-like woman figure. One of the most famous priestesses of the formidable narrative of the Haitian Revolution is Cécile Fatiman, and considering her exploits at the Bois-Caïman ceremony, it would seem only fitting to laud her in a

[416] Ibid. Emphasis mine.

celebratory poem about Haitian Independence. Furthermore, the juxtaposition of "love-worthy" and priestess draws a link between Fatiman and her spiritual corollary Ezili – the Vodou *lwa* of Love. Illuminating their embodied and spiritual relationship within this poem that praises Haitian Independence, brings forward alternative possibilities of fulfilling a more egalitarian, sensuous and inclusive Haitian national identity.[417] Indeed, understanding the terrain of Haiti through the spiritual embodiment of Ezili locates Black women's geographies by transforming the "ungendered/ungeographic" topography of the land and nation. Similar to the ways in which the women *cultivateurs* resisted the sexual and laboring domination of the feminized space of the plantation, these poetic landscapes highlight the "secretive histories that can be found in the plots."[418]

Alternatively, the young female warrior's stanza encompasses an imbrication of national pride, militarism and sexuality, albeit not in the typical masculine and patriarchal way. Taking into consideration that women under the Boyer regime were not able to join the military, the inclusion of such a character seems to contradict the legislation of the time. However, upon closer inspection, this woman warrior does not invoke any first-hand accounts of martial duty. Rather, her whole verse appears to be celebrating the militaristic achievements of her male paramour. Indeed, her lines incorporate a great deal of suggestive, sexual and violent imagery as she is aroused by the thought of seeing her lover covered in blood. This erotization of violence and battle, suggests that fighting for freedom and liberty is an irresistible trait, creating amorous feelings towards military men. This unabashed bloody and carnal longing shifts the limited and

[417] See chapter one for more on the sensuous possibilities of Ezili.

[418] Here I am referencing McKittrick's conceptual double entendre of the plot as a literary central narrative and as a material agricultural terrain where personal/community crops are grown on the plantation. See, McKittrick, "Plantation Futures," 10.

restrictive sexual narratives of Haitian women, affording them a type of sexual agency that is not bound within the confines of marriage, or that is not limited to pregnancy or reproduction. The juxtaposition of sexual longing with resistance against Haiti's foes, illustrates how "oppositional militarism underpinned the politics of men as well as women."[419] In this case, female militaristic participation does not involve first-hand combat, but rather requires sexual desire, a longing that is intertwined with notions of freedom and Independence. Indeed, what are the possibilities of creating a national identity around a feminine articulation of militarism that is directly linked to sensuality, desire and sexual agency? What alternative types of filiation, relation and community can arise through Black women's sexual freedom? And how does this type of sensuous framing alter the possibilities of the Black Radical Tradition?

These poetic analyses disrupt and reconceptualize the autopoiesis mantra of repetition and replication, imagining alternative constructs of national belonging through sensuous marronage. Thinking of Black liberation through modalities of sensual desire reveals ways of understanding Black women's sexuality outside of sexual labor and productive, reproductive, nationalistic tropes. Here, I am reminded of Treva Lindsey's and Jessica Marie Johnson's generative mediations in their article, "Searching for Climax: Black Erotic Lives in Slavery and Freedom," where they attest that "reimagining black women as historiographically erotic subjects opens narratives of slavery to a radical black sexual interiority."[420] Taking their reflection further, I argue that assessing this radical Black sexual interiority through a lens of desire, and sexual freedom and autonomy re-articulates a more promising and democratic notion of Black liberation. In view of post-Independent Haiti and its constrictive heteropatriarchal and

[419] Beckles, "Black Masculinity in Caribbean Slavery," 240.

[420] Lindsey and Johnson, "Searching for Climax," 171.

proto-nationalist demands of Black female sexuality, I read the fragments of resistance articulated through women's protests of labor exploitation, through the echoes of Ezili in poetry, and through an expression of sexual desire as freedom, as glimpses of sensuous freedom dreams that hint towards a Black queer futurity.

In the inventive space of the Caribbean, I understand notions of Black queer futurity as being in relation with understandings of queer temporality and with the edicts of Black diasporic and feminist thought. Kara Keeling's formulation of queer temporality is useful here, as it "names that dimension of the unpredictable and the unknowable in time that governs errant, eccentric, promiscuous, and unexpected organizations of social life."[421] Through this lens, whilst locating Haiti "within and against discourses of European Enlightenment modernity,"[422] I surmise that the queer interpretations of temporal and spatial frames of the Haitian Revolution can assist in unravelling alternate renditions of Black liberation. Moreover, as many Black Queer Studies scholars attest, Black feminism can be read as a queer project, one concerned with interiority, affect and the erotic as methodological interventions that look towards the future.[423] The instances of sensuous marronage in this chapter hint towards a longing for freedom that is queer as it "defies normative politico-economic structures that seek to reproduce only violent futures for black bodies"[424] and in particular women's and non-normative gendered bodies. In

[421] Kara Keeling, *Queer Times, Black Futures* (New York: New York University Press, 2019), 19.

[422] In a similar way Rinaldo Walcott locates the "Caribbean within and against discourses of European Enlightenment modernity […] to articulate a cosmo-political ethics of reading and interpretation," in his piece "Genres of Human: Multiculturalism, Cosmo-politics, and the Caribbean Basin," in *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis*, ed. Katherine McKittrick (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 186.

[423] See, Rinaldo Walcott, "Somewhere Out There: The New Black Queer Theory," in *Blackness and Sexualities*, eds. M. Wright and A. Schuhmann (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2007), 29–40; Gill, *Erotic Islands*; Allen, "Black/Queer/Diaspora at the Current Conjuncture; Tinsley, *Ezili's Mirrors.*

[424] Tinsley, *Ezili's Mirrors,* 191.

other words, sensuous marronage queers as it invokes mobilization towards a future collectivity where Black folks exist and thrive without the constraints of unfreedoms that – as this chapter shows – are intertwined with heteropatriarchy, and racial and gendered capitalism.

CODA

The Future of Sensuous Marronage

> For me, narrating counter-histories of slavery has always been inseparable from writing a history of present, by which I mean the incomplete project of freedom, and the precarious life of the ex-slave, a condition defined by the vulnerability to premature death and to gratuitous acts of violence. As I understand it, a history of the present strives to illuminate the intimacy of our experience with the lives of the dead, to write our now as it is interrupted by this past, and to imagine a *free state*, not as the time before captivity or slavery, but rather as the anticipated future of this writing.
>
> - Saidiya Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," 4.

Kreyon pep la pa gen gonm

- Haitian Proverb

The whole process of putting together this dissertation project – the initial research, the navigating of the colonial archive, the formulation of theoretical frameworks, and of course, the writing – has made me aware, and perhaps, more attuned to my own personal understanding of embodied sensuous knowledges. I will never forget the haunting presence I felt at the *Archives Nationales d'Outre-Mer* in Aix-en-Provence, when reading the microfiches – alone in a dark dusty room – containing letter after letter of planters' indignant petulance over property damage, while repeating similar tropes of slave savagery. As they were condemning the chaotic, violent, and disorderly actions of the early insurgent era of the Revolution, they also somehow attributed no agency to the enslaved in fomenting the rebellion of Saint-Domingue. The "unthinkableness" of the Haitian Revolution, rang even louder in that moment, as days prior, upon my arrival to the colonial archival space, I was instructed by an attendant that I must have been mistaken, because they did not have anything here about the Saint-Domingue rebellion and/or the Haitian Revolution. I was incensed. Livid. Gatekeeping her precious French archives, she was trying to

erase this revolutionary history as her ancestors had done before her. The colonial erasure was continuous, in fact, it had never stopped. The haunting lingered on.

Nodding to the "afterlives of slavery" in the epigraph above, Saidiya Hartman links counter-narratives of slavery to the current "incomplete project of freedom." Thinking through the Haitian Revolution – which is considered a beacon of liberty for the Black diaspora – one could think of its genealogy as the democratic potential that it held and continues to hold, while simultaneously recognizing its constant tension with the powerful forces of the "afterlives of slavery." Before this research, whenever I would think about the theoretical framework of the "afterlives of slavery," my mind aptly went to the material conditions prescribed by the concept, primarily the consequences of structures of anti-blackness that impact Black life today. Through the process of writing my dissertation, I realized how much the concept also encapsulates the notion of life after death, not simply as a historical cause-and-effect outlook, but as a spiritual, and even esoteric framework of futurity. Through a lens of resistance, the ghosts and spirits that live on from the brutal exploitation of enslavement, and through the momentous events of the Haitian Revolution, also refuse to be erased. Indeed, as my doctoral project shows, the Haitian Revolution is not over. It never stopped. The limited historical frames offered by the colonial archives (and their imperial handmaiden) and by masculinist, militaristic, heteropatriarchal discourses, foreclose the potential to not only encounter other freedom-making epistemologies and methodologies, but also constrict alternative notions of Black diasporic liberation for the present and future. Nonetheless, the spirits are still there, haunting and embodying sensuous freedom dreams.

The lingering resilience of sensuous marronage' ontologies, epistemologies and methodologies is perfectly exemplified by the Haitian proverb in the epigraph, which translates

to, “the people’s pencil has no eraser.” Highlighting the resistance “from below,” the people’s history written with this metaphorical pencil is never wiped out and is always present. Sensuous marronage as a site of relief from the unfreedoms of colonial domination, slavery and its concomitant formulations of “flesh,” relies on what Edouard Glissant calls the “right to opacity,” the right to hold alternate conceptions of being in the world that resist Western modernity’s requirement for “transparency.”[425] Opacity is crucial to conceptions of Black liberation, since a “transparent” Black subject is considered an abjection according to Western and postcolonial taxonomies of humanness. However, by retrieving embodied, sensorial, sensual and spiritual memories within alternative archives, I suggest that Ezili’s sensuous assemblages, the possibilities entrenched in the figure of the trickster, and women’s laboring speculation and erotic desires for freedom, are uncovering a pathway to liberty that fervently calls for the dismantling of heteropatriarchy, rigid Western gender conceptions, and racial and gendered capitalism. Indeed, the project of Black liberation cannot be complete without these imperative requirements, and through the lens of sensuous marronage that is the main forewarning and takeaway from the Haitian Revolution.

Today, the colonial and imperial ghosts are as present as ever in Haiti. Mainly through neoliberal economic exploitation, imperial political entrenchment, and a heteropatriarchal, misogynistic and homophobic culture, the continuous and distinctive deployment of the “afterlives of slavery” in Haiti, reveals some of the most tragic aspects of a forsaken liberation project. However, the people’s pencil keeps on writing, and the sensuous marronage tactics of resistance still reverberate throughout the nation, and beyond. Using what Alexis Pauline Gumbs calls a queer intergenerational reading practice, we can see how sensuous marronage was enacted

[425] Glissant, *Poetics of Relation.*

through the years, and in the present, leaving traces of a Black feminist and queer radical collective consciousness that aims to re-define and build community, democracy and liberation.[426]

Although Haitian women were always at the forefront of resistance efforts – during and after the Haitian Revolution – it was not until the end of the U.S. occupation of 1915-1934, that they formalized their liberatory endeavors into a recognizable organization. Indeed, in 1934, the *Ligue Féminine d'Action Sociale* was founded among elite women, who brought forward a communal and inter-class cooperation model that sought to address the concerns of working-class women, such as encouraging literacy, founding a people's credit union, lobbying to open schools for girls, and demanding equal pay.[427] Although suppressed by the Duvalier regime (1957-1986), Haitian women continued to organize clandestinely, and on April 3, 1986 more than 30,000 Haitian women took to the streets of Port-au-Prince, demanding to be full democratic citizens in the post-dictatorship era. Organized by more than a dozen grassroots groups, the march highlighted issues such as sexual and gender-based violence, women's financial exclusion, and lack of access to health and education.[428] Although many formal legislative gains were met, such as the creation of the *Ministère à la Condition Feminine et aux Droits des Femmes* (MCFDF), they have not necessarily translated into a substantive cultural shift regarding gendered and sexual expectation. Nonetheless, veteran organizations like

[426] Alexis Pauline Gumbs, "We Can Learn to Mother Ourselves: The Queer Survival of Black feminism 1968-1996," (PhD diss., Duke University, 2010), 49.

[427] See, Myriam J. A. Chancy, *Framing Silence: Revolutionary Novels by Haitian Women* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997); Fania Noël, "Les Féministes Haïtiennes de Tous les Combats," *Ballast*, March 5, 2019, https://www.revue-ballast.fr/les-feministes-haitiennes-de-tous-les-combats/

[428] Perpetua Chery, "'Feminist' is a Dirty word in Haiti," *Woy Magazine*, January 31, 2017, http://woymagazine.com/2017/01/31/feminist-dirty-word-haiti/

Solidarite Fanm Ayisyèn (SOFA) which has been tirelessly advocating for democratic and women's rights for over 30 years, and the newer *Nègès Mawon*[429] feminist group that has been at the forefront of protesting the corrupted misuse of the PetroCaribe funds – as well as fighting patriarchal oppression through artistic endeavours – remain tied to activist concerns in the country. In fact, what I am trying to highlight through this brief genealogy, is that feminist/women's organizations have been the vanguard of Black liberation action in Haiti. Each time a national crisis occurs, Haitian feminists take center stage making demands and reorienting the trajectory of democracy to include women's rights, but also to fight against imperial, neoliberal and governmental oppression.[430] Like Ezili's assemblages and the women *cultivateurs* of the Haitian Revolution, these contemporary Black feminists are transforming the landscape of freedom as they see it, insisting on shifting the epistemologies of Black liberation through a woman-centered erotic awareness.

The particularity of Haitian history and culture not only impacts how sensuous marronage is deployed as a freedom episteme, but also influences how Black ontologies are asserted, creating self-determined ways of being and knowing. Haiti's most prominent LGBT rights organization *Kouraj*, has been advocating for queer of folks since 2011. However, while international news outlets will assert that they are an LGBT human rights organization, the members of *Kouraj* will emphasize that they are supporters and advocates for the *Communauté M.* Indeed, countering the universalization of Western rhetoric on sexual orientation and gender presentation, *Kouraj* demonstrates how identarian monikers do not reflect Haitian sexual realities. Highlighting the importance of self-affirming grammars, *Communauté M* refers to

[429] The term translates to Black marooned woman, hinting at the fugitive tactic of rebellion and liberation.

[430] "Haïti : comment les femmes secouent le monde politique," *Plateforme Altermondialiste*, January 19, 2020, https://alter.quebec/haiti-comment-les-femmes-secouent-le-monde-politique/

people who are *Masisi, Madivin, Makomer* or *Mix*.[431] Indeed, these designations are fluid and mirror the "gender indefiniteness" of the Black enslaved fugitives and of *Romaine la Prophètesse* of the Haitian Revolution. Moreover, on top of self-defining the sensuous and erotic Black self, *Kouraj* also strategically employs the opaque sexual and gendered structure of Haitian designations as a mode of refusal and resistance to the imposition of Western terminologies, which are used by U.S. Evangelicals to foment hatred and divide the Haitian population. Here, queer intergenerationality illuminates the ways in which sensuous and opaque Black ways of being from the past remain embodied as tactics of survival and refusal in the present. Furthermore, this non-identity-based notion of creative sexualities and genders is quite similar to Macharia's conception of "erotic diversity," and to Gloria Wekker's analysis of the self-construction of sexual subjectivities of working-class Afro-Surinamese women, who do *mati* work, suggesting a diasporic sexual self-determining ontology.[432] Indeed, I am suggesting that although the terrain and history of Haiti's postcolonial turn is quite distinctive – particularly because of the events of the Haitian Revolution – the embodied freedom dreams and lessons also resonate throughout the Black diaspora.

Through the process of researching and writing this dissertation, I discovered alternative ways to tell the formidable story of the Haitian Revolution and recognized that the desire for Black liberation is not solely told through narratives of violent masculinities, military exploits, and bloodshed. I also realized that the colonial ghosts and the "afterlives of slavery" do not

[431] *Masisi* refers to a male person who socially and /or in his sex life, plays a "feminine role." *Madivin* is a female person who has same-sex sexual relations, even if those are only episodically. It is less totalizing than the term lesbian, which is identity-based. *Makomer* is a male person \with a radically female identity, who is seen a godmother figure. *Mix* refers to someone who has sex with both sexes but does not identify with any of the categories above. See, Kouraj, "La Communauté M," https://www.kouraj.org/la-communaut-m

[432] See, Macharia, *Frottage*, 62-63; and see, Gloria Wekker, *The Politics of Passion: Women's Sexual Culture in the Afro-Surinamese Diaspora* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

completely overdetermined the conditions of Black life. This project allowed me to see, feel, hear, know and dream about the love and passion it took to make it through. Indeed, sensuous marronage took me there, through Ezili's beating heart, through Panurge's fugitive trickster alter-ego, and through the resistance of the fierce women *cultivateurs*. Their stories present a Black/Queer/Diaspora hope for a future that encompasses the liberation possibilities that some would deem "unthinkable." However, a queer intergenerational reading practice enables us to know that these sensuous actors, along with many others, did not give up on their freedom dreams, and are still holding on to them till this day. *Kenbe la, pa lage Ayiti.*

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Archives Consulted

Archives Nationales, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine and Paris (AN)

Archives Nationales d'Outre-mer, Aix-en-Provence (ANOM)

Secondary Sources

Agard-Jones, Vanessa. "What the Sands Remember." In "Black Queer Diaspora." Special issue, *GLQ* 18, no. 2-3 (2012): 325-346.

Alberti, Fay Bound. *Matters of the Heart: History, Medicine and Emotion*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Alexander, M. Jacqui. *Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory, and the Sacred*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2005.

Allen, Jafari S. "Black/Queer/Diaspora at the Current Conjuncture." In "Black Queer Diaspora." Special issue, *GLQ* 18, no. 2-3 (2012): 211-248.

Allen, Jafari S. *¡Venceremos? The Erotics of Black Self-making in Cuba*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011.

Ardouin, Beaubrun. *Études sur l'Histoire d'Haïti; Suivies de la Vie du Général J.-M. Borgella*, Tome Premier. Paris: Dézobry et E. Magdeleine, Lib.-Éditeurs, 1853. http://archive.org/details/tudessurlhisto01ardo.

Ardouin, Beaubrun. *Études sur l'Histoire d'Haïti; Suivies de la Vie du Général J.-M. Borgella, Tome Cinquième*. Paris: Dezobry et E. Magdeleine, Lib.-Éditeurs, 1854. https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k82876j.

Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. Translated by Hélène Iswolsky. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993.

Barkin, Doris. "Cuckolds and Codpieces: Early Modern Anxieties in Male Potency." PhD diss., City University of New York, 2015.

Beckles, Hilary. "Black Masculinity in Caribbean Slavery." In *Interrogating Caribbean Masculinities: Theoretical and Empirical Analyses*, edited by Rhoda E. Reddock, 225 243. Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2004.

Beckles, Hillary. *Centering Woman: Gender Discourses in Caribbean Slave Society*. Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 1999.

Beckles, Hilary. *Natural Rebels: A Social History of Enslaved Women in Barbados.* New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1989.

Beliso-De Jesús, Aisha M. *Electric Santería: Racial and Sexual Assemblages of Transnational Religion*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2015.

Bellegarde-Smith, Patrick. "The Gede: Vignettes of Life, Death, the Dead and Rebirth." *Journal of Haitian Studies, Bicentennial Issue* 10, no. 2 (Fall 2004): 162-167.

Bennett, Joseph and André Grétry. "The Great Composers. No XXIII. Grétry (Continued)." *The Musical times and Singing Class and Circular* 28, no. 532 (1887): 334-338.

Bey, Marquis. "Black Fugitivity Un/Gendered." *The Black Scholar* 49, no. 1 (2019): 5-62.

Browne, Simone. *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2015.

Brown, Karen McCarthy. "Afro-Caribbean Spirituality: A Haitian Case Study." In *Vodou in Haitian Life and Culture: Invisible Powers*, edited by Claudine Michel and Patrick Bellegarde-Smith, 1-26. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

Brown, Karen McCarthy. *Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.

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

Bush, Barbara. *Slave Women in Caribbean Society, 1650-1838*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990.

Byrd, Brandon R. *The Black Republic: African Americans and the Fate of Haiti*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019.

Cale, John G. "French Secular Music in Saint-Domingue (1750-1795) Viewed as a Factor in America's Musical Growth." Phd diss., Louisiana State University, 1971.

Camp, Stephanie M. H. *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004.

Campt, Tina M. *Listening to Images.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2017.

Carby, Hazel. *Race Men*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998.

Célius, Carlo. “Neoclassicism and the Haitian Revolution.” In *The World of the Haitian Revolution*, edited by David Patrick Geggus and Norman Fiering, 352-392. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009.

Chancy, Myriam J. A. *Framing Silence: Revolutionary Novels by Haitian Women*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997.

Chancy, Myriam J. A. *From Sugar to Revolution: Women’s Visions of Haiti, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic*. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2012.

Charlier, Etienne. *Aperçu sur la Formation Historique de la Nation Haïtienne*. Port-au-Prince: Presses Libres, 1954.

Christophe, Henri. *Code Henry*. Cap Henry: Chez P. Roux, Imprimeur du Roi, 1812. http://archive.org/details/codehenry00hait/page/n41/mode/2up.

Christophe, Marc A. “Ulrick Jean-Pierre’s ‘Cayman Wood Ceremony’.” *Bicentennial Issue of Journal of Haitian Studies* 10, no. 2 (Fall 2004): 52-55.

Clark, VèVè A. “Developing Diaspora Literacy and *Marasa* Consciousness.” *African and Afro Caribbean Performance* 50, issue 1 (May 2009): 9-18.

Coates, Carrol F. “Vodou in Haitian Literature.” In *Vodou in Haitian Life and Culture: Invisible Powers*, edited by Claudine Michel and Patrick Bellegarde-Smith, 181-198. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

Le Code Noir ou Édit du Roy, Servant de Règlement pour le Gouvernement & l'Administration de Justice & la Police des Isles Françaises de l'Amérique, & pour la Discipline & le Commerce des Nègres & Esclaves dans ledit Pays (Paris: Glaude Girard, [1685] 1735). https://archive.org/details/lecodenoirouedi00fran/page/8/mode/2up

Cohen, Cathy J. “Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?” *GLQ* (1997) 437-465.

Colwill, Elizabeth. “‘Fêtes de l’Hymen, Fêtes de la Liberté’ Marriage, Manhood, and Emancipation in Revolutionary Saint-Domingue.” In *The World of the Haitian Revolution*, edited by David Patrick Geggus and Norman Fiering, 125-155. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009.

Dalmas, Antoine and Charles Etienne Pierre Wante. *Histoire de la Révolution de Saint Domingue, Depuis le Commencement des Troubles, Jusqu’à la Prise de Jérémie et du Môle S. Nicolas par les Anglais; Suivie d’un Mémoire sur le Rétablissement de cette Colonie.* Paris: Chez Mame Frères, imprimeur-libraires, 1814. http://archive.org/details/histoiredelarv00dalm.

Daut, Marlene L. *Tropics of Haiti: Race and the Literary History of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World, 1789-1865.* Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015.

Davis, Angela. "The Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves." *The Black Scholar* 3, no. 4 (1971): 2-15.

Dayan, Joan. "Erzulie: A Women's History of Haiti." *Research in African Literatures* 25, no.2 (Summer 1994): 5-31.

Dayan, Colin [Joan]. *The Story of Cruel and Unusual*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007.

Dayan, Joan. *Haiti, History, and the Gods*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.

Defaux, Gérard. "De Pantagruel au Tiers Livre: Panurge et le Pouvoir." *Etudes Rabelaisiennes* 13 (1976): 163-180.

de Gastine, Civique. *Histoire de la République d'Haïti ou Saint-Domingue: L'Esclavage et les Colons*. Paris: Plancher, 1819. http://archive.org/details/histoiredelarpu00gastgoog.

Deren, Maya. *Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti.* Kingston: McPherson, 1953.

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

Du Bois, W.E.B. *Black Reconstruction in America 1860-1880*. New York: Atheneum, [1935] 1992.

Dumesle, Hérald. *Voyage dans le Nord d'Hayti, ou, Révélations des Lieux et des Monuments Historiques*. Les Cayes: Imprimerie du Gouvernment, 1824. http://digitallibrary.usc.edu//cdm/ref/collection/p15799coll58/id/43145.

Edwards, Erica R. *Charisma and the Fictions of Black Leadership*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012.

Encyclopedia of African Religion. 1 vol., edited by Molefi Kete Asante and Ama Mazama. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2009.

Eskin, Stanley G. "Mythic Unity in Rabelais." *Modern Language Association* 79, no. 5 (Dec., 1964): 548-553.

Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. New York: Grove Press, [1952] 1967.

Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*, translated by Richard Philcox. New York: Grove Press, [1963] 2004.

Ferrer, Ada. *Freedom's Mirror: Cuba and Haiti in the Age of Revolution*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Fick, Carolyn E. *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990.

Fick, Carolyn E. "The Saint-Domingue Slave Revolution and the Unfolding of Independence." In *The World of the Haitian Revolution,* edited by David Patrick Geggus and Norman Fiering, 177-195. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009.

Finch, Aisha K. "Cécile Fatiman and Petra Carabalí, Late Eighteenth-Century Haiti and Mid Nineteenth-Century Cuba." In *As If She Were Free: A Collective Biography of Women and Emancipation in the Americas,* edited by Erica L. Ball, Tatiana Seijas, Terri L. Snyder, 293-311. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020.

Finch, Aisha K. *Rethinking Slave Rebellion in Cuba: La Escalera and the Insurgencies of 1841 1844.* Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015.

Fischer, Sibylle. *Modernity Disavowed: Haiti and the Cultures of Slavery in the Age of Revolution.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.

Fleurant, Gerdès. "The Song of Freedom: Vodou, Conscientization, and Popular Culture in Haiti." In *Vodou in Haitian Life and Culture: Invisible Powers*, edited by Claudine Michel and Patrick Bellegarde-Smith, 51-63. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

Foster, Thomas A. *Rethinking Rufus: Sexual Violations of Enslaved Men*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2019.

Freeman, Elizabeth. "Introduction." In "Queer Temporalities." Special issue, *GLQ* 13, no.2-3 (2007):159-176.

Fuentes, Marisa J. *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016.

Garrigus, John. *Before Haiti: Race and Citizenship in French Saint-Domingue.* London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

Garrigus, John. "Race, Gender and Virtue in Haiti's Failed Foundational Fiction: *La Mulâtre comme il y a beaucoup de blanches*." In *The Color of Liberty: Histories of Race in France,* edited by Tyler Stovall and Sue Peabody, 73-94. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003.

Geggus, David. "The Bois Caïman Ceremony." *The Journal of Caribbean History* 25, no. 1 (Jan. 1, 1991): 41- 57.

Geggus, David. *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002.

Geggus, David. “Saint-Domingue on the Eve of the Haitian Revolution.” In *The World of the Haitian Revolution*, edited by David Patrick Geggus and Norman Fiering, 3-20. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009.

Geggus, David P. “Slave and Free Colored Women in Saint Domingue.” In *Black Women and Slavery in the Americas: More than Chattel*, edited by David Barry Gaspar and Darlene Clark Hine, 257-278. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996.

Genovese, Eugene D. *From Rebellion to Revolution: Afro-American Slave Revolts in the Making of the Modern World*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979.

Ghachem, Malick W. “Prosecuting Torture: The Strategic Ethics of slavery in Pre-Revolutionary Saint-Domingue (Haiti). In “Law, Slavery, and Justice.” Special issue, *Law and History Review* 29, no. 4 (November 2011): 985-1029.

Gill, Lyndon K. *Erotic Islands: Art and Activism in the Queer Caribbean*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2018.

Gill, Lyndon K. “In the Realm of Our Lorde: Eros and the Poet Philosopher.” *Feminist Studies* 40, no.1 (2014): 169- 189.

Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993.

Girard, Philippe. “*Rebelles* with a Cause: Women in the Haitian War of Independence, 1802-04. *Gender & History* 21, no.1 (April 2009): 60-85.

Glissant, Edouard. *Caribbean Discourses: Selected Essays*. Translated by J. Michael Dash. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1989.

Glissant, Edouard. *Poetics of Relation*. Translated by Betsy Wing. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, [1990] 2010.

Glymph, Thavolia. “Du Bois’s *Black Reconstruction* and Slave Women’s War for Freedom.” *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 112, no. 3 (2013): 489- 505.

Glymph Thavolia. *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Greenberg, Amy. *Manifesting Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Gumbs, Alexis Pauline. “M/other Ourselves: A Black Queer Feminist Genealogy for Radical Mothering.” In *Revolutionary Mothering: Love on the Front Lines*, edited by Alexis

Pauline Gumbs, China Martens, and Mai'a Williams, 19-31. Toronto: Between the Lines Press, 2016.

Gumbs, Alexis Pauline. "We Can Learn to Mother Ourselves: The Queer Survival of Black Feminism 1968-1996." PhD diss., Duke University, 2010.

Hampton, Timothy. "'Comment a nom': Humanism and Literary Knowledge in Auerbach and Rabelais." *Representations* 119, no. 1 (Summer 2012): 37-59.

Handler, J.S., R.S. Corruccini and R.J. Mutaw. "Tooth Mutilation in the Caribbean: Evidence from a Slave Burial Population in Barbados." *Journal of Human Evolution* 11 (1982): 297-313.

Hantel, Max. "Rhizomes and the Space of Translation: On Edouard Glissant's Spiral Retelling." *Small Axe* 42 (Nov. 2012): 100-112.

Hartman, Saidiya. "The Belly of the World: A Note on Black Women's Labors." *Souls* 18, no. 1 (January-March 2016):166-173.

Hartman, Saidiya. *Lose Your Mother: A Journey along the Atlantic Slave Route.* New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007.

Hartman, Saidiya. *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Hartman, Saidiya. "Venus in Two Acts." *Small Axe* 12, no. 2 (2008): 1-14.

Hilton, Anne. *The Kingdom of the Congo*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985.

Hoffman, Léon-Francois. "Un Mythe National: La Cérémonie du Bois Caïman." In *La République Haïtienne: État des Lieux et Perspectives*, edited by Gérard Barthélemy and Christian A. Girault, 434-448. Paris: Karthala, 1993.

Hoffmann, Léon-François. "Representations of the Haitian Revolution in French Literature." In *The World of the Haitian Revolution*, edited by David Patrick Geggus and Norman Fiering, 339-351. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009.

Holden, Vanessa M. *Surviving Southampton: African American Women and Resistance in Nat Turner's Community*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2021.

Horne, Gerald. *Confronting the Black Jacobins: The U.S., the Haitian Revolution, and the Origins of the Dominican Republic.* New York: New York University Press, 2015.

Hugo, Victor. *Bug-Jargal*. Translated and edited by Chris Bongie. Peterborough: Broadview Press, [1826] 2004.

Hurston, Zora Neale. *Tell My Horse: Voodoo and Life in Haiti and Jamaica*. New York: HarperCollins e-book, 1938.

Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA). *Mirage: Enigmas of Race, Difference and Desire*. London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1995.

James, C.L.R. *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*. 2nd ed. New York: Random House, [1938] 1989.

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

Johnson, Jessica Marie. *Wicked Flesh: Black Women, Intimacy, and Freedom in the Atlantic World*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020.

Johnson, E. Patrick, and Mae G. Henderson, eds. *Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2005.

Jordan, June. "The Creative Spirit: Children's Literature." In *Revolutionary Mothering: Love on the Front Lines*, edited by Alexis Pauline Gumbs, China Martens, and Mai'a Williams, 11-18. Toronto: Between the Lines Press, 2016.

Kadish, Doris Y., and Deborah Jenson, eds. *Poetry of Haitian Independence*. Translated by Norman R. Shapiro. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015.

Kafka, Judith. "Action, Reaction and Interaction: Slave Women in Resistance in the South of Saint Domingue, 1793-94." *Slavery and Abolition* 18, no.2 (1997): 48-72.

Kaplan, Amy. *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002.

Kaplan, Sara Clarke. "Love and Violence/Maternity and Death: Black Feminism and the Politics of Reading (Un)representability." *Black Women, Gender + Families* 1, no. 1 (2007): 94-124.

Keeling, Kara. *Queer Times, Black Futures*. New York: New York University Press, 2019.

Kelley, Robin D.G. *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination.* Boston: Beacon Press, 2002.

Lacey, A. "Literature and the Arts: Rabelais and the Voyages of Jacques Cartier." *Canadian Modern Language Review* 1, no. 3 (1945): 5-10.

Landes, Joan B. *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of Revolution*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988.

Law, Robin. *The Slave Coast of West Africa*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.

Lindsey, Treva B. and Jessica Marie Johnson. "Searching for Climax: Black Erotic Lives in Slavery and Freedom." In "Harriet Tubman: A Legacy of Resistance." Special issue, *Meridians* 12, no.2 (2014): 169-195.

Lorde, Audre. "The Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power." In *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*, 53- 59. Berkeley: Crossing Press, [1984] 2007.

Macharia, Keguro. *Frottage: Frictions of Intimacy Across the Black Diaspora*. New York: New York University Press, 2019.

Madiou, Thomas. *Histoire d'Haïti, Tome Deuxième*. Port-au-Prince: Impr. De J. Courtois, 1847. http://archive.org/details/histoiredhaiti02madigoog.

Malenfant, Colonel. *Des Colonies, et Particulièrement de Celle de Saint-Domingue; Mémoire Historique et Politique.* Paris : Chez Audibert, lib., 1814. http://archive.org/details/descoloniesetpar00male.

Manigat, Leslie F. "The Relationship between Marronage and Slave Revolts and Revolution in St. Domingue-Haiti." *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 292, no. 1 (June 1977): 420-438.

Marshall, Emily Zobel. "Anansi, Eshu, and Legba: Slave Resistance and the West African Trickster." In *Human Bondage in the Cultural Contact Zone: Transdisciplinary Perspectives on Slavery and Its Discourses*, edited by Gesa Mackenthun and Raphael Hörmann, 177-192. Münster: Waxmann, 2010.

Masse, Étienne-Michel. *Ossolinski, ou Marseille et Saint-Domingue, après 1794 et en 1815: Mémoires Contemporains recueillis et publiés par E.-M. Masse.* Paris: Jules Lefebvre et Ce., libraires- éditeurs, rue des Grands-Augustins, no.18, 1830. http://archive.org/details/ossolinskioumars01mass.

McAlister, Elizabeth. "Love, Sex, and Gender Embodied: The Spirits of Haitian Vodou." In *Love, Sex and Gender in the World Religions*, edited by Joseph Runzo and Nancy M. Martin, 128-145. Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2000.

McKittrick, Katherine. *Dear Science and Other Stories.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2021.

McKittrick, Katherine. *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006.

McKittrick, Katherine, ed. *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2015.

McKittrick, Katherine. "Plantation Futures," *Small Axe* 17, no.3 (November 2013): 1-15.

McKittrick, Katherine. “Yours in the Intellectual Struggle: Sylvia Wynter and the Realization of the Living.” In *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis*, 1-8. Durham: Duke University Press, 2015.

Métral, Antoine. *Histoire de l’Insurrection des Esclaves dans le Nord de Saint-Domingue*. Paris: Chez F. Scherff, libraire et Com.re pour la Suisse, place du Louvre, no.12 : Rey et Gravier, quai des Augustins, no.55 : Delaunay, galerie de Palais-Royal; Et a Genève : chez Manget et Cherbuliez, 1818. http://archive.org/details/histoiredelinsur00mt

Métraux, Alfred *Voodoo in Haiti*. New York: Schocken Books, 1972.

Meyer Jean, Jean Tarrade, Anne Rey-Goldzeiguer and Jacques Thobie. *Histoire de la France Coloniale T.1: Des Origines À 1914*. Malakoff: Arman Colin, 2016.

Michel, Claudine and Patrick Bellagarde-Smith, eds. *Haitian Vodou: Spirit, Myth, and Reality*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006.

Michel, Claudine and Patrick Bellagarde-Smith, eds. *Vodou in Haitian Life and Culture: Invisible Powers*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

Michel, Claudine. “Vodou in Haiti: Way of Life and Mode of Survival.” In *Vodou in Haitian Life and Culture: Invisible Powers*, edited by Claudine Michel and Patrick Bellegarde Smith, 27-37. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

Moitt, Bernard. “Women, Work and Resistance in the French Caribbean during Slavery, 1700 1848.” In *Engendering History: Caribbean Women in Historical Perspective*, edited by Verene Shepherd, Bridget Brereton and Barbara Bailey, 155-175. Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 1995.

Moitt, Bernard. *Women and Slavery in the French Antilles, 1635-1848*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001.

Morgan, Jennifer. *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004.

Morgan, Jennifer L. “*Partus sequitur ventrem*: Law, Race, and Reproduction in Colonial Slavery.” *Small Axe* 55 (March 2018): 1-17.

Nurse, Keith. “Masculinities in Transition: Gender and the Global Problematique.” In *Interrogating Caribbean Masculinities: Theoretical and Empirical Analyses*, edited by Rhoda E. Reddock, 3-37. Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2004.

Olmos, Margarite Fernández, and Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert. *Creole Religions of the Caribbean: An Introduction from Vodou and Santería to Obeah and Espiritismo*. 2nd ed. New York: New York University Press, 2011.

Peabody, Sue. "Négresse, Mulâtresse, Citoyenne: Gender and Emancipation in the French Caribbean, 1650-1848." In *Gender and Slave Emancipation in the Atlantic World*, edited by Pamela Scully and Diana Paton, 56-78. Durham: Duke University Press, 2005.

Philip, Marlene Nourbese. "Dis Place – The Space Between." In *A Genealogy of Resistance and Other Essays*, 74-112. Toronto: The Mercury Press, 1997.

Rabelais, François. *Gargantua and Pantagruel*. Translated by Burton Raffel. New York: W.W. Norton, 1990.

Rabelais, François. *Oeuvres complètes*. Edited by Mireille Huchon and François Moreau. Paris: Gallimard, 1994.

Rabelais, François. *Œuvres de François Rabelais*. Edited by Abel Lefranc, Paris : Librairie Ancienne Edouard Champion, 1922.

Rey, Terry. *The Priest and the Prophetess: Abbé Ouvière, Romaine Rivière, and the Revolutionary Atlantic World*. Oxford University Press, 2017.

Rigaud, Milo. *Secrets of Voodoo*. San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1969.

Roberts, Neil. *Freedom as Marronage*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015.

Robinson, Cedric J. *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, [1983] 2000.

Robinson, Cedric. "Coming to Terms: The Third World and the Dialectic of Imperialism." *Race & Class* XXII, no. 4 (1981): 364-386.

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *Emile, or on Education*. Translated by Allan Bloom. New York: Basic Books, [1792] 1979.

Sala-Molins, Louis. *Le Code Noir, ou le Calvaire de Canaan.* Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1987.

Scott, David. *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.

Scott, Julius S. *The Common Wind: Afro-American Currents in the Age of the Haitian Revolution*. London: Verso, 2018.

Sharpe, Christina. *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.

Sharpe, Jenny. *Ghosts of Slavery: A Literary Archaeology of Black Women's Lives*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002.

Sheller, Mimi. *Citizenship from Below: Erotic Agency and Caribbean Freedom.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2012.

Snorton, C. Riley. *Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017.

Spillers, Hortense. "Interstices: A Small Drama of Words." In *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*, edited by Carole S. Vance, 73-100. Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984.

Spillers, Hortense. "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book." *Diacritics,* 17, no. 2 (1987): 64-81.

Stallings, L.H. *Mutha' Is Half a Word: Intersections of Folklore, Vernacular, Myth, and Queerness in Black Female Culture*. Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2007.

Stallings, L.H. *Funk the Erotic: Transaesthetics and Black Sexual Cultures*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2015.

Stoddard, T. Lothrop. *The French Revolution in San Domingo.* Boston: University Press Cambridge, 1914.

Stoler, Ann Laura. *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010.

Strongman, Roberto. "The Afro-Diasporic Body in Haitian Vodou and the Transcending of Gendered Cartesian Corporeality." KUNAPIPI: *Journal of Postcolonial Writing & Culture* XXX, no. 2 (2008): 11-29.

Strongman, Roberto. *Queering Black Atlantic Religions: Transcorporeality in Candomblé, Santería, and Vodou*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2019.

Taylor, Diana. *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2003.

Thomas, Greg. "On Sex/Sexuality & Sylvia Wynter's 'Beyond...': Anti-Colonial Ideas in 'Black Radical Tradition'." In "Sylvia Wynter: A Transculturalist Rethinking Modernity." Special issue, *Journal of West Indian Literature* 10, no. 1-2 (November 2001): 92-118.

Tinsley, Omise'eke Natasha. "Black Atlantic, Queer Atlantic: Queer Imaginings of the Middle Passage." *GLQ* 14, no. 2-3 (2008): 191-215.

Tinsley, Omise'eke Natasha. *Ezili's Mirrors: Imagining Black Queer Genders*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2018.

Tinsley, Omise'eke Natasha. "Songs for Ezili: Vodou Epistemologies of (Trans)gender." *Feminist Studies* 37, no.2 (Summer 2011): 417-436.

Tinsley, Omise'eke Natasha. *Thiefing Sugar: Eroticism between Women in Caribbean Literature.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.

Toumson, Roger. *La Transgression des Couleurs: Littérature et Langage des Antilles.* Paris: Editions Caribéennes, 1990.

Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History.* Boston: Beacon Press, 1995.

Turner, Sasha. *Contested Bodies: Pregnancy, Childrearing, and Slavery in Jamaica*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017.

Vieux-Chauvet, Marie. *Dance on the Volcano*. Translated by Kaiama L. Glover. Brooklyn: Archipelago Books, [1957] 2016.

Walcott, Rinaldo. "Freedom Now Suite: Black Feminist Turns of Voice." *Small Axe* 57, 22, no.3 (November 2018): 151-159.

Walcott, Rinaldo. "Genres of Human: Multiculturalism, Cosmo-politics, and the Caribbean Basin." In *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis*, edited by Katherine McKittrick, 183-202. Durham: Duke University Press, 2015.

Walcott, Rinaldo. "Outside in Black Studies: Reading from a Queer Place in the Diaspora." In *Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology,* edited by Patrick E. Johnson and Mae G. Henderson, 90-105. Durham: Duke University Press, 2005.

Walcott, Rinaldo. *Queer Returns: Essays on Multiculturalism, Diaspora, and Black Studies*. London: Insomniac Press, 2016.

Walcott, Rinaldo. "Somewhere Out There: The New Black Queer Theory." In *Blackness and Sexualities,* edited by M. Wright and A. Schuhmann, 29–40. Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2007.

Weinbaum, Alys Eve. "Gendering the General Strike: W.E.B. Du Bois's *Black Reconstruction* and Black Feminism's 'Propaganda of History'." *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 112, no.3 (2013): 437-463.

Weinbaum, Alys Eve. "The Afterlife of Slavery and the Problem of Reproduction Freedom." *Social Text 115* 31, no. 2 (2013): 49-68.

Wekker, Gloria. *The Politics of Passion: Women's Sexual Culture in the Afro-Surinamese Diaspora.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2006.

Williams, Alison. *Tricksters and Pranksters: Roguery in French and German Literature of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000.

Winters, Lisa Ze. *The Mulatta Concubine: Terror, Intimacy, Freedom, and Desire in the Black Transatlantic*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2016.

Wynter, Sylvia. "Rethinking 'Aesthetics': Notes towards a Deciphering Practice." In *Ex-Iles: Essays on Caribbean Cinema,* edited by Mbye Cham, 237–279.Trenton: Africa World Press, 1992.

Wynter, Sylvia. "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument." *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3, no.3 (2003): 257-337.

Wynter, Sylvia and Katherine McKittrick. "Unparalleled Catastrophe for our Species? Or, to Give Humanness a Different Future: Conversation." In *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis*, edited by Katherine McKittrick, 9-89. Durham: Duke University Press, 2015.